



Frederic A. Delano, first C100 Chair, 1923. Treasury Dept. photo

The Committee of 100
on the Federal City



THE COMMITTEE OF 100 ON THE FEDERAL CITY

Its History and Its Service to the Nation's Capital

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Front cover: McMillan Plan, National Capital Planning Commission image

The long history of planning for Washington, D.C. and its environs reflects many examples of excellence fully consistent with the visionary origins of the federal city. At times, however, the planning for and orderly development of the city have suffered greatly from lamentable short-sightedness and exploitation.

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City was founded in 1923 to sustain the fundamental values – derived from the tradition of the L’Enfant Plan and the McMillan Commission – that give the Nation’s Capital city so much of its distinction, grace, and beauty. In a statement of purpose approved by the Committee’s Board of Trustees in 1970, the Committee’s work was defined as serving in “the field of civic conscience and guardianship which falls in the void between parochial self-interest and national politics.” The Committee’s broad range of interests includes parks and conservation, historic preservation, urban design and architecture, land use regulation, environmental protection, and transportation.

For a century, the Committee has attracted architects, planners, landscape architects, lawyers, conservationists, historians, and concerned citizens from diverse backgrounds. It works with national, regional, and local organizations that share its mission of safeguarding the heritage of Washington, D.C. The Committee is the city’s oldest citizens’ forum dedicated to long-range planning, and one of the most effective organizations of its kind.

The Committee began in an age that sought to revive and extend the original planning ideals for Washington, D.C. Influenced by the “City Beautiful” movement, by resurgent architectural classicism, by the conservationist ethic, and by various urban reform or “clean up” movements inspired by the early 20th-century “muckrakers,” planners sought to make the nation’s capital the living embodiment of their ideals.

As the federal city approached its centennial in 1901, planners looked increasingly to Washington to set a high standard for the rest of the nation. The creation in 1901 of the Senate Park Commission – better known as the McMillan Commission – led to the articulation of a sweeping initiative for extending the L’Enfant Plan and for establishing strong standards for parks, monuments, public buildings, and scenic vistas far beyond the monumental core of Washington, D.C.

In the spirit of idealism ushered in during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, the recommendations of the McMillan Commission inspired successive reforms: the establishment of the Commission of Fine Arts in 1910, the Height of Buildings Act (“Height Act”) that was passed the same year, and the Washington Zoning Ordinance of 1920. These eventful years comprised the background to the establishment of the Committee of 100.

Another essential aspect of the Committee’s founding was the widespread fear among concerned citizens in the 1920s that the achievements of the preceding quarter century might prove to be fragile or insubstantial without continued oversight and advocacy. The distraction of World War I, followed by the laissez-faire of the early 1920s and the escapist “back to normalcy” spirit, led a number of activist planners to undertake initiatives to preserve the momentum of planning in the nation’s capital.

When Frederic A. Delano was asked in 1923 by American Civic Association President Dr. J. Horace McFarland to form a Committee of 100 on the Federal City within that group, he accepted because, as he put it, “we all realized that comprehensive planning would be more constructive than sporadic resistance to a constant succession of proposals unrelated to a general plan.”

The American Civic Association, with 75 chapters throughout the United States, was a strong supporter of planning for the capital and supported legislation in Congress to establish a permanent planning commission for Washington. The influence of the American Civic Association gave the Committee of 100 a level of national support that no other city could claim.

Delano and his fellow members of the American Civic Association consciously sought to uphold the legacy of the McMillan Commission, which they feared was in jeopardy. Reminiscing in 1938, Delano recalled that he was “asked to undertake a revival of the recommendations of the 1901 commission, and I began my work by inviting 100 citizens to join me.”

EARLY YEARS: 1920s THROUGH 1940s

When the Committee of 100 was convened in 1923, it was divided into ten subcommittees of ten persons each. These were asked to report back to the entire Committee in 1924. The subcommittees addressed: architecture; forest and park preserves; school sites; playgrounds; housing and reservations for housing; zoning; streets, highways, and transit; extension of metropolitan Washington beyond the District lines; waterfront developments; and industrial development and limitations.

Responding to the recommendations of these subject matter groups, the Committee released its first report in January 1924. Among other proposals, the report recommended a major extension of Washington’s parks, forests, and open space under the guidance of an overall planning agency that would focus on park planning as a principal responsibility.

This recommendation responded to years of alarms raised by planning-conscious residents, joined by the business community, that open space and scenic countryside in and around the city were being lost to unplanned or ill-planned development. Before the creation of the Committee of 100, the Washington Board of Trade had drafted a bill to create a body with authority to acquire land for parks in the District, Virginia, and Maryland, with the advice of the Commission of Fine Arts. The Committee of 100’s report lent decisive support to this legislative initiative, and the Ball-Gibson Act creating the National Capital Park Commission (NCPC) was signed into law on June 6, 1924.

In addition to advocating for more parks and open space, the Committee of 100 urged that broad planning powers be vested in a single agency. Its advocacy played a key role in passage of the Capper-Gibson Act on April 1, 1926. This act renamed the two-year-old NCPC as the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC) and expanded its powers to include preparing, developing, and maintaining a comprehensive plan for the Washington and its

environs. The plan was intended to embrace transportation, subdivisions, public housing sites, sanitation, zoning, commerce and industry, and other elements of city and regional planning.

Frederic A. Delano, who chaired the Committee of 100 from 1923 to 1944, served concurrently as chair of the NCPPC through most of its formative years. He directed pioneering efforts aimed at the creation of comprehensive planning for the federal city, notably a plan for parks, parkways, and recreation facilities for the Washington area that was submitted to Congress in 1928. This plan gave impetus to passage of the Capper-Cramton Act of May 29, 1930, which authorized funds for parkland acquisition in Washington, extensions of parkland along Rock Creek and the Anacostia River into suburban Maryland; and land on both sides on the Potomac River for what became the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

During its early decades, the Committee of 100 maintained a strong liaison with the NCPPC – a liaison that went far beyond the propitious circumstance of Frederic A. Delano’s chairing both organizations – and with other civic organizations. Horace W. Peaslee, vice-chairman of the Committee of 100 from 1923 until his death in 1959, created the Architect’s Advisory Council, a group of architects who provided free design review to individuals seeking building permits, and Allied Architects, a group responsible for helping to select architects for the design of federal buildings. John Ihlder, chair of the Committee’s subcommittee on housing, urged the protection of low-density residential areas throughout the city and worked to ameliorate poor housing conditions.

The years of the Depression and the New Deal brought wins and losses for the L’Enfant-Millan vision. On the plus side, passage of the Shipstead-Luce Act of 1930 provided for review by the Commission of Fine Arts of new construction within and adjacent to the monumental core of Washington, Rock Creek Park, Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway and other significant sites and vistas of the L’Enfant Plan. The grand architectural designs of the “City Beautiful” movement continued with construction of the Supreme Court building, the Federal Triangle complex, the National Gallery of Art, and the Jefferson Memorial.

Moreover, a significant amount of public housing was constructed, including the landmarked Langston Terrace Dwellings, the first federally funded public housing complex in the city, designed and landscaped by African-American architects Hilyard Robinson, Paul Revere Williams and David Williston.

The New Deal upheavals, however, inevitably stressed the urban fabric. A vast influx of federal workers precipitated severe housing shortages in Washington, along with a new scourge, traffic congestion. The emergency of the Depression, and the experimental nature of New Deal programs created to alleviate the crisis, led to the creation of new, often short-lived, federal agencies. The urgent need for office space prompted shortcuts around the comprehensive planning efforts of the NCPPC.

This situation increased dramatically in the 1940s, when World War II preempted almost every long-term planning provision for the federal city. In 1941, for example, the War Department pushed through its plans for the construction of the Pentagon over the objections of both the Fine Arts Commission and the NCPPC. Interior Secretary Harold Ickes warned against

“further encroachment upon the parks and playgrounds of the National Capital,” and commented sourly upon the “grab bag method of putting a road or a building on any bit of vacant land that can be discovered.” The Mall was home to fourteen temporary buildings, which were constructed in 1942 and remained through the mid-1960s. The National Museum of American History, National Gallery of Art, and National Air and Space Museum were formerly the sites of temporary government offices.

