

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Name of Property
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page 1

Supplementary Listing Record

NRIS Reference Number: SG100004189

Date Listed: 07/19/2019

Property Name: District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

County: District of  
Columbia

State: DC

-----  
This Property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation

  
-----  
Signature of the Keeper

07/19/2019  
-----  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

**Significance:**

The names of *Hildreth Meiere (artist)*, *Wayland Gregory (artist)*, and *John Earley (artist)* are added under Architect/Builder. [Given the property's significance under Art, the names of the relevant artists should be included in the contributing designers list.]

*Community Planning and Development* is added as an area of significance. [The building's extended planning and construction history reflected important patterns of city planning in the district and the building's final construction significantly impacted the Judiciary Square/Pennsylvania Avenue streetscape and city plan.]

-----  
The DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SHPO was notified of this amendment.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

4189

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Other names/site number: Henry P. Daly Building/Metropolitan Police Center

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 300 Indiana Avenue NW (301 C Street NW)

City or town: Washington, D.C. State: DC County: \_\_\_\_\_

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide   X   local

Applicable National Register Criteria: X

  X   A     B   X   C     D

<u>David Maloney</u>	<u>DAVID MALONEY / DC SHPO</u>	<u>6/3/2019</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date
<u>DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE</u>		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

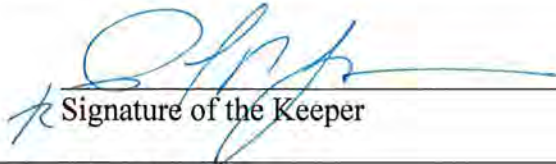
District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

  
Signature of the Keeper

7/19/2019  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	sites
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>                    </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   0  

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/Government Office

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/Government Office

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

---

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Moderne \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: \_Limestone, granite, steel, aluminum\_\_\_\_\_

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

---

### Summary Paragraph

This nomination consists of the District of Columbia Municipal Center building (contributing building), its associated plaza (contributing site), and the Police Memorial fountain (contributing object). The Municipal Center and plaza are located south of Judiciary Square and are bounded on the south by C Street NW, on the north by Indiana Avenue, on the west by the western edge of the plaza, and on the east by the western edge of an open and grassy area that separates the Municipal Center building from the United States Department of Labor building.

Known as the Henry P. Daly Building since 1995, the District of Columbia Municipal Center building is an office building which today houses the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police Department, the District of Columbia Department of Motor Vehicles, and other city offices. Constructed between 1938 and 1941 with the aid of Public Works Administration funds, the limestone-clad Municipal Center reflects a Classical Moderne style often associated with New Deal civic buildings. The building itself is a collaboration of Municipal Architects Albert Harris and Nathan Wyeth with Arved Kundzin, William B. Harris, Edward Donn, Fred Murphy—and the reviewing agencies, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. The Municipal Center also comprises notable artwork, including terra cotta friezes by Hildreth Meière and Waylande Gregory within the building’s internal courtyards;

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

and a tile mosaic map of the District of Columbia, designed by architect Eric Menke for the floor of the C Street lobby.

The plaza, on the west side of the building, is an expansive walkway that spans the broad axis between the Municipal Center and the D.C. Superior Court Building (Moultrie Courthouse). Designed by the Municipal Architect's Office, the plaza was built contemporaneously with the Municipal Center building, closing off the block of John Marshall Place between C Street and Indiana Avenue NW.<sup>1</sup> The plaza provides a vista between Pennsylvania Avenue on the south and the Old City Hall (later Courthouse), designed by architect George Hadfield on Judiciary Square in 1820. The plaza mediates between the elevation of C Street and Indiana Avenue, which is approximately thirty feet higher, with two flights of steps. The taller flight, which provides access to Indiana Avenue, is flanked by slabs of pink granite, which bear sculptural relief panels by sculptors Lee Lawrie and John Gregory.

The Police Memorial (1940-41) fountain, designed by John J. Earley, is a low-lying octagonal-shaped polychromatic concrete fountain with a circular water basin set within it. Sited near the northwest corner of the building, the fountain was designed and built as a memorial to local police killed in the line of duty.

During the planning stages in the 1920s and early 1930s, the term "Municipal Center" referred to a series of judicial and administrative buildings planned for Judiciary Square and the squares to its south on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue. By the late 1930s, the name became synonymous with the administrative building alone, as it is the central element among the campus structures constructed in the New Deal era. In 1943, the D.C. Recorder of Deeds building (1943) was erected, and in 1977-78, the D.C. Superior Court (H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse of the District of Columbia) building was erected, completing the complex by mirroring the massing and materials of this first building. Today, the name Municipal Center is popularly applied to the administrative building itself. For purposes of this nomination, the term Municipal Center refers to the administrative building, and "Municipal Center Campus" is used to refer to the entire complex and its component buildings.

---

## **Narrative Description**

### Site

The Municipal Center building and site is bounded by C Street NW to the south and Indiana Avenue to the north. On the west, the site includes an axial plaza that extends from C Street NW on the south to Indiana Avenue on the north and spans the width between the Municipal Center and the D.C. Superior Court (H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse) building across from it, constructed 1978. The plaza, designed as part of the Municipal Center complex, provides a vista between the

---

<sup>1</sup> John Marshall Place was the stretch of 4-1/2 Street NW from Pennsylvania Avenue on the south to Indiana Avenue NW on the north. The block between C Street and Indiana Avenue was closed to traffic and turned into a plaza as part of the Municipal Center complex in 1939-41. The block between Pennsylvania Avenue and C Street NW was closed by 1985 when the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation installed the bronze statue of John Marshall and developed the former roadbed into a park, called John Marshall Park.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

National Mall and the Hadfield-designed City Hall at the south end of Judiciary Square.

Sometimes referred to as the John Marshall Plaza, the plaza extends north of John Marshall Park which itself spans the former John Marshall Place roadbed between Pennsylvania Avenue and C Street NW.

