'CAPITAL' CITY

Creating an Approach to Urban Development in a Monumental City

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THE CREATION OF FUNCTIONAL SPACE + URBAN IDENTITY THROUGH THE LENSES OF SYMBOLIC DESIGN + ECONOMIC PLANNING
The **Planned City:**
Where Symbolism + Capitalism Meet

The **Capital City:** A center of trade and commerce? The hub of industry? The majority of capitals in the world today are the result of the growth of hundreds of years. Starting as farming towns, they grew to become centers of trade, industrial hubs, and eventually these cities are elected above the others in the area to become an region’s center of government and civic architecture.

Yet in Washington DC, the commercial fabric was ignored, allowed to grow in any way it could. Seen often as the urban blight, it became the enemy of L’Enfants’ plan. But too often the iconic city became dependant on this infill to survive.

The **Capital City:** A cultural icon? The symbol of a nation? Capital cities are often considered the centers of a nation’s spirit, containing the functions of government side by side with the institutions that capture a country’s imagination. Romantic as it may seem, they are often populated with theaters, museums, and libraries which cater to the population.

In the case of Washington DC, the city was created for the single purpose of representing the young country to the rest of the world, proving itself on par with its more established European counterparts. From the swamplands rose pristine federal buildings and civic institutions, with the hope to create better citizens.

Today, this desire can be seen among the monuments and institutional architecture proliferated throughout the city, to the symbolic city plan that contains them. But while the marble city was built, the city of commerce was ignored.
CAPITAL [n] 1. The wealth, whether in money or property, owned or employed in business by an individual, firm, corporation, etc. 2. An accumulated stock of such wealth. 3. Any form of wealth employed or capable of being employed in the production of more wealth.

What is a CAPITAL CITY?
At the conception of Washington DC, most capitals were shaped by the economic forces that created them. Today, Washington D.C. is a city where the decisions for its future are made by those who are not permanent residents, while those that are have little to no say in the future of their home. Change in planning can be sporadic and often not in the best interests of the actual residents. As a result, a bipolar city emerged. It is divided between the ‘urban monument to the United States’ and the everyday workings of a commercial and residential center. Shopping centers intermingle with the Smithsonian, while the Washington Monument overlooks office buildings. Each does its best to ignore the other, but these two separate cities must exist as one to survive.

As a result, many critics state that the city must be saved by the very entity that abandoned it so many years before. The 1950’s, while allowing for cooperation between developers and government, was also the decade of the flight from the urban to suburbia. With the residents went the money, leading to the sprawl of strip malls and commercial boulevards we see today.

There was no need to enter urban centers anymore, as neighborhoods fell one by one to decay. Once the city was a place of consumption, but to survive in the future, it must also be something to be consumed.

Cities like Washington D.C. are depending on their monuments and institutions to bring people back into the metropolis and the commercial vendors must depend on them as well, just as the institutions need the economically motivated to support them and their patrons.

So why approach this issue from an architectural standpoint? Urban planning and architecture are always attempting to make space ‘better’. And by making space better, they hope to make the lives of the people who inhabit it better as well. Each stage in Washington D.C.’s master planning has attempted to make better citizens on both a national and local scale. But though the mall and area around it could inspire changes of heart in the 8 million visitors each year, the rest of the city has been practically ignored until recently. With architecture and urban planning, I want to look at ‘the rest of the city’, and how to make it a viable entity again.
According to John Reps, “The planning of Washington, D.C. was at once an act of faith, a political maneuver, a symbolic gesture, and a remarkable achievement in city planning.” It has been linked to the growth and change in our nation since its conception. And while it doesn’t reflect the rest of the cities in the nation in form, nor should it, it still has managed to stay a powerful symbol of the country for the past 200 years {Reps}.

The concept of the ‘capital city’ as a representation of a country is far from new. It acts as a snapshot of the welfare of the country, which explains why many capitals are also the economic centers of nations. But when the capital is planned, it can stand for something else, something greater and more idealic.
[ ANALYSIS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT IDENTIFIES TWO PRIMARY DESIGN STRATEGIES, A SYMBOLIC APPROACH AND AN ECONOMICALLY BENEFICIAL APPROACH. SEPARATELY, NEITHER MEETS THE NEEDS OF A POPULACE. IN WASHINGTON DC, THESE TWO SYSTEMS ACTED IN AN ANTAGONISTIC RELATIONSHIP, WHERE SYMBOLIC DESIGN HISTORICALLY DISPLACED AND REGULATED LOCAL ECONOMIES. ANACOSTIA IS AN UNDERDESIGNED AND UNDERDEVELOPED AREA OF THE DISTRICT, WHICH CURRENTLY FACES MASSIVE RECONSTRUCTION. I PROPOSE THAT BY USING THE MARKET PROGRAM, WHICH BRIDGES INSTITUTIONAL AND RETAIL ARCHITECTURE, LOCAL IDENTITY CAN BE NURTURED WHILE STILL PROMOTING ECONOMIC GROWTH, ACTING AS AN EXAMPLE FOR FUTURE URBAN DEVELOPMENT. ]
“Washington was planned as a city of ideals.”

Charles Moore 1930
Economic Planning Since the District’s Conception

Although L’Enfant saw the inclusion of market centers as integral to the district plan, sharing space with the buildings of distinction, most of the city’s economic development happened separately and often against the pre-conceived plans of the many urban designers of the DC. It was not until 1950 that a desire to combine the efforts of formal planning and economic growth entered into the mindset of city developers, seeing retail and development as more than just infill between the destination landmarks of the city, but as another form of place making.

Washington DC still acts a city dependent on ‘image’ and is experienced as a point destination city. Less glamorous programs are mainly ignored and are considered secondary to the more symbolic areas of design. And while the more important civic structures are glorified by designers, existing and local economies often are overrun or re-regulated without consent for their existing positions.

Formal Urban Planning in Washington DC

The original plan has been the basis of the city’s development since the day it was drawn, constantly referenced by almost every plan since. These plans, though often beautiful, rarely took into account the growth of the city beyond the National Mall and the immediate area beyond the public monuments.

The following timeline of the development history of the city shows the emphasis on this form of symbolic design from the urban inception, through the City Beautiful movement, to the current Legacy Plan. And while more current plans have begun to look outside the city center, their approaches still seem to depend on the concept on monument and place making. But does this form of design really connect and vitalize the city, or is it another lofty ideal?
The Army Corps of Engineers were shouldered with the responsibility of the creation and upkeep of public works, buildings and grounds. The main responsibilities at this time included: 1. Paving and adorning Penn Ave, 2. New presidential home, 3. Dredging the Potomac (flood proofing), 4. Defining the public parks and squares.

Olmsted attempted to bring the mall under a unified theme. He terraced the front of the Capitol Bldg and created symmetrical, winding walks with only a few trees shielding the main vista of the Capitol. It is similar in many ways to his Central Park plan, with many aspects created for the betterment of health.

Electric streetcars are installed throughout the city, making it easier than ever before for businesses to operate.

The first official height restrictions are issued. No bldg is taller than its street. On a residential st., the max is 90ft, and 110ft on a commercial st.

Three new markets, owned and run by the Washington Market Co. are approved for the original market squares, and built in the next few years.

The turn of the century brought with it a new way of planning the urban environment. The City Beautiful is most prominent in the plan below, based on the grand boulevards of Europe. It was hoped to create better citizens.

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Set with the task of coordinating district and federal planning, the main result of the Commission was the Federal Triangle Complex. Existing structures were removed and replaced with the new ‘federal look’, still citing the McMillan Plan.

Most of the planning from 1900 until 1950 focused primarily on creation of jobs and the protection and creation of parkland throughout the city. One example was that of the Fort Drive Project, unrealized.