POST-WAR YEARS: 1940s THROUGH 1960s

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the city’s growth remained explosive.¹ The population peaked in 1950 with 802,178 residents before beginning a decades-long decline. The postwar period saw a major shift in the values that drove public-sector planning, posing a direct challenge to much of the L’Enfant-McMillan vision.

The Committee of 100 began as a champion of the McMillan Commission’s legacy – the classicist “City Beautiful” movement. It had been an advocate and initiator of federal planning programs created to further the work of McMillan-style planning. Ironically, after the war, the Committee was forced into an adversarial position against some of the very planning agencies it helped create.

A shift had occurred in intellectual and cultural values. In the post-World War II period, the “City Beautiful” version of civic order was supplanted by radical modernism and the culture of the automobile. In the formative years that produced the Committee of 100, planning principles centered on expanded parkland, low-density public housing, and the grand avenues and vistas of the L’Enfant Plan.

After World War II, planning energy was redirected into massive urban renewal projects as a cure for “blight,” and into freeway projects that carved up neighborhoods and displaced residents, usually minorities. Urban freeways and urban renewal were reform efforts aimed at addressing real problems, but seldom have well-intentioned ideas so completely missed the mark.

Under the stimulus of the District of Columbia Redevelopment Act of 1945 and the National Housing Act of 1949, large-scale programs of urban renewal were planned for Washington, particularly in the southwest quadrant. In 1950, the NCPPC (renamed the National Capital Planning Commission, or NCPC, in 1952) proposed a few comprehensive plans centered on sweeping urban renewal projects and three highways around the circumference of Washington. There were dissenting voices: planner Elbert Peets urged low-density rehabilitation and David Finley, chair of the Commission of Fine Arts, offered to provide guidance in preserving L’Enfant Plan elements. Despite their efforts, calls for modernity prevailed.

In 1954, the Supreme Court gave a green light to unfettered urban renewal with its decision in *Berman v. Parker*, 348 U.S. 26 (1954). In that landmark case, which blessed urban

¹ The Committee of 100 also entered a new era after World War II when its long-serving founding chair, Frederic A. Delano, stepped down in 1944. He was succeeded by Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts.

renewal efforts nationwide, the Court held that a legislative body could authorize taking large tracts of private property as part of a master plan to relieve blight, even if a particular property was not itself blighted.

Thus empowered, the District's newly-created Redevelopment Land Agency began implementing NCPC's urban renewal plan. Over the next decade, 23,000 residents were displaced, almost all of them African American, along with 6,000 businesses,² and a modern new neighborhood arose in its place.³

Urban freeways, the other significant planning initiative of the era, proved more yielding to concerted citizen opposition. In 1949, the elevated Whitehurst Freeway was constructed in an attempt to siphon traffic away from congested streets in Georgetown. At first, partisans of freeway construction could argue plausibly that such bypass roads were compatible with neighborhood conservation. All too rapidly, however, transportation policy in the 1950s and 1960s moved from bypassing neighborhoods to running through them. The Committee of 100 played a key role in defeating subsequent proposed highways.

Under the leadership of Rear Admiral Neill Phillips, and Trustees Peter S. Craig and Robert Kennan, the Committee played a prominent role in challenging previously accepted freeway plans for the District that would create high-speed transit corridors through residential neighborhoods. The presidentially appointed members of the NCPC, many of whom had doubts about earlier freeway plans, encouraged testimony by the Committee and were guided by it.

The "Washington Freeway Battle" began with a proposal by District and Maryland highway planners to extend U.S. 240 (a precursor to I-270) down Rock Creek Park to downtown Washington. The Committee joined the National Park Service, NCPC and numerous national and local organizations in strongly opposing this plan. Next, planners proposed a U.S. 240 extension down Wisconsin Avenue to Tenley Circle, then splitting with one leg through Melvin C. Hazen Park and Rock Creek Park and a second leg running down Glover-Archbold Park to the

² The Court described the "blight" in graphic terms:

Surveys revealed that in Area B, major repairs, only 17.3% were satisfactory; 57.8% of the dwellings had outside toilets, 60.3% had no baths, 29.3% lacked electricity, 82.2% had no wash basins or laundry tubs, 83.8% lacked central heating. In the judgment of the District's Director of Health it was necessary to redevelop Area B in the interests of public health. The population of Area B amounted to 5,012 persons, of whom 97.5% were Negroes.

348 U.S. at 30.

³ A half-century later, architectural historian Richard Longstreth, a Committee of 100 member, wrote in praise of the architecture of the new Southwest, while acknowledging:

Southwest never got the recognition it deserved. Well before the last units were completed, the whole endeavor came under fire for the wholesale clearance it had incurred, dislocating thousands of low-income, mostly black, residents in the process. By the late 1960s, the Southwest became more an example of social engineering run amok than a poster child for urban regeneration.

The Southwest Urban Renewal Area in Washington, D.C., Docomomo US (May 13, 2013), <[The Southwest Urban Renewal Area in Washington, D.C. - Docomomo \(docomomo-us.org\)](http://www.docomomo-us.org)>

Potomac. The Committee also opposed this plan, joining forces with the families of Charles Carroll Glover and Anne Archbold, donors of most of Glover-Archbold Park, in litigation to block invasion of this stream-valley woodland.

The Freeway Battle was a multi-racial effort in a largely segregated city, and a multi-jurisdictional fight. Everyone was threatened. In addition to carving up Tenley Circle, freeway plans included a 10-lane North Central Freeway through African American communities alongside the B&O Railroad's Metropolitan Branch tracks; and a new Potomac River bridge at Three Sisters Islands at Spout Run near the start of the Potomac Gorge.

Prominent African American leaders included Julius Hobson and activist (later mayor) Marion Barry. The North Central Freeway was slated to run through Takoma Park, Maryland, prompting outrage there. On the Maryland side, Sammie Abdullah Abbott, later mayor of Takoma Park, was a vocal leader of the Emergency Committee on the Transportation Crisis (ECTC), who roused the community with the war cry, "No white men's roads through Black men's homes."

With the District of Columbia Federation of Civic Associations, the Committee sued in the federal courts in a landmark case handled pro bono by a leading law firm. The case reached a successful conclusion in the U.S. Court of Appeals in 1968, blocking construction of the Three Sisters Bridge, the Potomac Freeway, the East Leg of a projected Inner Loop Freeway and the Northeast-North Central Freeway.

The victorious culmination of the freeway battle was brought about by the efforts of hundreds of citizens. The proposed freeways affected multiple neighborhoods and were brutally insensitive to preserving parks and woodlands. The Committee's prescience in opposing disruptive urban freeways was grounded in its L'Enfant-McMillan values, principally the recognition that a city functions as a unified whole.

Meanwhile, Congress in 1960 created the National Capital Transportation Agency, which laid the grounds for Metro. The rail system was intended to reduce the pressure of commuter traffic, which highway planners used to justify costly, destructive freeway plans. The Committee enthusiastically endorsed the new agency.

Countering the postwar era's zest for freeways and urban renewal, a heightened interest arose in historic preservation. In 1950, Georgetown residents and preservationists persuaded Congress to pass the Old Georgetown Act, which designated all of Georgetown as an historic district subject to the oversight of the Commission of Fine Arts.

This period also saw renewed encroachments on park lands and open space. The Committee successfully advocated for protection of natural areas along the Potomac, including the Maryland shore opposite Mount Vernon, wetlands at the mouths of several Virginia creeks just south of the district, and Mason Neck below Fort Belvoir. The Committee joined others in persuading Congress to create a national wildlife refuge specifically for bald eagles on Mason Neck, a move that headed off a proposed suburban development.

The postwar period brought internal changes to the Committee. In the early 1960s, fundamental disagreement over transportation issues led the Committee to separate from the American Planning and Civic Association (formerly the American Civic Association) and become a separate non-profit corporation in 1965. Two years later, it was granted tax-exempt status under I.R.C. 501(c)(3).

