

Local OPINIONS



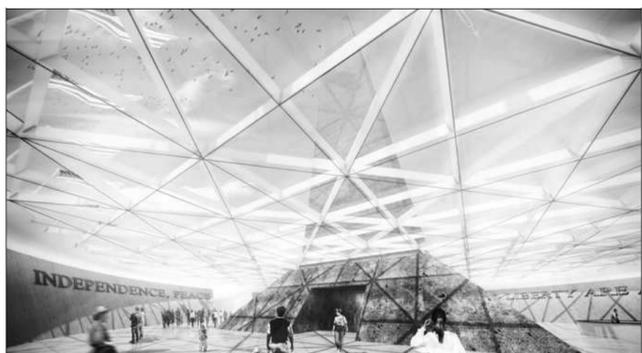
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WRITE FOR US

Local Opinions, a place for commentary about where we live, is looking for submissions of 300 to 500 words on timely local topics. Submissions must include name, e-mail address, street address and phone number, and they will be edited for brevity and clarity. To submit your article, please go to washingtonpost.com/localopinions.



The Washington Monument re-imagined



JACQUES PRINS, KEVIN BATTARBEE, EGIDIJUS KASAKAITIS/INBO ROTTERDAM

'Monument of Unity': Circles and light

In our proposal, we retain the singular, uncluttered identity of the Washington Monument as the central fixture of the Mall. And we reinforce the circle as the symbol of the United States as one nation.

Curves on the east and west sides of the monument mound open generous entrances to a new central space. To add a layer of history to the visitor experience, we reveal the now-hidden foundations of the monument. A citation from George Washington's farewell address on the perimeter wall surrounding the foot of the monument proclaims the importance of the union between the states.

The new, circular central hall serves primarily as an entrance facility and visitors' center. Around this hall is a museum space housing a permanent exhibition emphasizing two themes: George Washington's life and legacy, and the history of the Mall and the monument. The main design feature in the hall and museum is the interplay of direct and indirect light — direct in the hall, indirect in the museum spaces.

— Jacques Prins, Kevin Battarbee and Egidijus Kasakaitis



HUNT LAUDI STUDIO

'An Inclined Plane': Integrating the monument and the city

One Sunday we walked to the Mall. Arriving at the intersection of 14th Street and Constitution Avenue, we noticed how 14th and 15th streets cut the Mall off from the monument. An idea came to us: Why not extend the Mall over the two streets so people could walk to the monument without having to cross traffic?

This competition raises some of the most difficult questions about public space in American society. Working on the sketches, we recalled being part of the enormous crowds that gathered under the monument for President Obama's inauguration. We realized that our proposal would not only create a great viewing platform for important historic events but had emerged from deeply embedded cultural practices related to city founding.

In subsequent rounds, we worked hard to open up the obstructed approaches from all sides. We sought to better integrate the monument with the city (especially the underused waterfront at the Tidal Basin) and to create new views both toward and away from the monument. Such spaces can serve both the witness and the participant in the making of our history.

Julian Hunt, Lucrecia Laudi, Monling Lee and Miguel Angel Maldonado



CATHERINE PEEK

'Field of Stars': Symbol of togetherness

Imagine attending a demonstration at the Mall during the day and then returning that night to discover the grounds illuminated like a galaxy of stars — thanks in part to your very footsteps. Imagine the reward of seeing your path traced in a spectacle of light.

For the multimedia installation "Field of Stars," piezoelectric lights planted into the ground record footfalls by harnessing kinetic energy. For each fixture, the brightness and duration of the light is indicative of the number of people who stepped on it. The grid of lights as a whole paints a broader picture. Each evening, the grounds become a portrait of light created by the patterns and volume of that day's foot traffic. Stepping on a light also triggers a sound: a fragment of a historic speech, the song of native birds, a passage from an iconic score of music. The effect is to hear a ghost of all the treasures of sound and story that have been born of the Washington Monument grounds.