The NCPC began to deviate from the original McMillan plan. This brought much criticism ending many efforts to extend building beyond the mall.

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Penn Ave became a focus point yet again, but new thinking went beyond office buildings, as it became a center of commerce as well. It would be redesigned several times.

The plan focused on the spread of the city outward, as well as encouraged the monumentality of the metro center. Focus was on the diagonal avenues.
Unrealized in L’Enfant’s was his ability to incorporate the economic workings of a city in with his monumental plan. He saw Washington DC as a canal city, based upon the trade resulting from its location. While on a daily basis, large barges would traverse the waters, he also envisioned it as a place for large spectacles and parades. Integrated with his canal were several small market areas and five large market squares, of which only three were realized (and only one is still in existence today).

Also unrealized in his plans was his vision of the Southeastern portions of the city, which he intended to become a business district. He saw that merchants would only develop a ‘civic pride’ if they had a worthy space. His plaza would have contained the local governing body, integrating the commercial life of the city with its more official governing half. In renderings done by Peets, the local capitol building faced a public market, linking the sacred and profane (Peets).

However in the building of the city, many of these spaces were forgotten or ignored.

The District of Washington DC was found from scratch. With the exception of Georgetown and Alexandria, the area was mostly uninhabited and allowed L’Enfant, then Ellicott, to create an ideal urban center that represented the ideals and dreams of a fledgling nation. As a result, the planning occurred on a visibly grand scale. Early plans mapped out the locations of important civic structures, with radial avenues intersecting a classic North/South grid. The nodes of intersection were to become the centers of civic development, denoting important space. Economic development would happen along the diagonal avenues. Distance between buildings such as the Capitol and the Whitehouse forced a feeling of decorum, and L’Enfant felt that many civic and economic structures disrupting the space would make it seem less important, resulting in his view corridors. And while his plan went on practically unchanged, it was his views on the future development of the city that resulted in his termination (Gutheim + Lee).

Ellicott’s plan was strongly based on this original, with his only alterations made for practical reasons. However, as well as not altering the original beauty of the plan, he also did not
What had become grazing land was refocused with the designing and construction of the privately financed Washington Monument. The National Mall would once again become the ceremonial passageway proposed by L’Enfant [Gutheim + Lee].

However, unlike the original L’Enfant Plan, the mall space would not become a grand avenue of diplomatic estates, but would be re-envisioned by Mills’ financing of the Smithsonian Castle. The Smithsonian shifted the focus of the Mall to cultural institutions. Mills considered the site of the building to be the entire mall, filled with land for experiments and scientific buildings. Its final site reflected the monumental view corridors, as it was shifted to the side so the Capitol building would have an unobstructed view of the Washington Monument [Guntheim + Lee].

There was no focus beyond that of the Mall.

President Millard Fillmore commissioned Downing to create a landscape design for the Mall and area around the president’s home. Downing’s focus was on the new scientific aspect of the Mall due to the Smithsonian and Botanic Gardens [1820], creating a botanic focus. He had three main objectives:

1. The creation of a “National Park”
2. To create a style of natural landscape gardening that could influence the nation’s taste
3. The creation of a “public museum of living trees and shrubs”

His design contained six primary reserves linked by organically formed walkways, and even had a bridge linking the White-house to a President’s Garden. Water played an important role to his vision, and led to the Fountain Park and some lakes. While influential, the plan was never carried out to completion [ Gutheim + Lee ].

There were markets in the city since its conception. The Central Market had acted as the focal point of the central business district since it was conceived in the early decades of the 19th Century. It, as well as the Western Market and the Eastern Market, were powerful magnets of trade, overwhelming many smaller neighborhood markets.

With the 1870’s came the formation of private ownership of markets. For example, in 1873 a group of butchers joined together and built the Northern Liberty Market, which focused on the butchering industry. Private ownership allowed for income to be used on improvements to the market buildings [Tangires]. The Washington Market Company was conceived as a way to construct and maintain new market buildings on the Market Squares. The largest was the Central Market building. It was organized by goods, and separated wholesale and retail trade. He also considered more functional aspects of the design, incorporating parking, restrooms and state of the art appliances [Gutheim +Lee].

Adolf Cluss was the architect of the Washington Market Company. He envisioned four buildings around an open court. The final design was a monumental building, set on an open square on Pennsylvania Ave. But with the reclamation of the area for government buildings in the 1931, it was torn down to make way for the National Archives.
The purpose of the Army Corps of Engineers' role in the urban planning was to create and maintain a working, and beautiful, city.

In 1867, the Army Corps of Engineers were charged with the upkeep and creation of structures, grounds and general public works [sewers].

The focus of the 1867 Army Corps was Pennsylvania Avenue, possible new locations for the Presidential residence, dredging the Potomac River, and the creation of more defined parkland throughout the district. Rock Creek Park is the most enduring of the above ideas, visualized as a serpentine canyon dividing the district. This acted to prevent future growth and density to the West. The Army Corps also looked at other design issues, like a unified mall plan.

Later Army Corps set out to drain water from public areas, paying special consideration to monuments and other important public spaces. On a more aesthetic side, they also worked to add walkways and furniture to the parks, proving their role to be of both an engineering and picturesque focus [Gutheim + Lee].

The earliest zoning activities concerned the separation of commercial functions from the residential. In 1920, Harland Bartholomew studied existing conditions, and drew up a series of suggestions for the separation of residential, commercial and industrial uses. Each category had its own specific set of detailed regulations, dealing with area and height of new buildings.

With the conception of the Zoning Commission, the creation of specific districts occurred. In 1920, an official Zoning Commission was created. This signaled the widening of focus for city designers beyond the park areas.
The models created showed the city, but made no reference to human inhabitation. This led to the idea of ‘McMillanism’, meaning vacant streets + oppressive architecture. The resulting DC lacked the liveliness of other capital cities because it replaced the shops + restaurants of the Champs-Elysees with museums + office buildings.

The only market space near the Mall was removed to make way for the new National Archives building, making the center city a museum + office park in the city.

Planning of the ‘infill’ economic space was minimal, used only as a backdrop for the more magnificent monuments of marble.

The turn of the century brought with it a desire for change in DC. The city had no particular presence or style. Growing individually and sporadically, many designers argued that though this was the natural growth of most cities, as the nation’s capital Washington DC needed to present a ‘world standard’ that reflected the dignity, order and continuity of the national state.

The Senate Park Commission was created by Senator McMillan and Charles Moore. The members included Daniel Burnham [of the Columbian Exposition fame], Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., and Charles McKim of neoclassical monoliths McKim Mead + White. They relied heavily on the natural beauty of the area and the original L’Enfant grid placed on top of it. Burnham was the overseer, focusing mainly on Union Station. McKim did central composition, and Olmsted focused on the park system.

Central aspects like the Mall received the most detail, with the project focus on a park system and groupings of public buildings.

MCMILLIAN COMMISSION [1901]

The commission’s role was to coordinate the actions of both the federal and district departments in the areas of transportation, public building sites, sewerage, zoning, commerce, industry and other areas of planning. Their main focus was on the parkways to and from the city.

Their largest project, the Federal Triangle, was placed on a part of the city known as Murder Bay. It was the location of the Central Market, and considered a haven for criminal enterprise. Denoted as a blighted atmosphere, it was rebuilt as the massive composition seen today. Natural growth was considered secondary to the grand designs of the architects, and the Federal Triangle concreted institutional architecture’s hierarchy over the economically beneficial [Gutheim + Lee].