THE ADVENT OF HOME RULE: 1970s THROUGH 1990s

The 1970s brought long-sought home rule to the district. Congress passed the D.C. Home Rule Act in 1974, authorizing District residents to elect a mayor and city council. The grant of political self-determination was not complete – Congress retained control of the federal enclave and reserved the right to disapprove laws passed by the Council – but it was more autonomy than the city had known.

Under the Home Rule Act, the mayor was designated the city's chief planning officer. The NCPC, which had been the city's planner for fifty years, was given jurisdiction over only the federal interest. Thus, the city's comprehensive plan would henceforth be bifurcated, with District elements prepared by the mayor and council, and federal elements drafted by NCPC. The Act also established a zoning commission. The process of harmonizing federal and local interests, in planning and in other areas, is an ongoing fact of civic life in Washington.

The 1970s were years marked by dynamic contrasts. Between 1970 and 1980, the city lost 118,000 residents (the population shrank from 756,000 to 638,000), more than twice the 46,000-population loss of the preceding two decades.

There were multiple reasons for the precipitous drop: the city had for years disinvested in its schools and other public services, outside of a few favored enclaves; displacement of low-income households through urban renewal continued; and key commercial corridors ravaged in the protests following Martin Luther King's assassination did not recover immediately. In addition, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 gave middle-class African Americans increased access to mortgages and housing choice outside the city, principally in Prince Georges County.

Cities, however, are fluid, and while the city was depopulating, the seeds of its renaissance already were sprouting. Capitol Hill was designated a historic district in 1973 and attracted what were then called "urban pioneers." Shaw, Dupont Circle, Logan Circle, Takoma, and the Anacostia neighborhood around Frederick Douglass's home saw similar activity. The Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, the entity created by President Kennedy to refurbish "America's Main Street" began to make its impact felt. And the business community began to rebuild downtown.

City Council records from the 1970s are replete with requests for downtown alley closures. These were not the mews-type thoroughfares behind residential streets, but mid-block alleys that accommodated light, air, safety, delivery, and other services. Closing alleys allowed developers to assemble large parcels for massive office buildings. The new city government was

completely compliant, tempted to seek short-term economic solutions by encouraging maximum revenue-producing development. Development proceeded unguided as the city repeatedly deferred preparing the comprehensive plan called for by the Home Rule Act.

An early instance of the controversy over downtown was the Rhodes Tavern protest. Rhodes Tavern, built in 1799, rich in history and a nationally registered landmark, was proposed for demolition to allow construction of a mammoth office building. The eight-year battle that preceded its demolition in 1984 involved the Fine Arts Commission, the city, the courts, and the White House curator's office. Importantly, the protest galvanized grass roots citizen opposition.

A number of Committee of 100 members were active protesters, but the Committee did not play a formal role. The Committee focused on urging enactment of the comprehensive plan and advocating for a mixed-use "living downtown" with retail, arts, restaurants, and housing rather than the unrelieved office uses sought by the business community. During this period, the Committee co-sponsored a symposium with the D.C. Bar and developers on the theme "downtown is for people."

One of the next major development battles was fought over the Georgetown waterfront, including all of the area south of M Street, N.W. The Committee joined the Georgetown Citizens Association and other groups in fighting to maintain the Georgetown waterfront as an historic district with stringent limitations on new development.

This fight, though not successful, was another wake-up call alerting residents to the threats to the city's heritage and quality of neighborhood life posed by unplanned or ill-planned development. The 1970s witnessed a proliferation of citizen demands for controlled growth and historic preservation.

The D.C. City Council, thus prompted, enacted the Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act of 1978. The Committee worked closely on common interests with the new civic advocacy organizations that emerged under home rule and with many of the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs) established by the D.C. Home Rule Act as non-partisan elected citizen advisory boards.

While the city was shrinking, the region was growing, and the regional economy was dominated by the real estate and construction industries. The pattern was set across the Potomac River, where Arlington County supported enormous high-rise concentrations of office buildings in Rosslyn (across Key Bridge from Georgetown) and Crystal City (immediately west of National Airport). Both of these development centers were all too visible from key vantage points highlighted by the McMillan Commission and subsequent park planners as significant elements of the city's viewshed.

Rosslyn and Crystal City made the lamentations of Harold Ickes regarding the intrusion of the Pentagon appear almost quaint in retrospect. The Committee of 100 has monitored and aggressively resisted recurrent attempts to inflict high-rise, Rosslyn type development on the forested profile of the Potomac Palisades and has collaborated with the National Park Service to prevent egregious intrusions.

In 1982, the Committee of 100 was asked by the General Accounting Office to assist in a study of NCPC. The Committee praised NCPC's legacy while urging a number of steps to strengthen it.

The Committee said that NCPC and the D.C. Office of Planning ("OP") should be able to "offer planning of a quality equal to that now practiced in many large cities of the United States and in other national capitals." The Committee also recommended:

- a stronger voice for NCPC in the Washington Area Council of Governments;
- creation of an advisor on federal city affairs in the White House acting in liaison with the NCPC;
- more rigorous qualifications for NCPC commissioners;
- expansion of NCPC authority from review of federal activities within the region to full approval power.

As part of its NCPC review, the Committee assessed the work of the OP. The Committee, alarmed by runaway development, warned that "pressing needs for funds to run essential services, and the absence of a comprehensive plan, meant that "the city's land-use planning actions have been determined by ad hoc zoning decisions" and "pressure for immediate and limited concerns."

In 1984 and 1985, the D.C. City Council at last approved text and maps constituting the District elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The inaugural plan was followed by amendment cycles in 1989 to 1994 that added detailed ward plans to the citywide elements. Dorn McGrath, who chaired the Committee from 1987 to 1994, led the Committee into an unprecedented period of community engagement. McGrath traversed all wards, especially those east of the Anacostia River. McGrath would speak to any group of any size, exhorting citizens to make their voices heard in the ward planning process.

Armed with a slide projector and boundless enthusiasm, he showed residents new ways of looking at the city. He talked about the topographic bowl, the importance of historic districts across the city, not simply in affluent areas; and preached the power of Daniel Burnham's mantra, "make no little plans."

The District soon discovered that having a comprehensive plan in place did not forestall free-for-all development. Developers sought – and frequently were granted – exemptions from ground-floor retail uses in downtown buildings, something that is taken for granted today. Developers also tried to evade applicable height limits.

A succession of politically motivated "spot changes" to the plan and the city's zoning regulations eviscerated citizens' hopes for a transparent, reliable planning and development process.

The 1980s also witnessed the Techworld controversy. Techworld was envisioned as a vast mixed-use complex bounded by 7th, 9th, K and I streets, NW. It was intended to become an international trade center for technology products and companies, a concept that did not

materialize. Techworld's singular design feature was a bridge, six stories up, that would cross 8th Street and link two separate buildings. The design drew protests from the Smithsonian Institution, the D.C. Zoning Commission, the National Capital Planning Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts, the D.C. Preservation League, the Committee of 100, and two citizens groups.

The key objection was the skybridge, which opponents argued blocked the vista down 8th Street, in violation of the original L'Enfant Plan Street, although numerous other issues were raised, including an alleged violation of applicable height limits. When administrative avenues failed, the Committee and the Preservation League sued to stop the project. *Techworld Dev. v. D.C. Preservation League*, 648 F. Supp. 106 (D.D.C. 1986).

After losing before the federal district court, the parties appealed, joined by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Ultimately, an eleventh-hour amendment by Congress to the appropriations bill for D.C. removed the major issue of the 8th Street closing from the case, and the appeals court vacated the decision as moot. *Techworld*, No. 86-5630, 1987 WL 1367570 (D.C. Cir. June 2, 1987). J.L. Sibley Jennings, a Committee of 100 member and an architect who had studied the original L'Enfant Plan, wrote an op-ed contending that L'Enfant did not talk about 8th Street and the street should not be designated "special."