The evening's transformation of the grounds will unify the diverse paths of the visitors, poetically representing the common convictions and passions of the people and the interconnectedness of the nation. The beauty of the network of lights links people across time and intention, backgrounds and aspirations, into one enduring yet mutable symbol of togetherness.

— Catherine Peek

How would you change the Washington Monument grounds?

In 2010, a group of historians, architects, professors and others interested in starting a dialogue about the underused expanse at the heart of the Mall launched a National Ideas Competition to get answers to that question. In July, a jury picked six finalists, and now the public is being asked to choose two "People's Choice" favorites. Here, the six finalists describe their submissions. To learn more about the designs — and to vote — go to www.wamocompetition.org.



RED SQUARE

'The People's Forum': A national gathering place

My design refocuses attention on the neglected Jefferson Pier and calls attention to Pierre L'Enfant's original axial plan and the misalignment of the Washington Monument.

A new 3,000-seat Washington Amphitheater is a national gathering place that recalls the great amphitheaters of Rome and Greece and serves as a grand and fitting base for the Washington Monument. It falls on the north-south axis between the White House and Jefferson Memorial. The new Great Lawn in front of the amphitheater is both a performance and meeting space for 10,000 people. Tree plantings line walkways, define spaces and provide badly needed shade.

The entry to a new underground Mall visitors center and Washington Monument museum is on the axis between the Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial. It allows entry to the monument, reveals its foundations and also provides space for concessions, bicycle rentals, restrooms and event staging and storage.

The plaza and "People's Forum" area surrounding the monument provides spaces for public events, performances and exhibitions with shady allées, an American Arboretum and wetland plantings. A water element recalls L'Enfant's original canal.

— Karolina Kawiaka

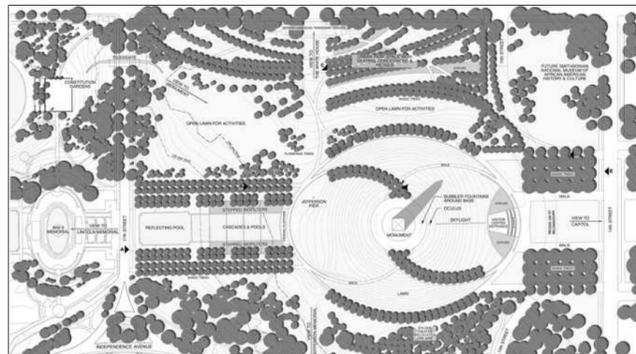


JINWOO LIM

'You and Me': A changing pathway

Since it was constructed, the Washington Monument has stood amid a variety of urban, natural and historical backdrops. I propose a broad circular pathway that will create new relationships between visitors and the monument, the city and nature as the visitors move around it. The pathway intersects with existing paths around the monument, and it links to the monument itself through an underground passage. Walls, slopes and steps rise and fall along the path, causing visitors to experience the presence of the monument in different ways at different points, in the same way that the monument — the tallest structure in the District — is a constant but changing companion to those who live and work in the city.

— Jinwoo Lim



STEPHEN LEDERACH

'Arcs of Shade': Reforesting the edges

Throughout the Mall, shade trees invite pedestrians and define spaces formally along the east-west axis and informally along the north-south axis. "Arcs of Shade" reforests the edges, walks and large areas of the Washington Monument grounds, keeps both axes open and preserves the Mall's grand design vision. These tree-shaded areas include paved surfaces, benches, low plantings, drinking fountains, bathroom facilities and occasional refreshment stands.

To the west, a grand, tree-flanked water stairway ties the Lincoln reflecting pool and World War II Memorial into the Washington Monument grounds. Groves on the north emphasize the axis running between the White House and the Jefferson Memorial while creating a new urban park that includes interlaced walks, plazas, seating and concessions.

On the east side, putting 15th Street underground improves pedestrian safety while allowing the formal Mall trees to extend toward the Washington Monument, creating an attractive connection between the Mall's greensward and the monument grounds. An underground visitors center with skylight views of the monument provides shelter. Finally, arriving at the monument base rewards the visitor with large bubbling fountains, creating a cooling platform with benches for enjoying the dramatic views.

— Stephen Lederach



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