The National Capital Park Commission was created to protect and preserve parkland, parkways and playgrounds throughout the region. In the early years of its conception, the Commission was at the mercy of developers and private citizens. But in 1926, it was granted a planning division and the first Comprehensive Plan was created.

The main focus of the Commission was to create and maintain a comprehensive plan of the National Capital. The parkways going to and from the city are the ideal examples of their approach to design.

By creating a comprehensive plan, they contributed to the concept of a grand design instead of the typical historical piecemeal growth of cities. In 1926, the Federal Triangle Project was initiated to house many of the new government employees. It became the physical manifestation of the ‘civic center ideal’, a surviving piece of the City Beautiful Movement. It solidified the hierarchy of programming in the city for the next 60 years [Gutheim + Lee].
While many of the plans promised increased accessibility, this was more of a happy coincidence than an actual determining factor in the parkways development.

One of the passions of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission was to preserve some of the natural reserves from being eaten away by private developers.

An example of this effort was the proposal for Fort Drive, a parkway connecting the Civil War fort locations ringing the city. It would celebrate the local history from the war. However, due to the need for private funding, the Drive never garnered enough support to become realized.

Other parks were proposed, like the Mount Vernon Parkway and the Potomac Palisades Parkway, though they had varying degrees of success. In the end, most design initiatives were echoes of the earlier McMillan Plan.
Areas that did not fit the needs of their community were considered urban blight. Enlisting the help of businesses was one way of addressing the issues in these areas.

In the plan, it was heavily suggested that commercial strips be done away with in favor of business centers that would allow from deeper lots for larger modern constructions [ DC Office of Planning ]. This led to the widespread acceptance of the second largest employer in the District - the service industry.

The main focus of the 1950 Plan was the rebuilding of rundown and obsolete areas in the district. The postwar city presented planners with new challenges and possibilities. Issues like the widespread use of automobiles, new security threats, urban congestion, and environmental preservation led to a rethinking of design strategies.

Central to the proposals were the residents of the city, and the services they demanded, mapping out areas that were less than satisfactory as places of intervention. This ruling allowed for large scale interventions to occur. It also pushed for the federal buildings to be dispersed throughout the city instead of concentrated around the Mall [ Gutheim + Lee ].
In Harold M Lewis’ studies, he identified business needs for each neighborhood. He recreated the definition of neighborhood identity, by shifting it from recreation centers and schools to the economic and business centers of the areas.

The Lewis Plan was created to make the general zoning outlines proposed in the 1950 Comprehensive Plan more specific and to resolve the differences between the Planning Commission and the Zoning Commission.

Harold M Lewis studied 137 neighborhoods, mapping out major traffic roads, parks and institutional lands. He also showed what the necessary population densities were to support a school.

The study resulted in the identification of 40 problem neighborhoods, most surrounding the monumental core. This study played a major role in the major redevelopment done to many neighbors in the North. This unslumming helped to accelerate the ‘flight from the city’.
The plans presented in the A Policies Plan for the Year 2000 were a radical departure from previous dialog. Controlled growth was possible by restricting growth in an area, and promoting the creation of new cities at least 70 miles away. New growth that did occur would be in a controlled sprawl scenario in low density developments in all directions, with a ring of smaller cities acting as the economic centers. This growth would happen along transportation routes made possible by new rapid transit lines. This plan made the way for the Metro lines.

It also led the way for plans like the “Action Plan for Downtown” which was created by downtown businessmen. It was a reaction to retail leaving the center city, and the expansion westward of urban functions [Gutheim + Lee].

The historic L’Enfant city would remain, renamed as the ‘metro center’. It would become to center of political employment, with recommendations that it be even denser. The main diagonals would be developed like Parisian boulevards, with trees, shopping and distinctive apartment buildings. The main focus of the plan was the dispersal of the urban fabric, but the main L’Enfant city would become a denser collection of buildings.

The concepts behind the Plan for the Year 2000 led to the creation of many projects around the area for the housing and employment of the population. And while some of the efforts were successful, the overall plan led to dissention among the population, peaking during the riots of 1968. And while L’Enfant would have scoffed at the planning techniques followed, they did allow for another way to preserve the original character of the district [Gutheim + Lee].
To revitalize the downtown west, economic planners chose to create office enclaves, with smaller retail outlets. But political intervention took more of an active role in the eastern downtown development, by saving some of the historic smaller buildings from destruction.

In the case of Pennsylvania Avenue, private businesses cooperated with the federal government to create a coherent corridor [ Gutheim + Lee ].

A new image was to be created for Pennsylvania Avenue by reflecting the Federal Triangle architecture to the Northern edge of the avenue, with plazas spaced down the thoroughfare. This plan, put forth in 1964, would have resulted in the demolition of some of the existing historic buildings. Public outcry stalled the plan.

So in 1972, the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Company was created. The PADC would work with both federal government and private enterprise to merge them together to make a cohesive statement. The chose to embrace the monumental and ceremonial purpose set out by L'Enfant, and adjust accordingly. It was to terminate in Freedom Plaza, designed by Robert Venturi [ Gutheim + Lee ].

After the flight to the suburbs by the middle class, planners saw the importance of maintaining population and encouraging new growth in the city. Downtown was suffering from underuse, seemingly vacant on nights and weekends.

This reform of the urban center was aided by the real estate boom of the 1980’s [Gutheim + Lee].

The Comprehensive Plan was the first urban plan after the passing of the Home Rule Act. The issue of what constituted Federal interest and what would be denoted under the district planners was at the forefront of debate.

Federal elements of the plan included the future planning of federal facilities, federal employment, buildings with an international function, open spaces and planning that concerned tourists and visitors. The local elements focused on land use, economic development, housing, public facilities, and general urban design.

Both chose to be concerned with environmental issues, transportation and preservation.

One of the major successes of the plan was the recreation of Pennsylvania Ave, from muddled and vacant to a unified and admired public space [Gutheim + Lee].
The new zoning laws encouraged businesses to build in new ‘destination districts’. This districts were to be filled with retail, service, arts and entertainment functions. The main destination area was between 9th and 15th streets.

The rezoning also changed many of the economic incentives in the area. It was no longer profitable to destroy the low historic buildings in many areas, but still managed to encourage development through the area.

In 1990, the City Council created the Office of Zoning as an independent agency to consult commissions on the local and federal levels. It would be able to give uncompromised decisions.

New zoning laws encouraged arts and retail outlets, and demanded new housing to promote the idea of living downtown. It covered 88 blocks, from Pennsylvania Ave to M Street and 15th Street in the West to 3rd Street on the East.
OBSERVING THE *URBAN*: THE *CITY OF TODAY*

“It is sometimes called the City of Magnificent Distances, but it might with greater propriety be termed the City of Magnificent Intentions.”

Charles Dickens 1844
The historic L’Enfant plan was based upon a North South grid intersecting with diagonal avenues. These avenues would be the centers of growth, with the intersections between avenues becoming plazas of importance. This dispersed the city focus through the developed area.

The Washington DC of today is the result of the many forces directing the city. Within the original plan, the industries of image, politics and hospitality populate the buildings. They have embraced the original plan in order to push their product - the city and the government.

Outside of the original plan, there were fewer concrete forces to direct development. As a result, the economic needs of the population became the driving force of growth, as seen in the difference between the plan envisioned by L’Enfant and a current map of the district. The central city reflects the original urban identity created by L’Enfant, but instead of studying his developmental strategies, it instead focused on the physical forms he laid out.

The one major difference between the plans can be found in how they are represented and understood. The density of L’Enfant’s figure/ground way of understanding the city was replaced by a less dense version, where vector drawings best capture the urban spirit.