The plaza mediates between the elevation of C Street and Indiana Avenue, which is approximately thirty feet higher, with two flights of steps. The taller flight, which provides access to Indiana Avenue, is bordered by massive stair walls of pink granite that are an extension of the raised foundation of the Municipal Center. Two piers flanking the broad stair landing bear high relief sculptural panels on their southern sides. The panel on the east pier, titled *Urban Life*, was sculpted by John Gregory in 1941. It illustrates various aspects of organized urban life—courts, hospital, business and sanitation—in allegorical manner. The courts are represented by a seated Maia, the mother of Mercury by Zeus; Aesculapius, god of healing, standing with his staff, represents hospitals; Mercury in flight represents commerce; and Vesta, goddess of the hearth, represents sanitation. The panel on the west pier, *Columbia*, was begun in 1941 by artist Lee Lawrie, but was completed by sculptor Harold C. Vogel several decades later. The panel, meant to symbolize Light, Water and Thoroughfare, depicts Columbia pouring water into a basin held by a mother and child on one side. On the other side, Columbia is holding a lamp to light the way for her departing assistant. When the piece was two-thirds completed, holes in the granite began to develop and work on the panel was halted, not to resume until 1974 as part of the construction of the adjacent D.C. Superior Courthouse. At that time, sculptor Harold C. Vogel finished carving the work and fitted pieces of matching granite into the holes that had developed in the defective granite.

At its north end, the site includes a Police Memorial (1940-41) fountain. Designed by John J. Earley, it is a low-lying octagonal-shaped ornamental concrete fountain with a circular water basin set within it. The fountain is located on a small concrete plaza raised slightly above sidewalk level and located near the northwest corner of the building. The outer wall surface of the basin is decorated with a mosaic of strings of white laurel leaves against a terracotta-colored background with blue bordering the upper and lower bounds of the surface. The fountain wall is capped by a neutral-toned concrete cap that essentially forms a seat around the water feature. The engraving “Police Memorial” is found in front of the fountain, laid within the concrete surface. This surface is bordered by a broad band of red-tinted concrete. The color, treatment and textures of the fountain are characteristic of the architectural concrete work of John J. Earley.<sup>2</sup>

On the east, a grassy lawn separates the Municipal Center from the Department of Labor (Frances Perkins) building. This open space includes a statue of Albert Pike towards the north end facing Indiana Avenue, a modern sculpture at the southern end, and is crisscrossed with pedestrian paths. The space, not designed as part of the Municipal Center Complex, is not included within the site boundaries.

### The Municipal Center

---

<sup>2</sup> John J. Earley’s architectural concrete works are well-known in D.C. and many are listed in the National Register.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

The Municipal Center building is a six-story, smooth-cut limestone clad office building designed in a Classical Moderne style. The building is characterized by its massing, articulated by slightly projecting central pavilions on each elevation, the stepping of the upper floors and a mechanical penthouse, and by an array of long and narrow window openings spanning three of the building's six stories. Each bay of openings—aluminum framed windows in vertical ribbons—is recessed from the limestone façade and framed by implied pilasters that are delicately carved into the ashlar limestone. The pilasters are fluted and capped by stylized capitals in low relief reflecting Art Deco design treatment.

A granite base having a purplish hue contrasts with the light limestone walls. The main roofline at the height of the building is topped by a projecting cornice above a carved frieze decorated with repeating anthemia. Other Moderne motifs include floral-patterned spandrels and extensive use of then-innovative materials such as polished aluminum in the light fixtures between the entrance doors and in water fountains and public telephone stands inside the building.

The building is reached on both the north, Indiana Avenue and south, C Street sides across paved entry courts and up steps. The Indiana Avenue elevation is the more prominent and formal one with broader steps leading to three long and narrow openings functioning as the primary entrance doors. A pair of streamlined Art Deco-styled lampposts flank the main entrance to the building on the Indiana Avenue façade, at the edge of the sidewalk and preceding the steps leading to the entrance doors. The lampposts—tall and fluted stone columns—support octagonal glass lanterns ornamented with brass eagles with wings raised vertically. Although these lampposts appear to be original features, they were not erected on the site until the 1980s. Lower bollards between these Deco lampposts were constructed more recently as a security feature. The lampposts may have been based upon historic drawings, though none has been identified.

A broad brick walk leads from the sidewalk to the entrance steps, up to the entrance of the building. The façade of the main block extends thirteen bays long with the three central entrance bays on-center and five bays to either side. The three central bays historically provided access to the building, though now only the center bay functions for entry. Still, the vertical polished aluminum framework around each pair of the three historic doorways provides a seamless link to the continuous framing of the window ribbon above. Cast aluminum entrance doors which curved out from the building to enclose interior revolving doors, emblazoned with the monogram "MP" were removed from the building in the 1980s and placed in storage. A pair of aluminum-framed and glazed doors fill the still-functioning center entrance, while metal enclosures bowing outward fill the flanking door openings. Polished aluminum grills having an Art Deco ziggurat form, fill the transom levels over the current and former door openings.

Five bays of ribbon windows are located to either side of the three center entrance bays. All thirteen bays span the three floors of the building's principal block, are recessed into the limestone walls, and are defined by the incised pilasters described above. The ribbon windows have aluminum frames with mullions and muntins dividing the windows of each floor into six lights with a large central light, flanking sidelights and a three-part transom light. Ornamental aluminum spandrel panels separate each of the windows between the floors. In the ribbons above the doors, the spandrel panels are decorated with raised bas relief having a stylized floral design



District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

with vertical emphasis. In the bays to either side of the entrance, the spandrels have a geometric design featuring two tiers of stacked semi-circles.

On the C Street façade, due to the change in grade, the raised pink granite foundation level forms the first floor of the building, with three floors of ribbon windows above. As on the Indiana Avenue side of the building, the three central bays provide entry to the building. Here, however, the entrances are punched into the granite base, while the ribbon windows span the floors above. Transom panels above the doors (replacements) on C Street feature an aluminum sunburst motif rather than the ziggurat form found on the Indiana Avenue façade. The ribbon windows above the granite base are identical to those on the Indiana Avenue façade, including the ornamental treatment of the spandrel panels.

Above the main block of ribbon ribbons, a projecting cornice runs continuously around the building. Inscribed below this cornice in the central sections of the Indiana Avenue and C Street facades is the legend "District of Columbia." On all facades, the inset window ribbons terminate with the fourth floor. The fifth-floor, flush with the plane of the walls below, is less ornate and consists of punched rectangular windows divided into three panes by vertical aluminum strips that are aligned with the window ribbons below. Above a second cornice divided into three sections by extruded horizontal bands is the sixth floor whose punched rectangular windows are aligned with those below and separated into four panes by polished aluminum framing. Above the sixth floor is the building's main cornice, which is rounded at the top and ornamented with a well-defined incised geometric pattern. The windowless seventh floor is more deeply set-back than the fifth floor and not visible from the public right-of-way.

On the west façade, a small, porch-like portico with four square columns fronts on the plaza near the northwest corner of the building. It was intended to face a similar portico on the west Administrative building planned for the opposite side of the plaza. Although this building was never constructed, the Moultrie Courthouse was completed on the site in 1978 with a projecting portico that addresses that on the Municipal Center building.

