

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City



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Testimony before the Commission of Fine Arts on behalf of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City Regarding the Design of the Proposed Eisenhower Memorial

Founded 1923

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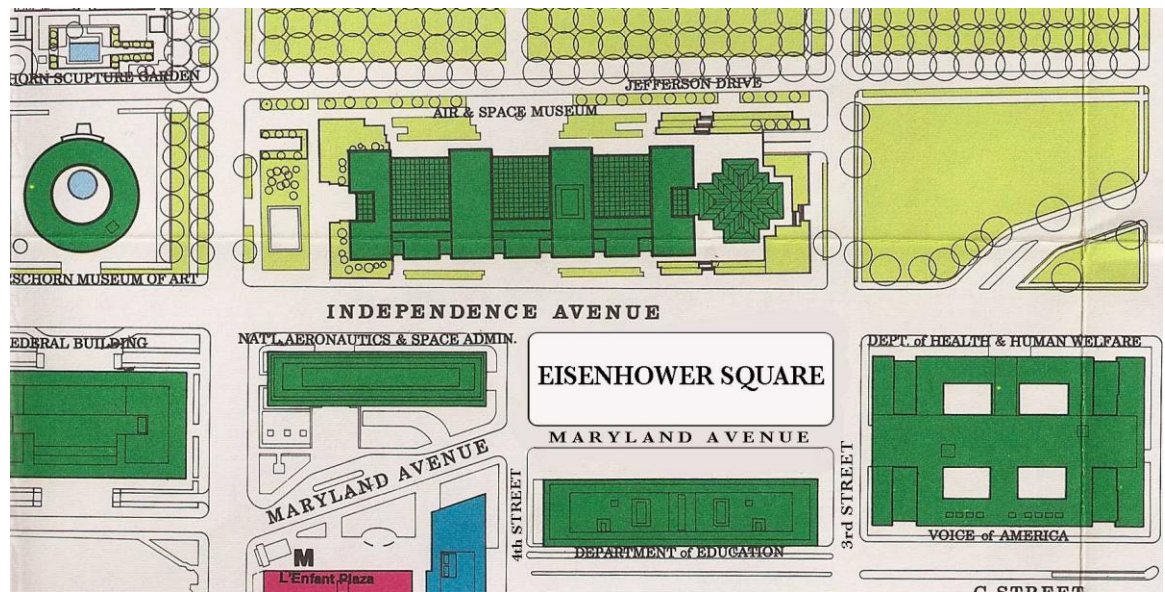
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February 3, 2011

Don Hawkins

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the preferred alternative conceptual design of the Eisenhower Memorial presentation by Frank Gehry. I would like to call your attention to just one important aspect of the design as presented: its extent. The question, whether there shouldn't be a street space between the memorial site and the LBJ building to its south, was raised during the 106 process in 2006. I submitted the attached illustration, Alternative B+, at that time on behalf of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City.