As a result, the plan comes across as open, lacking the density that made the original plan European in nature. While concepts like height restrictions were used to encourage uniform horizontal design, the lack of density is comes from a smaller population that grew accustomed to sprawl conditions. Most buildings of civic or monumental importance are concentrated around the Mall, instead of being located throughout the plan because of the visiting population need for access. Keeping the original physical form of the city is the main driving force in the center design, leaving much of the city to make its own way. As a result, it allows the city to stay an artifact to the American population and remain 8th grade field trip destination.

The population of the district has grown similarly to other cities in the United States. A steady increase gave way to the urban flight of the 1950’s, as the majority of the population moved from the city to the suburbs to escape the urban blight.

Today, even with the population beginning to increase again, everyday the number of people in the city increases by 70% [410,794 additional people] at least.

With such a temporary population, most planning appeals to them, leaving the permanent residents underserved by the businesses etc that are in the district.

In addition to the population change daily due to work, there are the number of tourists that are in the city at any given time. These 20+ million visitors also determine the focus of future development.

This appears as a focus on the hospitality industry, monument upkeep and creation etc, all of which alter the plan of the city.
In the city of Washington DC, 26% of the resident population work for the government on either a local or federal scale. Even more come into the city to do so every day. The rest work throughout the city, many in the consultant offices and public relation firms, not in factories or manufacturers like most other cities in the US. These companies’ focus is on image, most likely the number one bought and sold product in the district. Washington DC has 5 times the number of public relation offices than Boston [394] and but only 146 manufacturers compared to Boston’s 396 even though they have a similar population number.

The hospitality industry pays a large portion of the tax revenue, especially since the district loses a large portion of its potential income due to almost 2/3rd of the working population not paying their taxes to the city. In addition, many of the businesses that are located in the city also do not pay taxes at all.

As a result, the image of the city has always been an important piece of the economy and planning of DC.

The city planners therefore see the image focus of the city and apply it to the plans they create.

Washington DC has become a Destination City, leading to the development and push of plans that embrace this concept. Monuments and cultural institutions are given precedence over other programs in the city in existing and new plans. Considerable grants are given to new and old cultural centers, seeing them as “investments in economic development”.

The district has become a physical manifestation of Lebvre’s theory, that the city will become both a “place of consumption” and the “consumption of place”.
The main thoroughfare in the district is Pennsylvania Avenue. The physical connection between two of the branches of government, the avenue also acts as a center of business and commercial enterprises of all sizes, and the home to many residents.

It can be broken into three parts:

The *Western leg* is an office center for the city. Blocks are defined by a collage of building types of primarily large scales.

The *Central leg* is the focus of the tourism and governmental buildings. Retail fills the base of monumental government megablocks.

The *Eastern leg* is devoted to smaller retail and residential use.
The current plan hopes to stimulate development through the placing of monuments and government buildings. The hope is to re-center the city and disperse work and prosperity throughout the entire district. It does this by the creation of important ceremonial corridors that would radiate out from the center. Monuments and government complexes are then placed along the historically significant pathways, adding life to neighborhoods and revitalizing obsolete infrastructure. The important structures would also congregate along the underused waterfront of the city.

Yet the question remains on how much another monument means to a neighborhood, and what kind of affect such placement would have on the everyday workings of an area. It will most likely aid in connecting the city, but the everyday citizens lives would not be encouraged to interact throughout the city just because of another monument. Program that actually attracts locals would be more welcome, and perhaps conserve the local identity of a place [NCPC Legacy Plan].

The concept of the Legacy Plan involves the use of civic architecture to refocus the city. Yet it also hopes that through civic design, it can vitalize many of the areas that have long been ignored.

Monuments would help to connect the city as it was once intended, as the Legacy Plan symbolizes a shift back to the original intentions of L’Enfant. The city was also broken up into areas, which are then studied based on density of civic architecture etc. Area 1 is considered ‘on reserve’, and is complete. New monuments would not be built in the congested areas, but instead, would be encouraged to move out into the district to less civically dense areas [NCPC Legacy Plan].

The corridor would be broken up into zones, each with specific purpose. The corridor would be aligned with mixed use developments that would work to connect the corridor with the existing fabric.

Part of re-centering the city concerns the development of important corridors that lead to the Capitol Building. One of these main streets is South Capitol Street, a previously insignificant roadway. The street itself would receive the boulevard treatment, with the addition of green space and trees down its length.

It would provide an ideal setting for the expansion of cultural and civic programs, and could be developed with either residential or commercial programs, changing the face of the neighborhoods it goes through. On the waterfront a new park would be created, surrounded by cultural buildings [ NCPC South Capitol Plan ]

Everything needs to conform to Krier’s layout, including economic architecture. It becomes decorated with monumental motifs and used as a densifier along side important civic monuments [Krier].

Leon Krier approaches Washington DC with a different idea in mind than those proposed in the Legacy Plan. He believes that Washington DC has the potential to become a modern day Venice, a living museum.

To do this, the city needs to embrace its monumental character and exaggerate it [Krier]
The sketches of Leon Krier of Washington DC are based on his notion that modern American town planning was a disaster, and that the US citizen yearned for something more meaningful. He saw the Federal City as the place of rebirth of urban life and culture. It was his modern Venice, a urban paradigm for the next generation. How is this achieved? Krier believed it was to densify and monumentalize the city with classical and identifiable forms. The city would become a monument in itself, a perfect setting for his romantic views.

The issue with his reasoning lies in the monumental form. The Capitol Building is recognizable because it stands out. Many of the institutional buildings can be picked out due to the ‘monumental’ motifs. The urban infill allows this to occur, otherwise important buildings would simply be apart of the fabric.

Krier’s Sketches
One of a series of drawings done by Krier to visualize the concept of his ‘monumental city’. Other additions included a large venetian style lake [a return to the L’Enfant Canal system] + other symbolic forms that would, in theory, place DC among the most influential cities in the world.
The current city is a city of monuments. While concentrated around the National Mall, the city can be understood as an infill map, with particular structures separated and pulled out from the background.

These structures act as identifiers in the city, giving it character. Consider the urban skyline: there isn’t one. All images that are readily distinguishable as Washington DC are of the Capitol, or the Washington Monument. The city is connected instead by a horizontal line, broken by the occasional monumental building.
Economic development occurs in two different ways, the strip + the node. In the case of Washington DC, the majority of development occurs in the Center City, diffusing outward. However, there is also a strong correlation of growth along the major avenues as well.

The retail centers have little to do with the actual prosperity of the neighborhoods in which they are located, mainly because they do not serve the residents. However, the public markets are mainly dependant on the local community to exist. Their size and regularity generally determines their influence. So while a place like the Eastern Market could have a city-wide effect, other smaller markets only impact the surrounding blocks.

The main area of planning is in the center of the city. This is since the majority of the population of the city [during the day] is concentrated here. It is an example of the overwhelming focus on only a small portion of the city. The public markets, however, are located closer to residential areas.
The following study looks at the dispersal of civic institutional architecture alongside retail and residential building, at different scales of study. Each scale allows us to understand how planning looks at a neighborhood. At the regional scale, plots of land are noted based on the type of development planners wish to encourage. So in the original grid of NoMa, where program are primarily mixed, the zoning shows this. Meanwhile, to the West and South, planning happens along commercial strips.

At a neighborhood scale, the relationship between specific building programs is studied. The different portions of the city developed differently. In the original grid, large economic structures have led to the creation of high rise housing blocks on the same block. Meanwhile in the other two neighborhoods, the strips show a diversity of program, with housing behind.

And in an even more detailed few, we see how each block begins to act as its own ecology, programs reacting to the population they serve.