### Interior

The Municipal building has a rectangular footprint with a central open court area that is in turn divided into an east and west court by an internal wing. This internal wing, one story lower than the exterior walls, spans the north and south wings of the building at its midpoint, thereby dividing the interior court into two. These two courtyards (east and west courtyards) are open-roofed, and landscaped spaces with office windows opening onto them, and accessible to occupants of the building at the ground floor level. A ceramic tile mural by artist Hildreth Meiere titled "Health and Welfare" is mounted above the first-story windows on the west wall of the east courtyard. Wayland Gregory's "Democracy in Action" ceramic tile mural is mounted on the east wall of the west courtyard. Both artists were awarded their projects as part of a competition sponsored by the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

The C Street and Indiana Avenue entrances give egress to entrance foyers with ornamental plaster ceilings, polished aluminum fixtures, and highly-polished tinted terrazzo floors. The C Street lobby (at ground level) features a colored terrazzo floor depicting a map of the District of

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

Columbia. The foyers in turn give on to elevator lobbies (north and south banks), while east and west elevators can be found on-center of their respective wings. Long, double-loaded corridors lead down the center of all four principal wings of the building and provide access to a myriad of offices and rooms. Terrazzo floors and light brown/greyish stone wainscoting are found throughout the corridors.

Hildreth Meiere's "Health and Welfare" Art Deco mural extends eighty-one feet long and ranges eight-feet wide. It is located at an eighteen-foot height, above the first-story openings on the west wall of the east courtyard. It is a brightly colored frieze of glazed terra cotta consisting of a series of ten narrative vignettes that depict the health benefits and social services available to Washington residents in 1941. Each vignette, designed closely together, reads as a continuous entity. The scenes range from children and geriatrics receiving medical care, to an agricultural inspector examining agricultural goods, to two families applying for social security, and a young couple applying for the adoption of a boy in front of a city official's desk. As noted by James Goode in *Washington Sculpture*, Meiere has created a feeling of liveliness in the treatment of the figures' faces: those in the background have concave features, while those in the foreground have faces in relief. Meiere employed the Atlantic Terra Cotta Company to produce the frieze from the detailed drawings that she prepared, and lavished praise on the company's sculptor, Klimo for his role in the work.<sup>3</sup>

Waylande Gregory (1905-1971), a notable American ceramic sculptor of the twentieth century, both designed and executed his work, *Democracy in America*, at the Municipal Center. Like Meiere's, it is similarly an 81-foot-long by eight-foot wide frieze of ceramic tile. It is located above the first story openings of the east wall of the west courtyard and consists of five scenes made up of more than 500 separate tiles, each measuring approximately 14 inches square and glazed in both pastel and dark shades. The scenes of the composition include fifty life-size, low-relief figures depicting functions of the District's Police Department, Fire Department, and the Department of Motor Vehicles. The five scenes of the frieze portray traffic officials directing traffic, helping pedestrians in the midst of street protestors, firemen fighting a fire, and police apprehending criminals and lost animals.<sup>4</sup>

## **INTEGRITY**

The Municipal Center and plaza retain high integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The building and its plaza stand out as the completed elements of a larger and never fully executed municipal complex. The New Deal-era building is

---

<sup>3</sup> See [www.hildrethmeiere.org/commissions/municipal-center](http://www.hildrethmeiere.org/commissions/municipal-center)

<sup>4</sup> Shortly after the frieze was installed in 1941, it was embroiled in controversy. One of the panels depicting the Police Department contains two policemen in the act of grabbing a criminal and brutally beating him with a club. The Police Department found this depiction objectionable and sought to have the panel removed, but sculptor Paul Manship and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt intervened to save the work of art. The frieze, including that scene, survives.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

physically and architecturally grand, yet it is respectfully sited off-axis from the historic George Hadfield-designed city hall complex just north of it, allowing unimpeded views to the older landmark building. The building and its plaza include notable works of art that are indicative of art works from the New Deal era. The only alteration of note is the removal of the historic doors. The replacement doors fit within the original openings, retain the original aluminum frames and ornamentation above, and thus do not detract from the building as a whole.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

ART

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1941

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1941

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Nathan C. Wyeth and Albert Harris, Municipal Architects

Arved Kundzin (staff architect)

Eric Menke (staff architect)

Victor T. Givotovsky (civil engineer)

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Constructed between 1938 and 1941 with the aid of Public Works Administration funds, the Municipal Center was initially planned to be part of a larger municipal center complex. However, while still in design, the District government erected separately two buildings to house a Police Court, Municipal Court and Juvenile Court, relieving the demand for court space that was to be included in the complex. Similarly, the Recorder of Deeds, intended to be included in the Municipal Center, moved into its own new building one block west in 1943. Ultimately, the U.S. Courthouse for the District of Columbia and the Embassy of Canada were built on part of the site intended for District court buildings; and in 1977-78, the present D.C. Superior Court (Moultrie Courthouse) building was completed, carefully designed to mirror the materials, massing and porticoes of the Municipal Center. The Municipal Center and its plaza survive as the central element of a larger incomplete plan for the Municipal Center complex. The Municipal Center was designed in a stately Classical Moderne style, and has continued to fill an important civic need, housing the Metropolitan Police Department, the Department of Motor Vehicles and other city agencies.

The Municipal Center and Plaza meet National Register Criterion A with Politics/Government as its Area of Significance and National Register Criterion C with Art and Architecture as its Areas of Significance. Under Criterion A, the Municipal Center represents the expanding role of government, especially in the areas of public safety and social welfare services, as well as the development of modern municipal administration for the District; and in the development of a Municipal Center complex to accommodate these civic needs. The construction of the Municipal Center also represents the response of both local government and the Roosevelt Administration to the Great Depression. Its construction with Public Works Administration grants and loans, after years of congressional delay and insufficient funding, is emblematic of the active engagement that the New Deal sought to develop with urban governments.