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1986/06/08/vista-what-vistalenfant-said-nothing-about-eighth-street/3ffca8ec-8ac9-4585-90fa-67c79e2c0a78/>

In a subsequent case, the Committee successfully stopping the erection of a large, inappropriate rooftop addition to the Beaux Arts "Old City Post Office" building immediately adjacent to Union Station. The Committee argued that the addition would ruin the character and integrity of the building designed by Daniel Burnham – a preeminent advocate of "City Beautiful" classicism as well as the architect of the magnificent Union Station next door. The Committee's views prevailed as the case was heard before the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board and NCPC.

In a related case, the Committee persuaded Congress to respect the Height Act in plans for a new judiciary administrative building proposed by the Architect of the Capitol for construction on the other side of Union Station. The Committee has continued to defend the integrity of the Height Act through its successful intervention in the Market Square North project, in which the developer and Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation sought extra height for a new building near the new Navy Memorial.

The Committee's involvement in historic preservation activity expanded apace. It actively supported preservation of landmark buildings such as the old Greyhound Bus Terminal, the Victor Building, the Garfinckel's building, the 1930 Park and Shop complex in Cleveland Park, the 1937 Hecht Company Warehouse, and the 1940 Sears Store at Tenley Circle.

The Committee supported the creation of new historic districts in Sheridan-Kalorama, Kalorama Triangle, and Cleveland Park. The latter case established salutary new precedents in preservation zoning, under the leadership of the Cleveland Park Historical Society, with Committee of 100 support. In 1994, in collaboration with the Anacostia Coordinating Council,

the Committee was instrumental in establishing an annual historic preservation awards program for the Anacostia Historic District.

The Committee helped unify the preservation community in opposition to the destruction of the 1911 Woodward Building, a major contributing building in the 15th Street Historic District. Despite the unanimous opposition of the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board, the demolition of the Woodward Building was approved in 1988 by the Mayor's Agent for the D.C. historic preservation law, using a glaring loophole providing for demolition of designated landmark buildings in the case of projects of "special merit."

Originally drafted in anticipation of major projects, the "special merit" provision degenerated through interpretation to the point that by the time of the Woodward Building decision it was an expedient excuse for almost any demolition. The so-called "special merit" contribution in the Woodward Building case consisted of token housing and a day-care center in a new office building which would be erected on the site of the demolished Woodward Building.

The owner submitted no evidence to demonstrate that the housing and day care were economically feasible. The so-called amenities could therefore be whittled away or eliminated once the new building was up. In 1990 the Committee won a significant court ruling overturning the decision to demolish the Woodward Building and imposing more stringent requirements in "special merit" cases. The D.C. Court of Appeals recognized that the demolition is permanent and that "special merit" cases should be limited to truly "special" cases in which the city obtains tangible benefits sufficient to offset the loss of a historic resource. *Committee of 100 on the Federal City v. District of Columbia Dep't of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs*, 571 A.2d 195 (D.C. 1990)

The Committee of 100's work in preserving the Woodward Building and narrowing the "special merit" loophole was recognized by the Historical Society of Washington, D.C. as the most significant preservation action in 1990.

A related concern was the effort by developers to employ Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) as a method of building oversized or poorly located buildings in return for putative amenities to be provided off-site. As originally conceived, PUDs were a means of developing large (often suburban) tracts of land in a more creative way than matter-of-right zoning allowed, but the concept does not adapt well to older cities such as Washington, D.C., where the lots available for development are comparatively smaller.

As a result, developers have sought and obtained zoning changes which permit construction of outsized office buildings in return for providing amenities in other parts of the city, thus violating the traditional PUD concept that the amenities be provided to the residents and occupants of the PUD site itself.

Committee of 100 members have attacked this practice, which has evolved in a standardless, ad hoc fashion, in various cases before the Zoning Commission and the District of Columbia courts, and this issue will continue to be debated in the years to come.

Also, pursuant to its oversight on zoning issues, the Committee steadfastly urged the District to bring its zoning into conformance with the Comprehensive Plan. At the same time, the Committee strongly opposed attempts to weaken the city's planning and zoning mandates for downtown housing.

By the mid-1990s, it was apparent that the city had lost an entire generation of sound comprehensive planning. Laissez-faire politics and excessive deference of local government to the private sector compelled a continued state of vigilance on the part of public-interest organizations. Residents fought the urge to yield to cynicism and the fatalistic conclusion that developers' proposals were a "done deal."

Meanwhile, the ever-accelerating growth of the region was threatening federal historic landmarks as far away as Manassas, Virginia, and environmental systems as vast as the Chesapeake Bay.

Strenuous community action was needed in support of NCPC and other federal agencies to reduce the scale of a towering office building proposed for a site across the Potomac from Mount Vernon. Litigation brought by the Committee and others was required to block the transfer of jurisdiction over Kingman Island (Children's Island) in the Anacostia River from the National Park Service to the city government without the legally required environmental studies. This transfer would have resulted in the conversion of public parkland to commercial purposes.

As the end of the twentieth century approached, the Committee proactively advanced proposals to redesign the Whitehurst Freeway below Georgetown, reinvigorate NCPC, and improve the standards of air quality throughout the region. The Committee also established an ad hoc subcommittee on regional planning to work in liaison with kindred organizations in Maryland and Virginia.

THE PAST QUARTER CENTURY

In the early twenty-first century, the District government increasingly adhered to the business community's dictates in land use, creating a situation where misgovernance became so routine that certain agencies entrusted with upholding the public interest became, for all intents and purposes, dysfunctional.

Thus, in the early twenty-first century, the Committee confronted a politics of opportunism that treated the nation's capital like any other city and exploited its resources for maximum private advantage. Actions by the federal government were equally ill-advised, albeit for different reasons.

In an extreme over-reaction to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the NPS proposed blocking direct approaches to the Washington Monument and requiring visitors to enter through a tunnel 500 feet away after being screened for security. Architect Don Alexander Hawkins, who made a specialty of the early history of Washington (and who chaired the Committee from 2006 to 2008), played a key role in defeating this patently bad idea.

Hawkins produced an analysis demonstrating that such a tunnel was contrary to the spirit and history of the L'Enfant Plan and the National Mall. He was joined by Judy Scott Feldman, a Committee of 100 member who in 2000 founded the National Mall Coalition to advocate for preserving public access to the Mall and celebrating its continuing role as the place where Americans gather to petition their government.

Also at the federal level, the Committee led efforts to defeat attempts to repeal or modify the Height Act and opposed alterations to the C&O Canal, part of the National Park System. It successfully challenged the Smithsonian Institution's new "South Mall Campus Master Plan" that would have demolished the much-loved Haupt Garden. The Committee also addressed proposed additions to the monumental core such as the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial and a proposed Desert Storm/Desert Shield memorial.

Major challenges arose with decisions at the federal and local levels to replace or redevelop properties that were deemed unnecessary or inadequate. Such was the case with the McMillan Reservoir, the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the Martin Luther King Library (designed by architect Mies van der Rohe), the J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building and the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium.

In the same context, the Committee challenged proposals to change Union Station and contested the creation of a "Union Station North" district (now called Burnham Place) that would degrade the setting of Union Station by encouraging over-development.

The Committee also resisted proposals to erect garish digital billboards in parts of the city.

In further preservation action, the Committee and the Preservation League unsuccessfully tried to stop demolition of the Third Church of Christ, Scientist, a Brutalist landmark in the Sixteenth Street Historic District designed by the I.M. Pei's firm. The Third Street Church battle was waged from 1991 through the Church's demolition in 2014. The Committee also developed new plans to protect the remains of the Civil War defenses of Washington, a network of earthen-wall forts constructed in the city and suburbs in 1862. Committee member Loretta Neumann went on to spearhead creation in 2008 of the Alliance for the Preservation of Civil War Defenses of Washington.

The Committee's efforts became increasingly broad, from the advocacy of affordable housing to an effort to ensure that the restoration of streetcar service is carried out to highest standards. The Committee's interest in parks and open space, its founding issue, expanded to include environmental protection. In 2005 the Committee advanced a formal proposal to establish a fully independent planning commission for Washington. Elected officials who unreservedly embraced the issue in a public forum reneged when it was time to act.