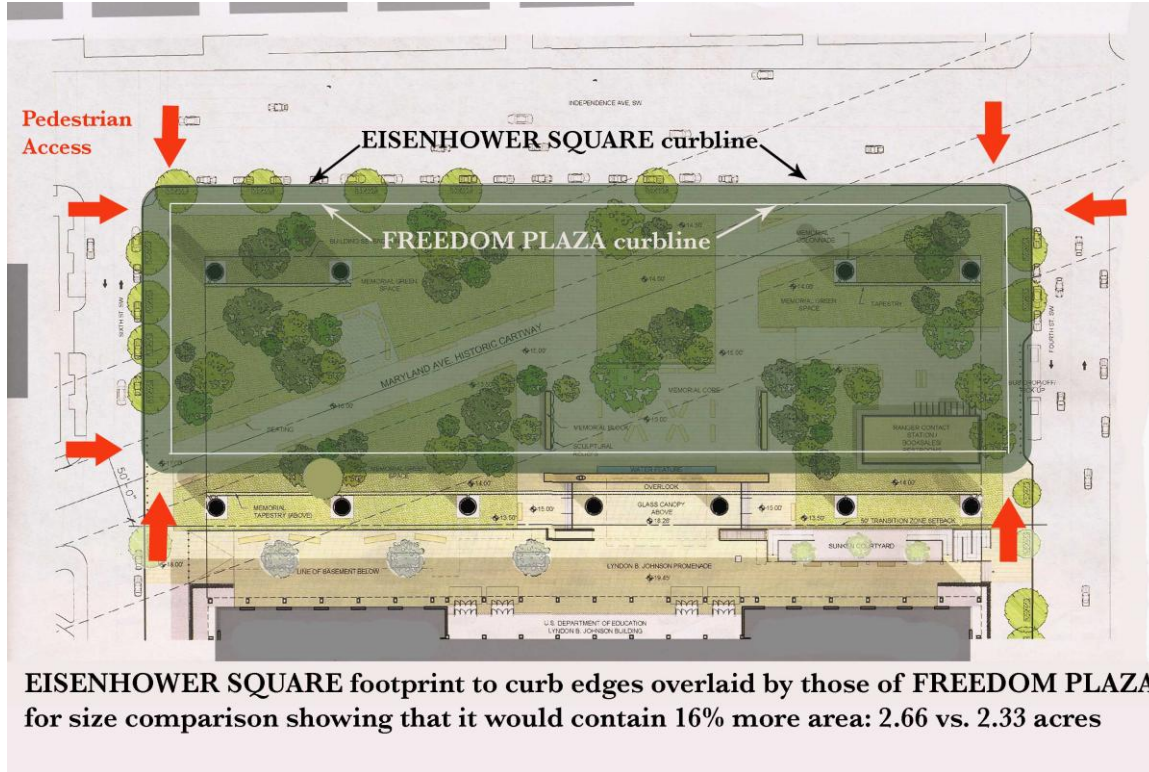


A PROPOSAL FOR THE CONFIGURATION OF MARYLAND AVENUE AROUND THE SITE OF THE EISENHOWER MEMORIAL TO CREATE EISENHOWER SQUARE

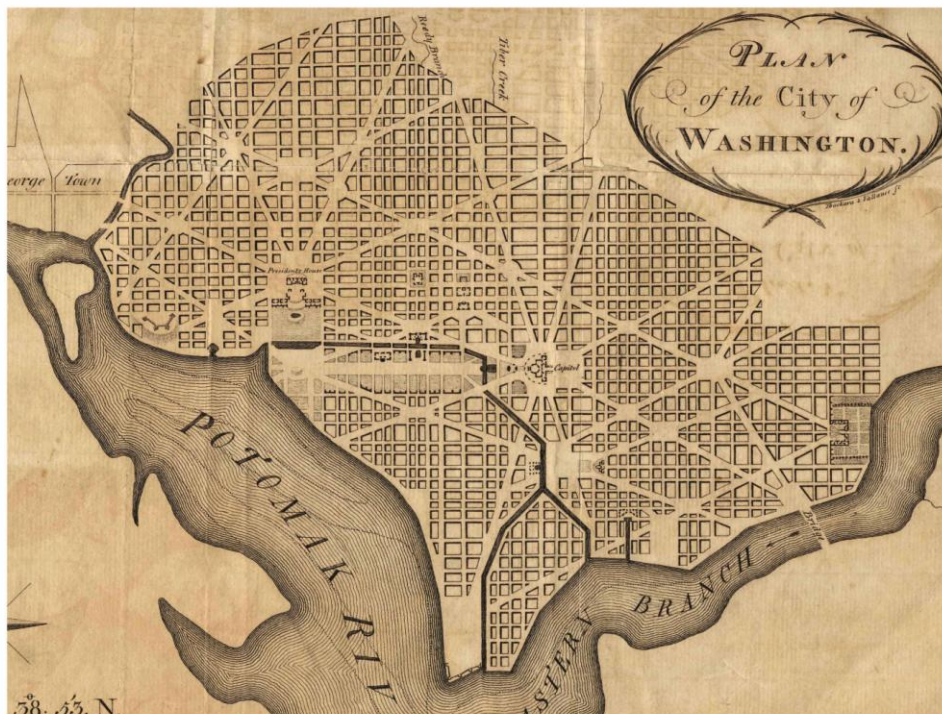
Introduced into the Section 106 process by the Committee of 100 on the Federal City in June, 2006

All three of the alternatives presented appear to be located in the front yard of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Building. Although the Memorial's southern line of columns separates it from the building to a substantial height, on the ground there is no clear separation: the Memorial appears to extend almost to the Building's face. The

functional and symbolic confusion this is bound to cause between the intentions and meanings of these two very different memorials to two radically different men, should not be allowed to diminish the effect of either of them. The Eisenhower Memorial's southern edge should be clearly seen and sensed by visitors. The proposed ambiguous open space between the Building façade and the Memorial's columns could be neutralized by creating a pedestrian street along it from 4th to 6th Streets. By this simple expedient, clear definition of the territory of the Memorial and that of the Building would be established, with a space as neutral as possible between them. Although existing peripheral elements of the LBJ Building project into the proposed street space, none of them need impair its function as a visual through-way.



At the same time, and just as importantly, the clarity of form that the memorial square would gain by having streets on all four sides would bring it into conformity with the consistent urban pattern established by L'Enfant and Ellicott. In the laying out of his design, L'Enfant established the lines of the avenues first, and then fit a discontinuous and irregular grid of streets in the spaces among them. The dominance of the avenues is of primary importance throughout the city plan. This is achieved, in part, by carrying the lines of the avenues *around all sides of reservations that lay across their alignment*. Failing to acknowledge this inflexible pattern by stopping Maryland Avenue, or bending it into 6th Streets as proposed in the preferred alternative, would appear as a unique error in the design of the 21st century plan of the city. The relative graphic strength resulting from having the streets appear to surround the memorial square is apparent in the illustration of Alternative B+, which is consistent with L'Enfant and Ellicott's standard.



On the plan of Washington adapted by L'Enfant and Andrew and Benjamin Ellicott for engraving and publication, there were fewer awkward intersections of avenues with multiple streets, due to slight realignments of some avenues and a greater regularity in the spacing of the streets. Further minor changes by the early surveyors reduced them even more.