The Municipal Center is particularly significant to the development of an independent identity for the District of Columbia, and the struggle to perform its municipal functions autonomously, which culminated in the successful Home Rule movement of the 1970s. This process must be traced through a forest of complications and seeming contradictions that reflected the political, social, and economic realities of its times. The Municipal Center plan changed greatly in the fifteen years that separated its inception and actual construction, because it evolved in response to some of the most tumultuous events of the twentieth century, the Great Depression and the coming of World War II. Its development reflected constant political tensions among fiscally-conservative members of Congress, the city's New Deal supporters, the federal Commission of Fine Arts, whose chair pronounced fiscal and practical concerns to be less important than aesthetic considerations, the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, which sought to adhere to urban planning principles, and the Municipal Architect and District Commissioners. On the surface, the District government lost some important design battles, such as the struggle over obstructing John Marshall Place NW with the building, although their outcome ultimately accomplished municipal goals by a more circuitous route. As with virtually every other large-

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

scale urban plan, the full design of the Municipal Center campus was never fully realized, here, because the forces of suburban flight and de-urbanization became pronounced shortly after the war which disrupted its construction. However, its most essential element, the Municipal Center building and its plaza, were built and, along with the municipal courthouses and Recorder of Deeds Building, became the expression of a modern identity for the District.

The development of the Municipal Center and its plaza were an important influence in the cityscape of Washington, DC. Envisioned as the central element in a link between Judiciary Square, the Mall, and the Federal Triangle, the Municipal Center and plaza is emblematic of the struggle to reconcile urban development with the L'Enfant Plan. Its construction reflects the re-conceptualizing of lower Pennsylvania Avenue as a ceremonial street of civic buildings framing the Capitol from a nondescript strip of local businesses. Moreover, as reflected in the conflict between the NCPC, CFA, and District Commissioners, the Municipal Center and its siting exerted a considerable physical effect on the traffic flow and development of the surrounding cityscape.

The Municipal Center also meets National Register Criterion C as an outstanding example of the Classical Moderne architectural style, which is symbolically associated with New Deal-era civic buildings. The use of this style deliberately sought to elevate municipal government architecture to that of the federal government and to integrate the two into the landscape plan for national monuments such as the National Mall and the U.S. Capitol Grounds. Moreover, the Classical Moderne style conveys the political symbolism of the Roosevelt Administration's "activist and interventionist approach" to federal-urban government relations. At the same time, the style's use of abstract classical elements creates a link to the Hadfield Courthouse, the city's original city hall in Judiciary Square.

The Municipal Center represents the work of master architects Albert Harris and Nathan C. Wyeth, as well as the ensemble work of an outstanding Office of the Municipal Architect staff. It incorporates a program of architectural art that includes important work by such widely-acknowledged masters as John J. Earley, Hildreth Meiere, and Wayland Gregory, as well as an outstanding individual work by the lesser-known municipal employee-artist Eric Menke.

The planning and design of the Municipal Center took many decades; however, the Period of Significance is limited to 1941, the year of completion of the building and plaza. Although one of the plaza relief sculptures was not finished until the mid-1970s due to structural deficiencies of the stone, the panel was eventually completed according to the original design, so the 1941 date still holds.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **The Evolution of the Municipal Center Concept**

Although it has sometimes been eclipsed by other plans, the concept of a District of Columbia governmental campus is almost as old as the city itself. In 1840, Judiciary Square, the reservation designated for the federal judiciary by the L'Enfant Plan, instead held such municipal buildings as the city hall-courthouse, a jail, a school, and a public hospital. However, as the nineteenth century progressed, the square became increasingly devoted to federal facilities and the Old City Hall became exclusively a courthouse. City offices dispersed to leased commercial buildings on nearby streets, including the Smith Building at First and C Streets NW and the Walker Building at 462 Louisiana Avenue NW.

As the District's population grew, its government expanded in size and complexity. Although many municipal offices relocated to the new District Building at Thirteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW in 1908, the city government soon overflowed even this "handsomest municipal building in North America."<sup>5</sup> It took decades of political struggle before a new building program sought to consolidate its scattered municipal accommodations. Although its construction is closely associated with Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, the District of Columbia Municipal Center had its origins in the urban planning projects of the Coolidge and Hoover Administrations and its trigger in the building of the Federal Triangle.

### **The Growth of the Federal City and the Federal Triangle Plan.**

During the early twentieth century, while the United States became both an imperial power and an urban nation, the federal workforce expanded almost continuously. Federal agencies were scattered about the city in inadequately-sized, obsolescent buildings, and, when the government mobilized for World War I, its so-called "tempo" office buildings spilled onto the mall. Within ten years, the number of federal employees doubled to 60,000 and the Commerce Department workforce labored at twenty different locations.<sup>6</sup>

During the Coolidge Administration, the movement to create a unified federal office district achieved critical mass. In 1926, Congress appropriated \$50,000,000 to create the "Federal Triangle," a set of massive office buildings to replace the eclectic mix of commercial, residential, and municipal structures on either side of Pennsylvania Avenue between Seventh and Fifteenth Streets NW.<sup>7</sup> While each of the Triangle's seven monumentally-scaled buildings was designed by a different "architectural consultant" to the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, the buildings, shared essential similarities. Except for one federal architect, all the consultants were principals in prominent firms in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, or San Francisco.<sup>8</sup> Five were graduates of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and all seven, in the words of art

<sup>5</sup> "Splendor Marks Baptism Of Home: Municipal Building Is Dedicated," *Washington Post*; Jul 5, 1908; 1

<sup>6</sup> James Goode, "Introduction" in Volkmar Wentzel. *Washington by Night*. (Washington, DC: Starwood Press, 1992) 13.

<sup>7</sup> "\$165,000,000 Public Building Measure Signed By Coolidge," *The Washington Post*, May 26, 1926, 5.

<sup>8</sup> George Gurney. *The Sculpture of the Federal Triangle*. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1979), 51-54.



District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

historian George Gurney, “had worked in ... the architectural firms that had determined the classical Beaux Arts style of buildings in Washington as envisioned by the McMillan Commission.”<sup>9</sup> Their buildings differed in classical orders, from John Russell Pope’s Corinthian National Archives, to the mixed Roman Ionic-Doric of William Delano’s Post Office Department, to the Doric of York and Sawyer’s Department of Commerce, but all were neoclassical in style. The choice of Beaux Arts neoclassicism for the “grand design” of the Triangle symbolically conveyed the proper mix of gravitas, authority, and traditionalism. It communicated that the buildings’ purpose was more than utility, for, as President Herbert Hoover would note at a 1929 conference that promoted the construction of the Triangle:

Washington is not only the nation’s capital. By its dignity and architectural inspiration we stimulate pride in our country; we encourage the elevation of thought and character which comes from great architecture.<sup>10</sup>

Although seven years had passed since the initial appropriation, just two of the Triangle buildings had been completed when Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in March 1933. It became the new president’s responsibility to construct the five remaining buildings to their previously-approved designs.