From fending off shoddy proposals for digital billboards to the opposition of ill-considered nominations to the Zoning Commission, the Committee continued to insist that the District of Columbia live up to the terms of its own Comprehensive Plan. Good planning is

essential for the well-being of all the residents of Washington – and for Americans everywhere who regard the nation’s capital city as a symbol.

What follows are detailed accounts of the Committee’s most important efforts during the past quarter century.

PROTECTING THE 1910 HEIGHT OF BUILDINGS ACT

An offhand remark by Congressman Darryl Issa in 2012 sparked a two-year campaign by the Committee to prevent Congress from repealing or weakening the Height Act, which preserves the iconic horizontal skyline of Washington. This act is more than a guarantee that the long-established ideals for the city will be respected. It is essential to planning for a livable city here and now.

Soon after Issa made his remark that DC buildings ought to be taller so that he no longer had to look at “ugly rooftops,” then Mayor Vincent Gray and Planning Director Harriet Tregoning moved to strike down the Height Act.

The Committee of 100 mobilized. Laura Richards, past chair of the Committee, testified before a subcommittee of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee – chaired by Issa – on July 19, 2012. She was the lone witness to oppose changes to the Height Act. She warned that removing the height limits would ruin the city’s skyline; diminish the prominence of the Capitol, White House, and other national symbols; and destroy the city’s human scale for no measurable benefit.

Tregoning insisted that the district’s most difficult problems could be solved only with taller buildings. Issa instructed NCPC and OP to conduct a joint study and develop recommendations.

The Committee joined other preservation and civic groups to defend the height limits and challenge the claim that public benefits would result. They urged Mayor Gray and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton to retreat from the attack on the Height Act. The mayor, unmoved, called the height limits part of a legacy of federal “oppression” in defiance of Home Rule.

Fortuitously, the joint NCPC/OP study included case studies conducted by other world capitals who relaxed their height limits and found that the resulting new buildings were among the most unaffordable real estate in the city. Issa requested modeling to demonstrate how taller buildings would affect Washington, DC streetscapes, the views of iconic federal monuments, and the perspectives of significant skylines. As the simulations were presented at a series of public meetings, audible gasps of disbelief arose from the audience.

Contractors and developers were asked to report upon the motivation for “building taller.” They reported that developer interest would be focused in high-cost areas where the construction costs might be recouped with high rents and not in parts of the city needing more housing.

On October 28, 2013, the D.C. Council held a hearing where dozens of witnesses supported the height limits, while a bare handful supported the change.

At the end of its study, the NCPC issued a draft report stating that the mayor and OP had failed to demonstrate a need for abolishing the limits or that economic needs could not be achieved within the existing height envelope. The mayor then took the unprecedented step of issuing his own report to NCPC, urging repeal of the Height Act outside the boundaries of the original L'Enfant Plan.

NCPC continued to deliberate the issues on its own. At two public hearings, D.C. residents from all eight wards flooded the small NCPC hearing room that rarely holds more than a handful of witnesses.

Testimony came from civic and citizens federations, ANCs, and individual citizens who described the Height Act as a right that is integral to living in the Nation's Capital. Witnesses testified that there was no evidence to support the claims of the mayor and OP that job creation, affordable housing, or other benefits would result from the repeal. To the contrary, most witnesses concluded that OP had failed to identify a problem that changing the Height Act would solve. In addition, witness after witness said they liked their low-rise city, liked being able to see the Capitol from the vantage points around the city, and did not want the District to become a faux New York.

The Committee of 100 described the mayor's actions as a threat to turn Washington into two separate cities – instead of *one* city that intentionally merges its history with its future.

Urged by the Committee to make a powerful statement of its resolve, the D.C. Council did so on November 19, 2013. By a vote of 12-1, the Council opposed changing the Height Act, and later that day NCPC took the same position by a vote of 7-3, noting that the Act protects the form and character of the nation's capital. NCPC said it could support a modest increase in the height of penthouses, but nothing more.

The following year the House passed a bill introduced by Issa and co-sponsored by Norton to authorize the city to permit habitable penthouses that could exceed the height limit by twenty feet. The Senate subsequently approved the legislation and President Obama signed it into law. Aside from that action, the drive to repeal the protections of the Height Act had been stopped.

In the aftermath of this battle, Preston Bryant, the chair of NCPC, asked to meet with the leaders of the Committee of 100. Impressed by the Committee's work, he sought to learn about the organization's structure, its mission, and its processes. Above all, he was curious to know how the organization had succeeded in generating a passionate citywide response to the threat to the Height Act – a response that resulted in a citywide assembly of residents appealing to NCPC to leave the Act alone.

The Committee’s leaders responded that it took great time and effort to reach out to members’ extended networks and city organizations. But once they were made aware of the threat, people understood what was at stake and were eager to help.

Roughly a decade later, the battle was rejoined when Mayor Muriel Bowser, Gray’s successor, and OP tried to undermine the Height Act through the D.C. Comprehensive Plan Amendments of 2021. The Committee, working with the DC Preservation League, convinced the D.C. Council to reject the renewed attack upon the historic horizontal skyline of Washington.

UNMASKING THE REWRITE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Committee of 100 devoted a great deal of time between 2017 and 2021 to influencing an extraordinary executive and legislative process to amend the Comprehensive Plan – the mother of all city planning documents. The unprecedented scope of this amendment cycle transformed it into a rewrite of the plan and pitted powerful development interests and the OP against neighborhoods and public interest groups.

The Committee reached out vigorously to the public with detailed analysis of existing plan weaknesses and proposed amendment flaws. In addition, the Committee offered its own proposals for strengthening the Plan.

Mayor Muriel Bowser and her administration sought to revise the Comprehensive Plan in ways that would facilitate development with minimal input from D.C. residents and neighborhoods and with minimal restrictions on developers.

The city government refused to hold ward informational meetings about the process, and also delayed releasing most of its proposed revisions while the Council considered a change to the Plan’s “Framework Element,” an introductory chapter that weakened the Plan fundamentally.

In approving the proposed new Framework Element, the Council relinquished much of its own power – and the accountability that goes with it – to the Zoning Commission, an action that makes it extremely hard for citizens and civic groups to affect the city’s land-use decisions.

The Framework Element sets out the basic rules for land use. Under the terms of the Home Rule Act, the Council is supposed to establish land use categories (for instance, high-density commercial, medium-density residential, industrial, among others) and apply them to areas on a map. The map and accompanying interpretive text guide the determination of which zones are appropriate for each category.

Despite strenuous efforts by the Committee to persuade the Council that this system is essential to enabling judicial review of Zoning Commission decisions, the Council ceded its own power to shape the city to the Commission — as Mayor Bowser proposed.

When OP released approximately 1,500 pages containing other draft amendments Plan, the Committee of 100 discovered that even more drastic changes were proposed – changes

designed to reduce even further the public's right to participate in land-use regulation. Residents and public interest groups were angry and overwhelmed when the magnitude of these proposed amendments was revealed.

OP argued that population growth necessitated rapid development without delays. The Committee of 100 found that this point of view was based on faulty data and outcome-determinative presuppositions.

The Committee decided to reach out to other civic groups across the city with a 73-page exposé that revealed how shared values and goals were being undermined. The title of this exposé was *Unmasking the Rewrite: How to Make the Comprehensive Plan Work for D.C.*

Unmasking the Rewrite was an eye-opening document. It showed how city policies had allowed the displacement of over 40,000 African American residents in less than 10 years. It also showed how rejecting the proposed OP amendments could help to reverse this outcome and restore a more democratic planning process.

In alliance with other civic organizations, the Committee persuaded the Council to reject the most damaging amendments proposed by OP.

THE BILLBOARD BATTLE

In 1931, restrictions on the presence of billboards in the city of Washington were adopted and subsequently updated in 1972. Not surprisingly, commercial interests have sought ever since to crack the potentially lucrative D.C. billboard market.