Civic architecture is spaced throughout the studies. In the case of Glover Park, the area is primarily residential, so the civic structures are limited to mainly schools and churches. At NoMa, civic architecture is found in the form of larger entertainment program and government buildings. And in Buena Vista, an interesting civic placement occurs. For an area that lacks an economic vitality, it has plenty of churches, schools and community centers.

Sectionally, it shows the basic organization and relationships between program types.

These studies begin to understand the development of each neighborhood up until now, and how they compare to the ideal typical forms set forth by L’Enfant. It also allows me to discuss what a neighborhood needs to create an identity, and what it depends upon to be considered a health neighborhood structure and economy.
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEIGHBORHOOD TYPES

SITE A: GLOVER PARK
MEDIUM

SITE B: NOMA
DENSEST

SITE C: BUENA VISTA
EDGE

AIR:
METRO:
CAR:

A
B
C
SITE A: GLOVER PARK REGION

SITE B: NoMa/CHINATOWN REGION

SITE C: BUENA VISTA/ANACOSTIA REGION
SITE A: GLOVER PARK REGION

SITE B: NoMa/CHINATOWN REGION

SITE C: BUENA VISTA/ANACOSTIA REGION

SITE IDEAL: L'ENFANT PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT
AREA STUDY [NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE]

SITE A: GLOVER PARK NEIGHBORHOOD

SITE B: NoMa NEIGHBORHOOD

SITE C: BUENA VISTA/BARRY FARMS NEIGHBORHOOD

SITE IDEAL: GENERAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT
Site A: Glover Park Neighborhood

Site B: NoMA Neighborhood

Site C: Barry Farm/Buena Vista Neighborhood

Site Ideal: Section Through Development
“From the beginning, we quickly learned that when you’re talking about a public market, it’s like you’re showing people a many-faceted diamond, and everybody sees a different slice of it, a different reflection of what it could be. For some people, it will be a place to promote organic produce. For others, it’s a community gathering place. Others see it as a small business incubator, and others see it as a way to provide farmers with an outlet to allow them to be sustainable. The fact is it’s all of those things.”

Einar Tangen 2009
WHY A PUBLIC MARKET? [DIAGRAM]
Markets started out as appointed areas of trade and exchange. Considered ‘neutral’ territory, they became places of mutual benefit where members of different groups would gather. This place of trade developed into the agora of Greece and forum of Rome, where vendors would occupy rented shops or temporary wooden booths to sell their goods. As markets became formalized, they came to be concentrated on main roads, or in wards so not to compete. The bazaars of Islamic cultures became cities within themselves.

In the United States, the public market was the primary source of fresh food throughout the 19th Century. Since it was considered the duty of local governments to insure fresh food to its citizens, governments often took control of the enterprises, ranging from the creation of curbside stalls to large terminal market buildings. This typology survived privatization of the food industry and its industrialization, today often described as the savior of the small businessman in America as many still work to connect local producers with local consumers.

The market was located in the civic centers of Greek towns, the agora, where there was not only commerce but also administrative, legislative, social, judicial and religious activities. They were considered integral to the survival of the community, protecting the public from unfair dealers and competition.

As market places became more widespread, the local government’s role also expanded. They were expected to provide the land, protection from thieves and cheating vendors, and general maintenance to make the market attractive to buyers and sellers. This led to many areas building permanent market areas. Sometimes this was just a public square, other times a floor in a town hall or courthouse. Later, large shed buildings were often built to permanently house the trade function, hoping to eliminate the chaos the market creates. Governments on all scales attempted to use the market to give back to their communities.

They became icons of trade, one of the few areas were large civic structures housed economic functions.
Markets are the single building typology that can be considered both a civic institution and a retail center. They act as profit making businesses while in many cases acting as the hub of a community. The above diagram is showing the current grocery stores, public markets + farmer’s markets in the District.

Part of the success of city planning is seen on how the plan takes care of the people who live within its boundaries. Looking at the existing conditions, we can see what is lacking in areas, and where the issues have already been addressed successfully.

The concept of walkability states that to create a healthy community, there needs to be access to healthy food products within a 15 minute walking distance. When this does not occur, a food desert is created, and the needs of a neighborhood are not met by the urban setting.

The concept of being able to have easy access to healthy food option is a factor that is beginning to define class difference in the United States, as it is no longer seen as a luxury, but as a right. In this map of Washington DC, the SE portion of the city lacks this access. It does not have what it needs to function as a viable neighborhood structure after often being ignored by urban and economic planners alike.

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Each pavilion is zoned for a particular type of trade, with fish in one, vegetables in other, etc. It is near water and primary means of transportation in order to facilitate the buying and selling that needed to occur.

Inside, every stall was a particular size, repeated across the larger pavilion, usually with a public space for sales and a more private area for the preparation.

Les Halles was the primary marketplace of Paris. It was one of the first markets created from iron and glass in support of the French industries. The building was designed by Victor Baltard and Felix-Emmanuel Callet.

It is made up of a series of pavilions, with elaborate truss systems to minimize the need for columns, since markets desire unobstructed space. It also allowed for light and air to enter the large interior space.

It became a center of the city of Paris, attracting people of all backgrounds, until it was demolished.
The old open air markets were built by the guilds to sell their wares under the grand loggias. Then the new markets in Florence Italy were built to adjust the city to its new role as a national capital. The idea was that a series of markets would improve the infrastructure and commercial aspects of the city, and bring it to an international stage. And though it did not last long as a capital, the markets stayed. Created from iron and glass, they continue to serve the locals with food and other items.

**Sant’Ambrogio Mercato**
*Built: 1860’s*
The Rialto is an island in the heart of Venice on the edge of the Grand Canal. It is also the heart of the trade that occurs in the city. With items ranging from luxury goods, to fresh vegetables, to fish, all the way to the cheesy tourism goods one can buy today, it is all available along the seemingly haphazard pathways of the Rialto Market.

The identity of the island of Rialto ended up being a result of the marketplace located within its fabric. From the iconic bridge that created a gateway to the island, to the market houses and stalls that are integrated seamlessly with the buildings. It is all part of a intricately woven fabric that connects civic buildings, the church and the market functions together [Calabi].

Rialto Mercato
Built: 1514
The Eastern Market is an example of a locally supplied marketplace. All of the vendors must be from within a particular distance of DC. The encourages local food production, and also makes it so these small businesses can survive in an increasingly corporate world.

As well as being a local landmark, it has also become a destination for tourists to get a feel for the area. It also has a flea market on Saturdays that attracts local artisans.

The Eastern Market was originally built in the 1870’s as part of the Washington Market Company by Adolf Cluss. Placed in the Capitol Hill neighborhood, it has been a staple of the area ever since.

In 2007, it suffered a fire that gutted the entire interior. But as a sign of how much it means as a symbol of the community, they rallied behind it, procuring the money needed to rebuild it.

Today it acts not only as a monument and grocery store, but also as a community center. Half of the space is left open so that local groups can use it for activities like dance lessons, or exhibits.
The Historic Market at The Grove in Los Angeles is a farmer’s market. The stalls of local vendors are placed together in rows, which are partially covered and connected by alleyways [Eizenberg].

The role of the Historic Market is of an icon. It is an object floating in space, functioning mainly because of the nostalgia it produces. When it was to be torn down, residents rallied to keep it going. Koning Eizenberg were the architects charged with its rehabilitation, creating a whimsical space.

However, what I find to be an issue with this market, is the inward way it acts. Floating in a parking lot, it has little interaction with the surrounding community.

Historic Market at The Grove
Built: 1934
Goods are bought and sold in a variety of fashions, from permanent stores, to temporary tents in the square to the side. It is considered one of the largest food markets in the world.