### **Governing the Federal City**

As the 1920s began, the District of Columbia’s long-restive relationship with the federal government grew increasingly tense. Residents of the federal enclave had no representatives in the congresses which determined the municipal budget and no voice in electing the nation’s president, who appointed the board of commissioners which governed the city. Key municipal offices were patronage plums, handed out to the favorites of powerful national politicians for services rendered far from the District of Columbia residents they served. The early decades of the twentieth century bought an increasing volume of cries for “home rule” from local political and civic groups.

While the federal government struggled to consolidate its ever-expanding functions, the District of Columbia government confronted problems wrought by urbanization. Driven in part by the expansion of the federal workforce, the District’s population had grown 63% between 1900 and 1920.<sup>11</sup> The demands of governing a city of this expanding scale overwhelmed the District Building and dispersed key offices across downtown. However, the District government’s building program was limited by its finances. From the mid-1920s, Congress contributed an ever-lower percentage of the city’s operating costs, leaving the shortfall to local taxpayers. Appeals for appropriations to fund municipal construction proposals were regarded with a bleak eye by a coalition of what the *Washington Post* called “lawmakers from the wide-open spaces” and other influential fiscal conservatives.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>11</sup> Campbell Gibson. *Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 To 1990: Population Division Working Paper 27* (Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 1998) Tables 13-15.

<sup>12</sup> “The District Goat,” *The Washington Post*; Dec 18, 1925; 6.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

The city's judicial system was staggering under its workload by the mid-1920s. District motor vehicle registrations rose risen twenty-fold between 1913 and 1924, and, with the institution of Prohibition in 1919, the city Police Court became "clogged with bootleggers and drunks," in the words of its clerk.<sup>13</sup> As the chief magistrate would later complain, its Victorian era building was so crowded that prisoners, attorneys, and witnesses were forced to stand for hours before parading through other trials on their way to their assigned courtroom. Because it had been built before women could serve on juries, the courthouse lacked women's restrooms. By the mid-1920s, proposals to unify District courts at Judiciary Square, as suggested by the 1901 McMillan Plan, had been approved by the federal government's Commission on Fine Arts (CFA).<sup>14</sup> In 1926, the year that it funded the Federal Triangle project, Congress endorsed the new courthouse plan.

The Triangle project created a crisis in municipal services. Among the hundreds of buildings in the area to be cleared were two fire houses, a police precinct station, the municipal "lodging house" for transients, and the District Building itself.<sup>15</sup> In late 1926, after their request for a parcel of land for replacement structures was soundly rebuffed by Treasury Department officials, the District Commissioners complained that police and fire stations might have to move to tents.<sup>16</sup> Proposals were advanced for a new central police headquarters at some other site which could house additional municipal functions.<sup>17</sup> Within a short time, these plans focused on Judiciary Square, which had been proposed as the site for a consolidated municipal building as early as 1886, and its environs to the south.<sup>18</sup>

### **Siting the Municipal Center**

In 1926, Judiciary Square still resembled the original "Reservation 7" on L'Enfant's Plan; a three-by-two block rectangle of green space amid the urban grid. The small municipal and federal buildings of the Civil War era had long been cleared, and the expansive open square was now bounded on the north by Montgomery Meigs' fortress-sized red brick Pension Building of 1887 and on the south by George Hadfield's City Hall, later Courthouse (**See historic map, *Image 1***). Hadfield's "Old Courthouse" had lent its "Grecian revival" lines to Architect of the Capitol Elliott Woods' white limestone Court of Appeals, built to its north and west in 1910. Six years later, Woods remodeled the Old Courthouse, re-cladding its stuccoed brick walls in limestone.

Before the Civil War, the neighborhood around Judiciary Square had been home to persons of wealth and prominence, such as Daniel Webster. However, residential fashion had long since moved north and west, and, although some impressive antebellum structures survived, the area

---

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Table 418, Motor Vehicle Registrations By State," in *Statistical Abstract of the United States for 1930*: (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1930), 387 and "Crimes Jam Court, Clerk Tells House," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 19, 1926, 20.

<sup>14</sup> "Arts Commission For Court Building In Judiciary Square," *Washington Post*; Jun 15, 1926; 7.

<sup>15</sup> "Dougherty Plans Housing Of Police And Fire Companies," *The Washington Post*; Dec 4, 1926; 24.

<sup>16</sup> Carlisle Barger. "Fight For District Improvement Plan Goes To Congress," *The Washington Post*; Dec 8, 1926.

<sup>17</sup> "Central Police Station Called Pressing Need," *The Washington Post*; Dec 14, 1926; 2.

<sup>18</sup> "A New District Building: Plans Of A Proposed Handsome Edifice," *Washington Post*; Apr 10, 1886; 2 and "Decision to Congress On Building of Police Court," *Washington Post*; Dec 12, 1926; M4.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

was now a mix of late nineteenth century row houses and office buildings, commercial garages, aging hotels, and light industry. South of Judiciary Square lay a tract of four L'Enfant Plan squares, cut into irregular shapes by the inverted cup traced by Louisiana Avenue, D Street, and Indiana Avenue on the north and the sharp diagonal of Pennsylvania Avenue on the south. This tract, composed of Squares 490, 491, 533, and Reservation 10, was bisected north-to-south by C Street NW and east-to-west by John Marshall Place, the northernmost segment of Four and a Half Street, which ran from Southwest Washington across the mall to the steps of the Hadfield Courthouse (**See historic map, *Image 2* and historic photo, *Image 11***). Although the city owned only a small portion of its land, the tract included the Municipal Court and several aging office buildings that had been intermittently leased by the District Government. It soon became the proposed site for a municipal center campus.

Although they shared the nondescript character of their neighbors, the squares in the municipal center tract occupied an extremely strategic location for federal city planners. Even as land was purchased and cleared for the Federal Triangle, the federal government had embarked on an ambitious effort to enlarge and beautify the Capitol Grounds and National Mall. In addition to demolishing "Uncle Sam's Hotels," the ranks of brick dormitories built for female war workers in the Union Station Plaza, the project would clear several fully developed squares and eradicate several streets between the Mall and the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue. This would leave the proposed Municipal Center tract as the civic campus linking Judiciary Square to the newly-expanded Mall, as well as to the developing Federal Triangle to its southwest. In addition to Congress' usual budgetary concerns, this made the city's plans of immense interest to the federal government.