In 2000, Mayor Anthony Williams proposed regulations that would allow huge flexible printed screens that could cover an entire 10,000-square-foot façade of a multi-story building. To evade the existing billboard regulations, these aggressive new billboards would be labeled “special signs.” Through a fluke of inattention in the D.C. Council, this new regulation became law, and the result was a huge citizen outcry.

Two Committee of 100 members, Richard Wolf and Ann Hughes Hargrove, worked with the organization Scenic America led by Meg Maguire — who would subsequently become a Committee member and officer — in campaigning against the “special signs.” Because of these efforts, the signs were restricted to designated areas of the city and their number capped at 32.

The advertising interests, undeterred, persuaded the D.C. government in 2004 to allow a new form of huge electronic full-motion video billboard at Gallery Place. The Committee joined forces with nearby residents in an unsuccessful effort to stop this development.

Meanwhile, by 2010 the DC government had mounted a concerted effort to get rid of illegal billboards that had remained or popped up as a result of lax enforcement, and ordered removal of five that were illegally located on residential property. The industry responded by suing, and then persuaded the mayor to endorse a swap: they would take down the five antique

(and relatively valueless) illegal billboards if the mayor would ask the Council to increase the number of permits for the huge (and hugely lucrative) “Special Signs.” They duly scrapped the billboards, but as a result of concerted citizen opposition led by C100 the Council said “no” to this lopsided deal, and the cap remained intact.

By 2011 the industry had succeeded in getting legislation approved extending Gallery Place-type electronic billboards to the Verizon Center. In 2012, the billboard industry concluded that D.C. was ripe for even more ambitious conquest. They persuaded Mayor Vincent Gray to propose new regulations that would give his office unilateral power to approve gigantic electronic billboards —such as 1,200 square-foot full-motion video billboards or 10,000 square-foot-wall billboards — in any part of the city that he labelled an “entertainment area.” These proposals were hidden away in an update of the city’s sign regulations proposed by the District Department of Transportation (DDOT).

DDOT backed down temporarily after their proposed regulations drew a deluge of critical comment from citizens groups, with the Committee of 100 in the lead. They tried again in 2015, with a new draft even more favorable to the billboard industry. Once again, civic watchdog groups took action – the Committee submitted a redline mark-up showing necessary amendments – and DDOT retreated again.

In 2016, Digi Media Communications – a digital billboard company that wanted to create what it called “a Spectacular Digital Network in our Nation’s Capital” – proceeded to construct new digital billboards on buildings at various sites around the city without proper permits. It sought to exploit a potential loophole (later closed) in the sign regulations concerning signs that are constructed *inside of* buildings but designed to be visible from the outside.

The city ordered Digi Media to stop work, took the company to Superior Court to secure compliance, and obtained a preliminary injunction. An emergency bill introduced in the Council by Councilmember Jack Evans to legalize Digi’s billboards failed for lack of support after strenuous opposition by the Committee and others. Ultimately, Evans was fined for ethics violations and resigned from the Council when a motion was introduced to expel him.

Meanwhile, Committee leaders met with the D.C. attorney general to encourage vigorous prosecution of the lawsuit, which was eventually decided against Digi (by then called “Lumen Eight”). After an appeal by Lumen Eight to the DC Court of Appeals, the case was remanded to the trial court for further consideration.

Then a bill emerged in the Council to authorize ten new digital billboards on the Nationals Park baseball stadium as well as its parking garages. The bill drew strong opposition from the Committee and the local ANC, but the advertisers sold it to the Council as a gesture of support for the “Nats.”

With their foot in the door, the billboard interests replaced this measure with a more aggressive bill to allow an unlimited number of “Nats Park” signs, designate the block above the stadium as a digital billboard zone, and create the long-desired system by which new “Designated Entertainment Areas” could be established across the city by the mayor through

unilateral action.

This proved too much for the Council, which authorized stadium billboards but dropped the measure conferring unilateral billboard approval power on the mayor, thus leaving in place legislation by which authorization of new digital billboard areas would require Council action.

STREETCAR OVERSIGHT

In 2005, the D.C. government embarked on the creation of a streetcar system. The program was flawed from the beginning because it began with the purchase, on a whim, of outdated trains from the Czech Republic that worked only with visually intrusive stanchions and overhead wires. Committee of 100 members recognized that systems without these overhead wires were serving cities in Europe and China.

In May 2010, the D.C. Council approved funding for the first segment of the ill-designed system. The Committee submitted testimony and a 19-page report about the need for legislative planning requirements, a financial and governance plan, and a streetcar technology assessment report that would explore propulsion technologies in use around the world that present viable alternatives to outmoded overhead wire systems. The Committee also retained attorneys who produced a memorandum on the legal issues.

The Committee's recommendations influenced the action of the Council. In December 2010, the Council enacted the Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act that included the following requirements:

- Development by DDOT of a system-wide environmental review.
- A plan submitted by the mayor to the Council for each extension of the streetcar system beyond the initial H Street/Benning Road segment.
- An evaluation of the impact of aerial wires on federal property, commemorative works of art, historic resources, and the contributing elements of the L'Enfant Plan.
- The designation of wire-free zones along with feasibility studies regarding the use of non-aerial power in the new extensions of the system.

In 2010, four Committee members began a detailed study of the proposed routes, structure, and impacts upon land use and visual quality of the outdated streetcar system that the city was developing. In January, 2011, the Committee published a 91-page report with detailed recommendations for the planning of the streetcar system, *Building a World-Class Streetcar System for a World-Class City*, at https://committeeof100.net/download/transportation/dc_streetcars/reports_and_presentations/A-World-Class-Streetcar-System-for-a-World-Class-City.pdf.

Despite this work and despite the clear mandate of the Council's legislative action, the mayor has produced neither the mandatory aerial wire report nor a plan for the operation of the streetcar system (though DDOT did recommend wireless propulsion for a proposed extension to Georgetown).

The city has spent more than \$250 million to acquire additional outmoded streetcars and to build a controversial and costly maintenance facility on an historic school campus. A Minnesota Avenue, NE, extension is underway amid a public outcry regarding its negative impacts. As of this writing, the Council had cut funding for further construction, stalling it for the time being.

COMMUTER AND PASSENGER RAIL

Roughly two-thirds of the cars on Washington's streets during business hours come from out of state. The concerns that prompted the Committee to seek the best streetcar system for the district have prompted its support for improved passenger and commuter rail systems linking D.C. to Maryland and Virginia.

The existing Metro, Amtrak, MARC (Maryland Area Rail Commuter) and VRE (Virginia Railway Express) systems are valuable transportation assets, but the MARC and VRE systems could be integrated to permit through-traffic via D.C. While VRE and MARC have reached agreements to create this much-needed through-traffic connection, physical impediments stand in the way.

In 2013, C100 commented on a Federal Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for CSX rail that proposed rebuilding of the Virginia Avenue Tunnel, explaining the potential adverse impacts to passenger and commuter rail. C100 advocated for the separation of freight rail operations from passenger and commuter rail operations by building a new rail bridge crossing the Potomac River. C100 was not successful at that time, but successfully pursued its position in subsequent proceedings.

The "Long Bridge" across the Potomac, the only rail crossing within 70-miles, is owned by the private firm CSX, and the bridge's configuration forces passenger and commuter trains to share the bridge with freight trains. In addition to advocating for the construction of a new bridge reserved for passenger and commuter trains, C100 recommended new trackage in Southwest Washington that would separate passenger and commuter rail operations from freight operations.

In 2015, a FEIS was initiated to expand the capacity of the Long Bridge, and the Virginia legislature together with Amtrak agreed to fund a new two-track bridge, as well as new rail tracks in Southwest DC dedicated to passenger and commuter rail, to be owned by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), that will separate long-distance passenger and commuter rail operations.

Further, the Committee has supported the electrification of tracks south of Union Station. Currently, trains traveling south of the Station use diesel locomotives because the overhead wires for electric locomotives would interfere with tall freight loads. Since AMTRAK trains in the Northeast Corridor use electric locomotives, a long lay-over in Union Station is required to change locomotives.