Started as a part of the church, it has grown into its own entity. Borough Market is an example of an intergrated market space within the urban fabric. Located in London, the recently renovated space is barely noticeable from the main streets. It is located within a block, reaching out into the grid of the city with several entries.

It has made it fashionable to buy food fresh in London, and has been promoted in both TV and movies.

Borough Market
Built: 1851

http://www.gands.co.uk/
The market is approximately 78,000 square feet, with 800 spaces for merchants in 6ft stalls.

One of the most interesting parts of the market, was the cooperation between Reading Railroad and the market, with programs like the basket service, where suburban housewives could order their groceries to be filled and then sent by train, where they would be held at the local station.

Today, the market provides a larger variety of goods to the population of Philadelphia, even though the station no longer exists.

When the Reading Railroad decided to build a new terminal in the city of Philadelphia, its chosen site was on the location of an open air market in operation since 1653. In order to build, it bought the markets and placed them at ground level, with the depot on the level above.

Built in 1893, it has served the city ever since, flowing seamlessly with the urban fabric.
EVOLUTION OF *URBAN DESIGN*:
A Study in the CREATION OF A DISCIPLINE

“Architecture is also the street.”

– Louis Kahn 1953
INTRODUCTION

Urban design was far from a new idea. From the Roman grid towns in Europe, to Pierre L’Enfants’ original plan of Washington DC, there was an aspiration to design the urban centers that people lived and worked. This desire pushed architects, politicians and citizens to come up with different ways of how the space in which people lived could ease, control, or define their daily lives. But the actual term and profession did not become a part of society’s vocabulary until much later on, as a new void need to be filled in the creation of urban space.

Early attempts at urban design in my project were an experiment in failure. Without an understanding of what the profession was, it was difficult to answer how my project even began to affect the neighborhoods of Anacostia, Buena Vista and Barry Farms. As much as architecture students like myself wish to imagine our buildings rising from the ground to change the world, in reality it is far more complex. To many of us, it can seem cynical, but it is realistic to state that a single building is bound by the constraints of its site. That is why large scale urban planning can seem so attractive to architects. But form, as beautiful and functional it may be, cannot change the world single handedly. It merely provides a setting for change and progress, which need to be initiated simultaneously across multiple fields and disciplines. Urban Design attempts to oversee the chaos, by bridging the fields of architecture, landscape design and city planning.

But more often than not, the development we experience is the result of hundreds of individual forces, pushing and pulling against each other to create the space in which we live. It can be chaotic, haphazard and confusing, a labyrinth of winding streets and flashing signs creating a setting for the life of its inhabitants. Urban design today acts to attempt and control this chaos, pushing it in a direction that is profitable, socially conscious and functional. Yet it has taken over fifty years to reach this point, since long before the conception of the term ‘urban design’ by CIAM in 1945. But since the fall out of favor of the modernist agenda, the actual term has undergone debate and transformation, that even its professionals have difficulties defining it.

As a result, though its exact roles are questioned, few questioned the field as integral to the design process. In the following essay, I explore the origins of the study of urban design, from the McMillan Plan, to the CIAM meetings, to the resulting factions created out of the modern movement, in order to discover the role that it plays today. With this understanding, I can then look at my particular project site, in Anacostia, and begin to think about how an urban designer would approach the same issues I am trying to answer as an architect.

THE EARLY FORMS OF PLANNING

Early forms of urban planning came in the guise of reform. The Industrial Revolution created cities faster and denser than ever before, as populations flocked from the rural farms to the opportunities that these new centers provided. Before planning became an accepted term, attempts to control and study the city were know best as urban reform. Most efforts were acts of sanitary or health improvements in areas unable to sustain the new lives they were expected to support [Petersen 30]. From 1840 to 1890, almost all acts of planning meant cleaner and healthier living, since during this period both industry and retail often concentrated in the center of the city, with residential areas surrounding it. Later the birth of mass transit and then the automobile began to pull the industrial center outward along major rail and roadways, reorganizing the urban center yet again, yet its roots can be found in the ‘great city urbanism’ of the 1800s [Petersen 12].

Urban planning was the result of several converging lines that came together after 1890. According to Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., these ‘streams’ consisted of public street platting, sewerage, water supply, parks and civic architecture [Petersen 12]. Early examples of this form of planning include Central Park, by Frederick Law Olmsted in the 1850’s, and Baron Haussmann’s rebuilding of Paris from 1852-1970. While Central Park acted to improve the health and lives of the future citizens of Manhattan, Haussmann’s plan for Paris was for security and aesthetic reasons. Both were early attempts to use design to create a better environment, but were led by utopian politicians and architects. These were unique examples, however, as most growth came in small spurts, affecting only particular areas of the city. Architecture and building often acted independent of these reforms, controlled by the hands of private developers with little regulation [Petersen 20]. As a result, it was not until the late 1800s that city planners truly took the center stage with the popularity of the City Beautiful movement.

In 1893, a group of architects and landscapers were brought together for the purpose of creating a setting for the Chicago World’s Fair [Petersen 1]. It was here that a desire for a unified urban environment finally took shape. Functional, cohesive and beautiful, it became the model for future urban form. The Court of Honor, its large open space filled by a water basin and framed with classical white facades, became the ideal example of what good planning and beautiful architect could do [Petersen 55]. It represented a shift from the picturesque views of park planners, to something more urban. Something grander that would place the United States at the same level as the great capitals of Europe.
The first comprehensive plan in the United States was that of Washington DC. It would encompass its urban core to its periphery, showing the increased confidence of designers in their abilities, and solidifying the nation’s capital among its foreign compatriots [Petersen 77]. Through much political maneuvering, Senator James McMillan got his plans for the future of the national capital approved and implemented. With the hiring of Daniel H. Burnham of the World’s Fair fame to lead the planning, and including others like Charles F. McKim and Frederick Law Olmstead Jr. to add their own expertise, McMillan’s concept became a reality [Petersen 91]. One of the few fully realized examples of the city beautiful movement was created. It was seen as a ‘great civic awakening’ as the value of beauty gained increasing weight in the public eye [Petersen 124]. And though the actual fulfillment of the original plan can be questioned, or the actual result that the beautification of the city had of its citizens wondered, what cannot be argued is the influence that the plan had of the profession of city planning. Planning became all about comprehensive planning of the city, with Washington DC setting the level of civic attainment desired.

But in most scenarios, city planning was more about dealing with the already built. Urban centers were rarely tabula rasas, waiting for the hand of the planner to give them life. Cities were the result of growth over time. As Olmstead Jr. stated in his introduction to the first meeting of the National Conference on City Planning, “City planning is the attempt to exert a well-considered control on behalf of the people of a city over the development of their physical environment as a whole” [Petersen 2]. The planning movement overcame America, taking form in all shapes and sizes. Some were applications of the City Beautiful and its comprehensive plans. Other reacted against it, promoting instead the city practical. In the end, planning became an integral part of every urban center’s design and future development.

But as city planning became accepted as a profession, it started to shift away from it routes in physical design. Instead, planners began to focus primarily on the scientific approach to the city, favoring economic and political data over design. Their solutions chose to address issues like land subdivision and zoning, thoroughfares and rapid transit, public buildings and parks, and industrial and residential decentralization. Yet they approached these issues through survey techniques and legislation, and not the creative and artistic ways of planning’s founders. And though their way of looking at the city became efficient and practical, it created a disconnect between planners and architects who proceeded to design. This void needed to be filled in order for cities to become collaborative pieces of design, but architects, landscapers and planners did not have the ability to cross and connect these disparate disciplines.