Armed with Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) and congressional approvals, Municipal Architect Albert Harris began preparing plans for new municipal buildings in late 1926. However, in February 1927, the Anti-Deficiency Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee denied funding for a new Police Court building in Judiciary Square, ostensibly because its proposed site at the corner of Fourth and E Streets NW lacked space for expansion.<sup>19</sup> In April, the subcommittee chair, notably tight-fisted Representative Louis Cramton (R-MI), shared his feelings with the CFA.<sup>20</sup> His letter advised that he was "unalterably opposed" to disturbing the square's trees and parkland and suggested that expanding and giving a face-lift to the existing Police Court Building just west of the square would offer greater economies than "any monumental structure in Judiciary Square."<sup>21</sup>

Cramton was not the only critic of siting municipal buildings in Judiciary Square. His proposal paralleled a turf battle among the judges of the city's courts that was playing out in the

---

<sup>19</sup> "\$1,250,000 for City in Deficiency Bill Passed," *The Washington Post*; Feb 27, 1927; 2.

<sup>20</sup> Moderate Republican Representative Frederick Zihlman of Maryland, chair of the House District Committee, criticized Cramton (sometimes spelled "Crampton") for being the architect of the policy of appropriating a flat annual sum which represented an ever-declining fraction of the District's operating costs. See Frederick N. Zihlman. "The Federal District," *The Washington Post*; May 22, 1926, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Representative Louis Cramton to the Commission on Fine Arts, April 1, 1927, (Unpublished), National Archives, Records Group 66, Box 47. See "City Heads Accused Of Move To Block Police Court Home," *Washington Post*; Feb 1, 1927; 1.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

newspapers. The Police Court was considered the city's "lowest" court for the nature of the offenses it tried, as well as the social status of many of its defendants. At times, some had questioned whether it would be appropriate to locate it within the Municipal Court, which tried civil cases and more serious offenses. During the winter of 1926-27, Gus Schuldt, chief judge of the Police Court, publicly rebelled at the idea of consolidated courthouses, charging that it was a plot by the District Commissioners to expropriate his court and demanded the construction of a new Police Court on the site of the existing courthouse west of the square. The *Washington Post* also reported opposition from unnamed local sources, who had proposed transforming the Pension Building into a National Guard Armory with Judiciary Square as its parade ground and placing the new Police Court on Indiana Avenue.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps interpreting Cramton's letter as a signal that Congress might fund a project adjacent to Judiciary Square, Harris revised his plan. On May 28, 1927 he presented CFA with a "Civic Center" site plan that had been approved by the District Commissioners. As described in the CFA minutes, this preliminary design showed the campus south of Judiciary Square, extending along Pennsylvania Avenue from Third to Sixth Streets NW, with John Marshall Place as its central axis. In the center of John Marshall Place, which had an exceptionally wide 90-foot right-of-way, was a tree-shaded parking court extending south from the Hadfield Courthouse at D Street to Pennsylvania Avenue. Although the plan did not label individual buildings, the CFA minutes identified buildings intended for the campus: the Police, Municipal, and Juvenile Courts, a Recorder of Deeds Building, an Administration Building, and a Fire Department Headquarters.

The CFA was so favorably impressed by Harris' plan that it recommended adding triangular Squares 459 and 460, between Six and Seventh Streets NW, as parkland to balance the design and provide a more appropriate vista for the Department of Justice Building planned for construction diagonally across Pennsylvania Avenue.<sup>23</sup>

On September 15, 1927, the CFA met with a delegation that included the District Commissioners, Municipal Architect Harris, and Public Buildings Commission chair U.S. Grant III to further refine this plan. The District Commissioners now proposed constructing three buildings: a Police and Fire Department Headquarters Building at Louisiana Avenue and John Marshall Place, a municipal administration building fronting on Pennsylvania Avenue east of John Marshall Place, and a combination courthouse and Recorder of Deeds Building along Pennsylvania Avenue west of John Marshall Place.<sup>24</sup> Square 533, in the northeast corner of the tract, would be held for future expansion.

Noting that the Municipal Center would occupy a strategic location in federal plans, as well as aid in the redevelopment of lower Pennsylvania Avenue, the CFA expressed strong support for most of Harris' plan. Although its members approved the scale and height of Harris' proposed buildings, some muted dissatisfaction arose regarding their arrangement. The CFA advised the

---

<sup>22</sup> "Arts Board View On Square Unknown: Commission to Take Up Plans for Judiciary Block." *Washington Post*, Aug 27, 1926; 18.

<sup>23</sup> "Municipal Center, 1927-1933" Extracts from the Minutes of the Commission on Fine Arts, National Archives, RG 66, Box 47

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

commissioners that the Municipal Center Administration Building should be the central building in the tract and should occupy a position comparable to that of the Hadfield Courthouse in Judiciary Square. Longtime CFA Chair Charles Moore suggested that Harris review the alignment of the Civic Center in the Plan of Chicago.

The September meeting was an occasion of rare concord between the two sets of commissioners, whereas at the October CFA meeting, tensions seemed more pronounced. Harris reported that there were problems with situating the Municipal Building as the CFA had suggested and that he had no funds to do more than a preliminary revision of plans. CFA Chairman Moore then backpedaled slightly, stating that the CFA had not intended to prescribe a specific design and suggested that the District seek a special appropriation to develop the project.

On December 8, 1927, Harris and Assistant to the Engineer Commissioner William Atkins presented a complete set of plans and renderings to the CFA. The project now included a new avenue-width street connecting the intersection of Third Street and Pennsylvania Avenue with Union Station Plaza, a feature acclaimed by the CFA. John Marshall Place had become “a great open court” with a central fountain, accessible to pedestrians through a gate at Pennsylvania Avenue and by a double-tiered flight of steps from Louisiana Avenue. Acting as the campus’ north-south axis, this plaza separated two interlocking structures: the Recorder of Deeds Office and the Police Headquarters were located to the west, and the administrative building to the east **(See architectural rendering, *Image 3*)**.

It had always been intended that the new buildings would be of simple lines, harmonizing with the “Greek Revival” style of the Old District Courthouse and Court of Appeals, and Harris’ stylistic vision was appropriately conservative.<sup>25</sup> His “monumental buildings... of the classical order,”<sup>26</sup> whose unbroken main facades stretched along either side of John Marshall Place, were essentially a series of modular wings surrounding multiple interior courts. Along the C Street axis, a formal gateway gave access to the central courtyard of each building. On the west side of Sixth Street, which passed beneath an arch at Pennsylvania Avenue, triangular Squares 459 and 460 were occupied by a separate three-segmented building that straddled the axis of C Street.