In 2023, the Committee submitted detailed comments on draft plans for the expansion of Washington's iconic Union Station, particularly on the sections on commuter and rail operations. The Committee pointed out that the plan is based on outdated and understated ridership projections and suggested that the need for more tracks must be evaluated. The Committee also recommended that alternative options need to be considered to allow thru-running of MARC trains into Virginia and thru-running of VRE trains into Maryland.

The Committee also pointed out that the environmental impacts of the proposed project have been understated. The continued use of diesel locomotives in parts of the system and the use of outdated diesel switching engines at the Ivy City rail yard, if not addressed, will negatively impact the NOMA, Capitol Hill and Ivy City neighborhoods. Finally, since many of the details of the project were deferred, the Committee stated that it is difficult to assess the potential historic preservation impacts of the proposal.

In short, while C100 stated that it's a positive development that the project is moving forward, critical issues remain that need to be addressed so that this project can proceed in an environmentally responsible manner that serves the rail needs of the future.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING OVERSIGHT

In 2015, Committee of 100 Chair Nancy MacWood formed a Housing Subcommittee to address the inadequate supply of affordable housing in the city, especially for low-income families who earn less than 60% of the Area Median Income and who should not have to pay more than 30% of their income for housing. The subcommittee also promotes a broad range of actions to stem housing loss and spur housing production.

The subcommittee's creation reflected a dramatic increase in the District's population, coupled with a housing shortage and the ballooning of the homeless population. The population reached a low point of 572,000 in 2000 before starting to rebound. The population grew to 602,000 in 2010, then grew at a dazzling rate to 712,000 in 2020 before giving up some of those gains. The incoming residents were largely, though not entirely, young, affluent professionals. Some moved into new, luxury apartments and condominiums, while others moved into existing middle- and low-income neighborhoods, driving up prices, rents and taxes. A development boom of new hotels, offices and amenities took place at a giddy pace.

Nevertheless, in a replay of the 1950s urban renewal movement, the district government allowed its public housing projects and other affordable units to fall into disrepair; then, instead of renovating or replacing them, transferred these properties to the private sector for mixed-use redevelopment containing little new affordable housing. Washington, D.C. became a city characterized by a stark income divide.

Housing Subcommittee members meet frequently with housing administrators and Council members. They advocate in coalition with other organizations, particularly the D.C. Grassroots

Planning Coalition, to achieve the following specific goals:

- Adequate funding and overdue reform of the Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF), and conditions for use of tax-increment financing.
- Expansion of the city's rent control program.
- Public investment in repairs and renovation of public housing to reverse a long-standing pattern of neglect and mismanagement; reforming the composition of the D.C. Housing Authority Board, and opposing displacement of residents through neglect and mismanagement of properties.
- Increased funding for vouchers.
- Provisions for establishing community land trusts and limited equity cooperatives.
- Requiring Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) in the downtown zones.

In 2021, the Housing Subcommittee led the Committee's work on the Comprehensive Plan, exposing systemic inequities in the OP draft amendments. This exposé drew praise from the Council Office of Racial Equity (CORE) and prompted the Council to make important revisions to the draft plan's most damaging features.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OVERSIGHT

The Committee of 100 remains active in historic preservation. The preservation subcommittee participated in the formal review of four projects under the provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966:

- 2014-2017: Observatory Hill Campus Master Plan. The General Services Administration sought to create 1 million square feet of office space on this scenic hilltop location. During the process, the site was designated an historic district, but the project was postponed due to lack of funds.
- 2018: Exterior and interior restoration and renovations of the historic Carnegie Library on Mt. Vernon Square. The work was funded by the Apple Corporation in return for a lease on first-floor space. When the project was completed, the D.C. History Center (formerly known as the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and before that as the Columbia Historical Society) returned to its second-floor space. Beyer Blinder Belle was the managing architectural firm with the D.C. government managing the project.
- 2019-2022: Lincoln Memorial restoration to mark the 100th anniversary of its dedication. The National Park Service was the lead federal organization for this project.
- 2020: Renovation of the Federal Reserve Board's flagship Eccles Building and Federal Reserve-East Building on its Constitution Avenue, NW Campus, with oversight by NCPC and the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office.

CONCLUSION

The current decade brought a wholly unforeseen crisis – the Covid 19 epidemic and its aftermath. The city lost 375 small businesses, some temporarily, others permanently, after the first year of lockdown. Neighborhood activity resumed after the worst of the pandemic abated, but downtown did not recover. Office occupancy had begun shrinking before the pandemic, as businesses moved to new mixed-use neighborhoods on the Southwest DC and elsewhere. In 2023, daily office occupancy levels were at half pre-pandemic levels. The downtown office section, which had been the city's economic engine for half a century, was moribund.

Finally, the government and business community desire an infusion of downtown housing (downtown is now 90% commercial, 10% residential). The architectural and structural feasibility of converting office blocks to apartments remains uncertain, though in the past year a number of landowners of office buildings have announced their intention to convert to residential use. The Committee of 100 has advocated for a living downtown since the 1980s and continues to do so.

This is a challenging time, yet an exciting one. The give-and-take of change is inevitable. Development will come and go. But history demonstrates that continuity – and commitment to the themes from which a community's identity derives – can be sustained over time by thoughtful citizens. The Committee will rely on its founding values to meet this moment as it enters its second century. Created to defend a proud heritage, the Committee of 100 on the Federal City has established a proud tradition of its own.

AWARDS

The Committee of 100's Vision Awards program started in 2002 under the leadership of Ann Hughes Hargrove to recognize visionary projects, programs, and achievements that exemplify the Committee's mission, including aspirational plans that have not yet been implemented.

Historically, three additional awards are conferred: the Barbara Zartman Award for Planning and Zoning Advocacy; the Ann Hughes Hargrove Advocacy Award that is given to individuals who make significant to the city through work related to the Commission's goals; and the Lifetime Achievement Award for individuals with a long and distinguished history of accomplishments to further the overall mission and goals of the Committee of 100.

In 2018, the trustees of the Committee decided to confer the Vision Awards biannually and to sponsor a special public lecture in alternating years.

In 2019, to highlight the urgent need for thoughtfully planned affordable housing, the Committee issued seven awards for innovative affordable projects and joined forces with the Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development to identify nominees.

The 2021 Vision Awards, held during the Covid epidemic, presented a particular challenge. With many people unwilling to attend events in person, a hybrid event took place at First Congregational UCC with award recipients in attendance and most of the audience tuning in on Zoom with an option to view the ceremony later on You Tube. For the first time, the Committee honored an out-of-state government organization, the Commonwealth of Virginia for *Transforming Rail in Virginia*, a visionary initiative to expand rail service south of Washington, DC's Union Station.

Awards

(Unless otherwise noted, all listed awards are Vision Awards)

2023

C100 Centennial, no Vision Awards

2022

Covid pandemic, no Vision Awards

2021

Brian Kraft, DC Building Permits Database
Crummell School, Empower DC
Park Morton Equity Plan, Park Morton Equity Team, Council @ Park Morton
Abrams Hall Senior Apartments,
Walter Reed Assisted Living Project Team
Transforming Rail South of Union Station, VA Dept. of Rail & Public Transportation
Hargrove Award: DC Grassroots Planning Coalition
Zartman Award: Marilyn Simon, PhD
Lifetime Achievement Award: DC Preservation League, 50th Anniversary
Lifetime Achievement Award: District of Columbia Public Library System, 125th Anniversary

2020

Covid pandemic, no Vision Awards

2019

Anacostia Watershed Society
The Parks at Walter Reed
“The Reach” – Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
Prologue and the Bloomingdale Historic Designation
Portner Flats (Housing)
SOME Conway Center (Housing)
Plaza West/Mission First Housing (Housing)
Manna, Inc. (Housing)

Jubilee Housing (Housing)
National Housing Trust Communities (Housing)
Hargrove Award - Fernando Lemos, Co-Founder
of Mi Casa
Lifetime Achievement Award –
Arthur Cotton Moore

2018

No Vision Awards

2017

Washington City Paper
Heurich House Museum
Empower DC
NCPC, GSA, and DC Office of Planning
Lifetime Achievement Award – George Idelson
Zartman Award – Laura Richards