THE CONCEPTION OF A DISCIPLINE

The actual moment of conception of the field of urban design is a contested topic of discussion. It is instead the result of several forces converging around the same time, creating from the chaos a discipline to be studied and argued. One of the major forces within this discussion is CIAM. The International Congress of Modern Architecture first met in 1928, and through these meetings, methods and approaches to urban design and architecture were debated and formulated [Mumford 2]. And though the roots of urban design was appearing in several areas during this period, few were as well know or contested as the ideas brought forth during the reign of CIAM.

The early plans of CIAM were rooted largely in the ideals of the Garden City, with the decentralization of the city became a thing of fascination with most of the designers. How can people live in healthy, productive environments, while still having the access and benefits that city living provides? Early projects were experiments with mass housing. This quickly turned into a comprehensive view of the city as a whole. Interestingly, the goals of early designs by CIAM were politically charged, based on the socialist notion of improving the living conditions of the majority of the population. The idea was to promote these ideas to socialist countries looking to reinvent their urban centers. This would be the basis of judging good design in the early years of the conference. But these plans went beyond the design of housing structures. They also attempted to increase economic efficiency with transportation improvements, while attempting to protect natural environment which was to be set aside for recreation [Mumford 3]. With the meeting of the third CIAM, in 1930, the idea of urbanism became the forefront of discussion among the designers, as they shifted their focus to one of CIAM’s more intriguing legacies: the rational site plan and mass housing [Mumford 4].

It was around this time that a member of CIAM began to tackle the question of urban design through proposals that can be best described as heavy handed. Le Corbusier’s Plan Voisin in 1925 and his later work, La Ville Radieuse in 1935, are what most recognize best from the CIAM period. He believed that in order to save the city, it had to be torn down and started anew. The tower in the park, while an intriguing answer to the urban problem created by tenement cities, was often criticized as being insensitive and inhuman [Hall 222]. But Le Corbusier continued to argue the merits of his design, and the purge of the historical city. These infamous plans often overshadowed the other lesser known position within the CIAM conferences. The urbanism
that today’s designers associate with the conference is often that of Le Corbusier, but the actual discussions of the members went far beyond these artistic yet unrealistic plans.

As the meetings continued, the political stance of earlier CIAM meetings faded with the exiling of several members during and leading up to the war [Mumford 20]. Their design shifted from a political philosophy, to something based more on the betterment of the city as an object and piece of infrastructure. CIAM’s form of urbanism became about combining abstract form and new construction to create beneficial urban structures. The designers did this by analyzing the existing social aspects of the city, its topography and climate, and preparing their solutions under their four functions of design. These functions were dwelling, work, transportation and recreation [Mumford 7]. The city became a ‘rational body’, as the members of CIAM used design to regain control over an increasingly chaotic environment [Mumford 14]. Later designs took a looser approach to the rational body mentality, as the architects realized that such a strict attitude made actually construction and existence impossible. But CIAM will be forever remembered for its modern approach to the conception of the city.

Where CIAM proved truly beneficial in the growth of the discipline, was the fact that for the first time, the gap between planning and architect was recognized and discussed. The need for a profession that would bridge the gap between architecture, landscape design and city planning became apparent. With the disbandment of CIAM, this realization left the close knit meetings with the former members, and proceeded to be littered around the world in practice and educational classrooms.

DEFINING A DISCIPLINE

The term ‘Urban Design’ was first used by Josep Lluis Sert at a lecture in 1953 [Mumford 102]. After coming to Harvard after the disbandment of CIAM, Sert reinvented the GSD curriculum. It would later become the basis for future urban design educational programs for many other schools in the United States [Mumford 102]. What made Sert different from many of his contemporaries was his belief that the issues of the city to be correctable. He wanted to synthesize the collaborative curriculum already in place between planners, architects and landscape designers, with his concept of the ‘heart of the city’ [Mumford 103]. He saw the core as only one portion of CIAM’s urban approach, which focused on the four main functions stated above. Instead of completely redoing the entire city, he found value in the civic core where face to face interaction occurred [Mumford 103]. The scale of man was lost in contemporary cities, and Sert believed in using his role as dean and chair of the architecture school to bring the human scale back into urban design. Along with the importance of the pedestrian environment, was the emphasis on natural environment [Mumford 117]. The GSD helped to popularize the idea of urban design in the United States, and bring it to the forefront of debate and practice, even if everyone did not agreed with modernist approach of Sert and the GSD. Now accepted as a form of study, urban design programs from many other schools of thought have since perforated into mainstream thought as viable alternatives.

In Colin Rowe’s Collage City, he begins to understand the makeup of the urban center as a series of ‘disparate objects held together by various means’ [Rowe 140]. They may be physical, or optical, or even psychological, but they are existing [Rowe 140]. He believed that the only way to deal with the problems of the city was to do so in the present day, and that using a collage approach is the only solution [Rowe 140]. No matter their style or history, just as people assemble themselves based on their own interpretations of traditional values, the city will proceed to organize and accommodate itself. However this has its limits, for no city can be completely hospitable – it is just too ideal [Rowe 105]. Through the acceptance of collage as an organizing factor in urban design, the city will naturally assert itself to create something both functional and beautiful. But this nonchalant look at the city comes across as theoretical, not something that many would put into practice.

So what does an urban designer actually do? According to the theory put forth by Denise Scott Brown and the UPenn school of thought, urban design should not be seen as a geographic boundary, but as an approach to an issue. The education provided should go beyond what was proposed by Sert and the GSD, becoming interdisciplinary beyond the design fields. A good urban designer needed to also have a background in economics, law, and other disciplines that many of the other schools of thought would deem unnecessary [Scott Brown]. These followers of modern urbanism believed that urban design should create order in an increasingly chaotic environment, making Denise Scott Brown’s approach unique. Instead, she argues, urban design becomes the “subtle organization of complexity” [Scott Brown]. It is the connector. The actual essence of urban design is about the relationships between objects, the in-between spaces that link our world together [Scott Brown]. The goal of the urban designer to create and better these spaces. But it is not an immediate solution. Urban design requires patience, as success is measured over long spans of time, with growth occurring incrementally. Good urban design learns from the existing environment and patterns of growth, then embraces and exploits it to create an identity. Scott Brown promoted an educational structure that
involved hands on problem solving in groups, and real life experience. But not all theories popular today see the city as a vibrant center of activity, the place of interactions and connection. The Industrial Revolution restarted the worlds love affair with the urban environment, when the city became the centers of economic gain, political debate, and cultural awakening [Le Febvre]. And just as industry led to the reorganization of the city both physically and mentally, it also led to its reinvention. The city began to infiltrate into the countryside through fashion, etc. The actual physical grouping of buildings was simply the core of a large complex being, constantly in state of change or erosion as new uses take precedence [Le Febvre]. Today that core is less important than it once was. Just like how urban influence has filtered itself across the landscape, so has the basis of power and control. As a result, a new city is forming. The third stage of the city has arrived, when designers and residents attempt to reinvent the urban reality. They push to keep centrality. To hold on to a city that has become a monument to what it once was, a relic [Le Febvre]. But this nostalgia is overriding the changes occurring, as design attempt to maintain a human scale that no longer exists in the urban environment.

The official conception of the discipline has done little to stem the debates of the true purpose of urban design. It seems to be constantly redefined and edited in order to make it continue to be relevant to today’s urban environment. Some take on a nostalgic approach to the city, while others bemoan our attempts hold on to something that is gone. In the end, these different ways of understanding and approaching urban design lead to original answers to the urban question: what is a city? In a way it is an experiment in understanding and approaching urban design lead to original answers to the urban reality. They push to keep centrality. To hold on to a city that has become a monument to what it once was, a relic [Le Febvre]. But this nostalgia is overriding the changes occurring, as design attempt to maintain a human scale that no longer exists in the urban environment.