Harris’ plan included two alternative schemes. One added a tower of eight stories to the northern module of the judicial structure, while the other created a circular court by curving the John Marshall Place façade of each building inward, anticipating Delano & Aldrich’s design for the Post Office Building in the Federal Triangle **(See architectural rendering, *Image 4*)**. This scheme treated Squares 459 and 460 as parkland, so, to compensate for lost space, the gates on the C Street axis were replaced by office wings which sealed off the central courtyards from the street. Neither of these more dramatic schemes won approval from the CFA. On December 14, 1927, the commission approved Harris’ preliminary layout, observing that it would “provide for the ultimate reclamation of what is now the least desirable portion of the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue.”<sup>27</sup> Under Harris, plans continued to evolve **(See architectural**

<sup>25</sup> “The Police Court Site,” *Washington Post*; Dec 9, 1926; 6.

<sup>26</sup> “Municipal Center, 1927-1933,” 8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

**rendering, *Image 5***). In 1928, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPC) agreed that the proposed tract should be the location for the Municipal Center.<sup>28</sup>

1929 saw the first actual efforts to construct the Municipal Center. In February, the *Washington Post* and other city newspapers published the Municipal Architect's drawing of the approved plan below headlines announcing that a bill to fund the project was before Congress. Although Representative Fiorello LaGuardia worried that the District would create an architectural hodgepodge that detracted from the neoclassical splendor of the Federal Triangle, in mid-June 1929 Congress authorized the expenditure of \$3,000,000 to acquire land in the Municipal Center tract.<sup>29</sup> House District Committee chair R. G. Simmons, a fiscally-conservative Republican from Scotts Bluff, Nebraska with "a reputation for pugnacity," noted that these funds came from the District's surplus deposited with the Treasury Department, and that purchasing the land would not cause the nation's taxpayers any added expense.<sup>30</sup>

By the end of the 1929 fiscal year, the District Commissioners had expended most of this initial appropriation and acquired a number of key properties. Although the CFA maintained that urban renewal was an important fringe benefit of the project, the press lamented the loss of such civic landmarks as the 1827 First Presbyterian Church and 1855 Metropolitan Memorial Methodist Church on John Marshall Place.<sup>31</sup> The District Government redeployed some of these doomed structures to temporarily relieve conditions in its overcrowded offices. The Walker Building at 462 Louisiana Avenue, which had housed many city offices before the construction of the District Building, became the new home of Police Headquarters, as well as the Playgrounds and Refuse Departments. The Employment Bureau moved into the First Presbyterian Church, and the 1827 National Hotel became the armory of the District National Guard.<sup>32</sup>

In 1929, Allied Architects, a local firm whose principals included Nathan C. Wyeth, Edward Donn, Fred Murphy, and landscape architect George Burnap, submitted an unsolicited design proposal for a "civic center." Congress appropriated an additional \$10,000 for design services and, just weeks after the September 1929 stock market crash, Albert L. Harris retained Allied Architects as design consultants for the Municipal Center.<sup>33</sup> During the year that followed the crash, the Municipal Center project remained extremely active. During the summer of 1930, Congress provided an additional \$3,000,000 for land acquisition, as well as an additional

---

<sup>28</sup> "District Site Approved By Planners," *The Washington Post*; Feb 15, 1928; 20.

<sup>29</sup> "House Passes Fund For Public Center," *The Washington Post*; Jun 8, 1929; 20.

<sup>30</sup> "Selling of District Building May Aid Municipal Center," Apr 25, 1929; 1 and "Municipal Center Funds To Be Asked," *Washington Post*; Jan 4, 1931; M15.

<sup>31</sup> David Rankin Barbee. "Famous Presbyterian Church Soon to Pass," *The Washington Post*; Dec 22, 1929; M17, David Rankin Barbee. "Historic Edifices, Dear to the Hearts of Antiquarians," *Washington Post*; Sep 13, 1931; MF1, and "Historic Church Passes for Municipal Center: Metropolitan Memorial." *Washington Post*; Jan 4, 1930; 1. Metropolitan Memorial Methodist's parishioners had included Presidents U.S. Grant and William McKinley.

<sup>32</sup> "Bureau Officials To Start Moving During This Week," *Washington Post*; Jul 27, 1930; M9 and Edward T. Folliard. "Old National Hotel To "Die" As Armory," *Washington Post*; Jan 12, 1930; 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Report of the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia for 1930*. (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1930), 57. See also "Individual Architects Employed on Center," *The Washington Post*; Oct 31, 1929; 10 and "Five Experts Begin Civic Center Plans," *The Washington Post*; Jan 5, 1930; 1.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

\$63,000 for architectural services, designs, and models.<sup>34</sup> By the end of the fiscal year, 92% of these funds had been spent and 82% of the land acquired. In June 1930, the District Commissioners requested congressional permission to hire specialized architects and technicians to work on the Municipal Center plans without regard to Civil Service classification or salary requirements.<sup>35</sup> By late 1930, a project architectural staff of twenty-five was shoe-horned into a room in the Municipal Architect's offices on the third floor of the District Building. In March 1931, the project staff, as well as Harris, moved to the newly-acquired Ford Motor Company Building, an Albert Kahn-designed showroom, service center, and warehouse at 451-455 Pennsylvania Avenue NW.<sup>36</sup> Although there was turnover during the near-dozen years it took to construct the Municipal Center, most of the key contributors to its design became involved at this time or shortly afterwards (**See historic photo, *Image 6***).

### **The Office of the Municipal Architect: Municipal Center Staff**

Nathan C. Wyeth was a key advisor to Albert L. Harris beginning in 1925, a principal partner in Allied Architects beginning in 1929, and Municipal Architect beginning in 1934. He was also the key influence in shaping the Municipal Center Campus

Wyeth was born April 20, 1870 in Chicago. His father, Charles J. Wyeth, a prosperous member of the Chicago Board of Trade, was a principal in the firm of Wyeth and Vandervoort, which sold malt to the brewing industry. Late in life, Nathan Wyeth would repeat a story about being carried from the path of the Chicago fire as a babe in arms.<sup>37</sup> Charles Wyeth died in 1873, and, in 1881, Wyeth's mother married General Orlando Bolivar Willcox, a Detroit attorney turned soldier awarded the Medal of Honor for leading multiple charges at the Battle of Bull Run.<sup>38</sup> After spending the remainder of the Civil War in Confederate prison camps, General Willcox had been assigned to the southwestern territories, where he spent much of the 1870s and 1880s battling Apache Indians. It is not known whether his step-children accompanied him to his post or whether they were placed in boarding school. After retiring from active duty in 1887, General Willcox became Director of the United States Soldiers Home and the Willcox-Wyeth family settled at 2022 R Street NW in Washington, DC, near Dupont Circle.<sup>39</sup>

Nathan Wyeth's architectural career could well have been derailed before it began. Charles Wyeth's will had provided his widow and two sons with an income based upon a principal of \$100,000 (the equivalent of several million dollars today) placed in trust with the friend for

---

<sup>34</sup> *Report of the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia for 1931*, (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 66.