2016

Perkins Eastman for Theo. Roosevelt High School
Rehabilitation
Douglas Jamal for Hecht’s Warehouse
Historic Congressional Cemetery
Pamela Scott for Lifetime Achievement
Zartman Award – Monte Edwards

2015

Lifetime Achievement Award – Ann Lewis

2014

Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington – Susan Claffey, President
 Tregaron Conservancy – Bonnie LePard, ED,
 Clayton, Board of Directors
 The House of Lebanon – Mt. Lebanon Dev.
 Corp,
 Johnny Holliday & Lionel Edmonds,
 Mission First Housing Corp., Urban Matters/
 Washington Interfaith Network, Cunningham
 +
 Quill Architects, Office of the Deputy Mayor
 for
 Planning and Development, DC
 Roadside Development & O Street Market
 Redevelopment Project – Richard Lake,
 Armond Spikell, Susan Linsky
 Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School – Sean
 O'Donnell & Matthew Bell, Perkins Eastman
 Zartman Award – George R. Clark
 Lifetime Achievement Award – Phil Mendelson

2013

Forest Hills Connection – Marlene Berlin,
 Editor
 in Chief, Tracy Johnke, Website &
 Communications
 Director, and Forest Hills Citizen Association
 First Congregational United Church of Christ –
 Cunningham + Quill, Architects, Tod William
 Billie Tsien Architects, Shanska USA
 Commercial Development
 Golden Triangle BID – Lower Connecticut Ave.
 Plan – Golden Triangle BID District, D.C.,
 Commission on the Arts & Humanities, DC
 Dept.
 of Transportation
 Southwest ECO District Plan – ZGF Architects,
 Riverfront BID and National Capital Planning
 Commission
 The Yards Park – Forest City of Washington,
 Capital Riverfront BID, Paul Friedberg &
 Partners, GSA, DC
 Zartman Award – Alma Hardy Gates

2012

The Atlas Performing Arts Center – Jane Land
 &
 Paul Sprenger
 Planning the Capital City – Trish Callard &
 Megan Brunson
 The Links Foundation, Inc. Project – Eris
 Simms,
 Exec. Dir., The Links, Inc., Amoy McGhee,
 R.
 McGhee & Assoc.
 RiverSmart Washington – Christophe A.G.
 Tulous,
 Director, DC Dept. of Environment & DC
 Dept of
 Transportation, Terry Bellamy, Dir.
 Hill Center – Old Naval Hospital Foundation –
 Nicky Cymrot, President, Hill Center
 Foundation
 & Diana Ingraham, ED, Hill Center
 Zartman Award – John Fondersmith
 Lifetime Achievement Award – Tersh
 Boasberg/
 Sally Boasberg

2011

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American
 Theater
 Civil War Defenses of Washington Trail
 Deanwood Community Center & Library
 All Hallows Guild of the Washington National
 Cathedral
 Lifetime Achievement Award – Elizabeth
 (Libby)
 Ulman Rowe
 Lifetime Achievement Award – Judy Scott
 Feldman
 Zartman Award – Meg Maguire

2010

Savoy Elementary School & Thurgood Marshall
Academy Public Charter School Public
Education

Campus

Robert B. Owens – legal advocacy against
freeways and 3 Sisters' Bridge

Arthur Cotton Moore – Preservation of
L'Enfant/

McMillan Plan Particularly Maryland Avenue

Barbara Zartman - Zartman Award

(posthumous)

2009

The L'Enfant Trust

Takoma Park Library

Washington Ethical Society/The Kurylas Studio

2008

Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA – Outstanding
Design

Tom & Angela Rooney – Improving Civic Life
in Ward 5

Casey Tree Endowment Fund – Restoration of
DC

Tree Cover

DC Modern Symposium

President Lincoln's Cottage & Visitors Center –

National Trust for Historic Preservation

The Newseum – Dynamic Architecture

TKF Foundation of DC – DC Green Spaces

Lifetime Achievement Award - Margaret

Freeman

2007

No Vision Awards

2006

Lifetime Achievement Award – Ann Hargrove

2005

W. Kent Cooper, FAIA – Lifetime
Achievement Arts & the Community

- The H Street Playhouse

- The ARC

- The Patricia A. Sitar Center for the Arts
Exhibits of Architectural History

Harry Wardman

Adolf Cluss

Adaptive Reuse 201 F Street, NE

Community Preservation

- Rosie's Row

Affordable-Unit Renovation

- Clifton Terrace

- Meridian Manor

- Trinity Towers

- Olympia Towers

Exceptional Design

- National Realtors Building

Municipal Planning

- The DC Office of Planning's Support of
Long Range Planning – Creating The
Building Blocks for Future Planners

Preserving Knowledge of the Past

- MLK Library, Washingtonian,
a Division at 100

2004

No Vision Awards

2003

DC Public Schools Facilities Program – Sarah
Woodhead, Paul Vance

Lifetime Achievement Award – Dorn McGrath

Lifetime Achievement Award – Charles H.

Atherton

Sarah Boasberg – Study, Re-Greening
Washington

Bolling Air Force Base – The Smith Group

Theresa Brown – LeDroit Park

The Josephine Butler Parks Center

DC Public Schools – Increasing Design Quality
in New and Additions to School

Friends of Garfield Park

Howard University Sponsored LeDroit Park

Historic District Revitalization Initiative
The Georgetown Partnership – Metro
Connection
Bus Program
Walter E. Washington Estates
Westminster Neighborhood Association
Associates in Cardozo-Shaw

2002

Joseph Passonneau – Architect, Planner, Transp.
Design
Judy Scott Feldman – National Mall
Mayor Williams/ City Council, DC Planning
Office – Anacostia Waterfront Initiative
DC City Council – Renovation of Wilson
District
Building
Ward 1 – True Reformers Bldg, – Public
Welfare
Found., Larry Kressley, ED, Sorg & Assoc.
Ward 1 – NPS – African American Civil War
Memorial – Frank Smith, Chair, African
American Freedom Foundation, Paul
Devroux,
Devroux & Purnell, Architects

Ward 2 – Millennium Arts Center
Ward 3 – Alban Towers – Chas. E. Smith
Residential Realty
Ward 4 – Takoma Village Co-Housing –
Owners,
Don Tucker, Architect, Environmental Design
Group of Bethesda, Historic Takoma, Inc.
Ward 5 – Brooks Mansion/ Broadcast Center –
Kojo Nnamdi, Chair, Nantz Rickard, ED, The
Public Access Corp. of DC
Ward 6 – Townhomes of Capitol Hill – Fran
Taylor, Chair, David Perry, Chair, The Ellen
Wilson Community Development Corp.
Ward 7 – The Willis P. Green Manor, Loretta
Tate, CEO and Pres., Richard Hamilton, Chair
Board, Marshall Heights Community
Development Org.
Ward 8 – Anacostia Museum and Center for
African American History and Culture,
Smithsonian, Architrave of the District,
Wisniewski Blair and Associates

2001

Vision Awards established.

Committee 100 Chairs

Frederic A. Delano (1923-1944)
Associate Justice Owen J. Roberts (1945)
Clifton A. Woodrum (1945-1947)
C. Melvin Sharpe (1948-1957)
Rear Admiral Neil Phillips (1958-1967)
Grosvenor Chapman (1968-1970)
David Sanders Clark (1971-1972)
Elizabeth Ullman (Libby) Rowe (1972-1980)
Marion K. Schlefer (1980-1983)
David Grinnell (1983-1987)
Dorn McGrath, Jr. (1987-1994)
Tersh Boasberg (1994-1999)
Kateri Ellison (2000-2001)
Ann Hughes Hargrove (2001-2003)
Barbara Zartman (2003-2006)
Don Alexander Hawkins (2006-2008)
Laura Richards (2008-2009)
George R. Clark (2010-2012)
Nancy J. MacWood (2013-2016)
Stephen Hansen (2017-2019)
Kirby Vining (2020-2022)
Shelly Repp (2023-....)