The CONTEMPORARY URBAN DESIGNER

So where would we find an urban designer in practice today? The generally accepted role is that of a staff member in a government municipality, or as a consultant. They are the reviewers of project proposals for community and special district planning [like university campuses]. Since most urban designers are just that, designers, they can think in three dimensions. This allows for many of them to focus their work on land-use planning. This is because cities are created from more than just buildings. The job of the urban designer is to think what can and will happen in all spaces of the urban environment. To do this, they take into account political, economic and social points of view, believing that through these lenses they can proceed to create the best solutions. And the best educator is that of experience, since one of the most important traits of an urban designer is the ability to converse and understand people from all backgrounds and fields. Experience makes it easier to get the thoughts of many and conglomerate them into a cohesive design strategy.

URBAN DESIGN’S ROLE IN ANACOSTIA

The question remains, why was it so important to me to gather such knowledge about this profession for my thesis project? What does urban design have to do with a market building in the southeast portion of Washington DC? In the case of Anacostia, everything. On the brink of redevelopment, Anacostia faces the same fate that many other neighborhoods in the district have. Reinvention of a historically prominent and ethnically rich neighborhood threaten to remove the very spirit and character that connect its current residents as a community.

Previous attempts to ‘better’ local neighborhoods resulted in the complete erasing of the existing population. Chinatown became lost under a series of condo towers and convention centers, while Adams Morgan is a shadow of its original self as it caters to the self-titled hip and wealthy. It is the hope of this project that viewing a smaller intervention, in the form of both a civic and an economical market space, within a larger context will push me as a designer to ascertain the effects that each design move I make will have on the community. More importantly, I will also see how the urban design decisions I make will affect my smaller building site, as well as the existing culture and population. Under the modernist approach, the neighborhood of Anacostia would be happily razed in order to make way for a rational grid of housing. Under the modernist theory, there would be no need for an economic intervention, as the functions are separately zoned. However Sert’s approach would most likely call for the introduction of a civic center, which would become the space of interaction among residents. Transportation has already undergone a separation of scale, as the parkway and freeway remove fast moving vehicles from the slower, pedestrian streets. But the introduction of another Pruitt-Igoe would act to separate this area further from the rest of the city.

Looking at the existing form of growth, the neighborhood has developed in more or less a main strip on MLK Jr. Street, which proceeds to fade into primarily residential buildings. Following the concepts of Denise Scott Brown, my role as designer is to create and emphasize the linking space. The area of my focus is an ‘in-between space’ itself, linking historical Anacostia and the metro entrance. The overall urban approach is to make it easier and more desirable for people to move and exist between the spaces. Starting at the metro station, I propose to create a public market building. This civic and
economic monument would act as both a supporting infrastructural piece, and an attracting monument. It would also act as a piece of the ‘necklace’ of civic nodes that I propose down the length of MLK. Separated from the rest of the context by a similar language of both scale and setback, these civic centers along the main street would act to continue to pull people further, and give pedestrians places of rest. The idea of the node is to exploit the attraction of the monument that is currently used throughout DC: a building in an open square, marked by a monumental marker is something important. Existing at the intersection with historical Anacostia, then again at the intersection between Pleasant St, and MLK, the introduction of public program would become a connecting element. The next would be the metro/market itself. Between these ‘squares’, retail infill could be promoting through a program which includes benefits for builders and renters. This could lead to gentrification, but by including the neighborhood residents in the process, they could begin to outline what kind of store they believe could do well in the existing neighborhood, and what they needed.

As an urban designer, it is important to design the in-between space as well, so the understanding of the different scales in the street between the nodes of civic architecture is integral. The main scales here, are those of the car, bus and person. By making walking attractive, because it is a main form of transport here, the scale of the car is often ignored. However, with the introduction of back parking and entrances behind most shops, drivers would have a different experience catered to them.

This is just a beginning, looking at the future of this area through the amateur eyes of an architectural designer. To truly come up with a plan that benefits this area, an urban designer needs to work cooperatively with people in the fields of planning, architecture and landscape design, and also with the residents, vendors and political figures. Through this team effort, this neighborhood might not fall victim to the ravages of private developers. Because when it comes to neighborhood development in lower income areas, requiring special housing just isn’t enough to keeping an area bother viable and attractive. Our lives do not end the second we walk outside, so neither should our attempts to hold to the existing neighborhood character.
"More than any other city... more than any other region, the Nation’s Capital should represent the finest in living environment which America can plan and build. “

John F Kennedy 1961
Most of the industry of the area was created to serve the local population.

Anacostia is located on the Southeast side of the District. Historically isolated from the central city, first by the river, then by the construction of a train route and the parkways, it has developed of its own accord. The population is primarily black, and though the bridging of the river has connected it to the urban center, it is still considered an underdeveloped region.

It is now on the brink of renewal, the focus of several urban plans that will connect this area to the rest of the city. But will it lose the carefully crafted identity it fought for? Current plans propose condos and office buildings, but I feel this area can be economically viable and yet still maintain its own identity.
I am proposing a mixed use development, with a public marketplace, an open community space, community rooms, and a small gallery to exhibit local work. It will be considered a piece on the main passage through Anacostia, that will encourage the development of the area’s personal identity, while giving them a program that they need- the supplier of fresh food.

A market can also act to bring people to the area, which can help encourage future growth.

The images on this page are the typical proposals that are currently being supported for the area. Condos and apartments are placed around the metro station. But how does this aid the neighborhood? What can it add to the community?

All proposed plans do little to encourage people to experience the area, or wander around. It seems like another area about to become gentrified.

ZONING DIAGRAMS [ DESIGNATED ZONES IN ALONG MAIN ROADWAY ]

MAIN ROADWAY THRU ANACOSTIA [ FROM METRO TO FAR END OF HISTORIC DOWNTOWN ]
The turquoise represents space currently being used for commercial purposes. Grey shows the residential areas around the main street. My project would focus on developing the main street, densifying it with small businesses.

Meanwhile, the civic spaces and buildings are shown as black. Green represents parkland.

My project would proceed to create civic nodes along the main strip in order to create places of importance and rest, similar to the design of the rest of the city.
The actual market project is created by overlaying two bar buildings over each other. Reacting to the surrounding buildings and geometries, the bars become ‘L’ shaped. The idea is that they will proceed to vitalize the whole site. The block itself is goes from the densest and most structured outdoor space on the main street, then slowly fades to a more suburban approach. This is mimicking the local development on a smaller scale. The interior space, though looking long and fluid on the outside, it actually broken up into smaller market areas, each with a different experience. This is because the market serves different uses to each user, whether it be a quick errand, or a tourist trip. In the place where MLK Jr. hits the site initially, is a facade that plays with the formal DC language of civic buildings. The idea is that it comes off as an important space, but in reality the facade is meant to be passed through or moved beyond.

Most importantly, this project depends on the area around it for its shape and future. But at the same time, it will act as an attractor for new people, and an influence on future development.
The **APPENDIX**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

I plan on using this book to find comparative examples of design from the urban scale, to individual buildings to strengthen my thesis.


*A detailed look at more recent planning initiatives in the city.*


*The study of the future of the city, as a result of past actions.*


*Washington from the view of an architect who defined an American style, predominating in Washington and other cities.*


*A more detailed insight into the makeup and politics of Washington DC, and the monumental rhetoric in the city.*


*A general historical background of Washington DC, and the City Beautiful movement.*


*A critique on the planning of DC, which I plan on using to better understand the site from an architect’s perspective.*


*More detailed information on the ‘Legacy Plan’.*