<sup>35</sup> "City's Heads Seek Right to Hire Men: Civic Center Technicians Without Salary Limit Requested," *Washington Post*; Jun 25, 1930; 20.

<sup>36</sup> "Architect's Office Moves Tomorrow," *Washington Post*; Mar 1, 1931; M16, See also "Ford Motor Company Building, HABS-DC-375," online at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pnp/habshaer/dc/dc0100/dc0110/data/dc0110data.pdf>, and "Ford Building – Washington, DC," at [http://www.fordmotorhistory.com/factories/washingtondc/site\\_details.php](http://www.fordmotorhistory.com/factories/washingtondc/site_details.php)

<sup>37</sup> National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. —Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Expansion).2006. Washington, DC: National Park Service

<sup>38</sup> "Medals for Two Brave Men", *Washington Post*, February 27, 1895, 3. General Willcox's medal was awarded many years after the Civil War.

<sup>39</sup> "Gen. O.B. Willcox Buried", *Washington Post*, May 15, 1907, 11.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

whom Nathan had been named. However, in 1888 the sudden failure of N. Corwith and Company sent ripples through the major New York City banks. It was later revealed Nathan Corwith, a merchant, banker, and speculator referred to as the “Lead King”, had comingled the Wyeth brothers’ trust with the funds for his failed business. Litigation outlived Corwith, dragging on into the mid-1890s, and eventually reached the Illinois Supreme Court.<sup>40</sup> Although it is unclear that the suit recovered any assets, the family was still able to fund both brothers’ educations.

Nathan Wyeth spent part of 1888 painting watercolors in Switzerland, returning to the United States to attend the Michigan Military Academy through 1889. Afterwards, he studied at the School of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, receiving an \$80 prize for best work in the architecture class in April 1890.<sup>41</sup> Afterwards he likely returned to the family home, since, when he applied for a passport in June 1890, he provided Washington, DC as his place of residence.

Nothing is known of Nathan Wyeth’s subsequent whereabouts until 1899, when he graduated from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris after studying in the Atelier of Pascal. He returned to the United States that year and began working for the Supervisory Architect of the Treasury. On June 4, 1900, a census enumerator listed him as boarding with the family of John Pairo at 2127 Florida Avenue NW, just a few blocks from the Willcox home, and recorded his profession as “architect.”<sup>42</sup> On December 23, 1900, the Washington Post reported that “Mr. Nathan Wyeth, who has spent the last five years studying architecture in Paris, will be spending the winter with his mother at 2022 R Street NW.”<sup>43</sup> In 1901, Wyeth’s work attracted its first attention in Washington when a review of the Washington Architecture Club Show at the Corcoran Gallery commented on the “beautifully rendered designs characteristic of the Friend School” offered by N.C. Wyeth.<sup>44</sup>

While Wyeth was serving his architectural apprenticeship, he quickly launched himself into the whirl of the capital’s high society. Possibly through the prestige of General Willcox, his connections far exceeded those of almost any beginning architect. In December, 1902, he was a guest at the White House debut of Alice Roosevelt, which he followed with attendance at a series of balls and receptions.<sup>45</sup> Although Wyeth was in his early thirties and probably past his athletic prime, he was an enthusiastic member of the Washington Fencing Club and played competitive tennis at the club level.

However, the chronology of this period of Wyeth’s career is as contradictory as that of his student years is vague. Many accounts state that he continued to work at the Treasury Department until 1903 or 1904, when he transferred to the Office of the Architect of the Capitol

---

40 “Street v. French,” *The Northeastern Reporter, Volume 35* (Chicago: West Publishing Company, 1894) 816. Pages 814-820 describe the case in detail.

41 “Prizes for Art Students,” *New York Times*, May 1, 1890, 8.

42 Twelfth Census of the United States. Washington, DC. Enumeration 145, Sheet 4A.

43 “Social and Personal,” *Washington Post*, December 23, 1900, 18.

44 “Art Topics,” *Washington Post*, April 7, 1901, E9.

45 “Miss Alice Roosevelt Introduced to Society,” *Washington Post*, January 4, 1902. 1.



District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

for approximately two years.<sup>46</sup> However, Wyeth's entry in *Wyatt's American Architects* cites government employment only prior to 1900.<sup>47</sup>

During his early years as an architect, Wyeth also worked with the noted New York firm of Carrere & Hastings, whose principals were fellow graduates of the Ecole.<sup>48</sup> Many biographers hypothesize that this was a brief alliance immediately after he returned from Paris in 1899.<sup>49</sup> However, *Wyatt's American Architects* states that Wyeth worked for the firm from 1900 through 1903, a period when he resided in Washington. This is not impossible, as Carrere & Hastings had been involved in the capital's architectural affairs from the mid-1890s, when John M. Carrere mounted an unsuccessful campaign to be named Supervising Architect of the Treasury. In 1899, the firm began constructing the Townsend House (later the Cosmos Club), and in 1901 it refurbished and modernized important areas within the Capitol building. In April 1904, Carrere & Hastings was retained to design the original House and Senate Office buildings, with plans to be drawn within the Office of the Architect of the Capitol.<sup>50</sup> *Wyatt's American Architects* entry cites these buildings as Wyeth's first "principal work."<sup>51</sup> The most likely explanation for this conflicting chronology is that he shifted employment between Carrere & Hastings and the Architect of the Capitol while working on various phases of these projects.

In early 1904, apparently while still working on federal projects, Wyeth formed a partnership with fellow Ecole graduate William Penn Cresson (1873-1932), later a diplomat, distinguished biographer of James Monroe, and husband of Daniel Chester French's daughter. Wyeth & Cresson, whose offices were at 1517 H Street NW, received its first building permit in March 1904, and executed seven other commissions during its three years of activity. Most of these were fashionable residences with a minimum construction cost of \$25,000, in an era when Harry Wardman built row houses for about \$2,000 each.<sup>52</sup>

Beginning independent practice in 1907, Wyeth continued to design Beaux Arts mansions, including the Gibson Fahnestock House and other residences in the 2300 and 2400 blocks of Massachusetts Avenue, the Pullman Mansion and assorted houses in the 16<sup>th</sup> Street corridor, and residences in the 2100 and 2200 blocks of R Street NW.<sup>53</sup> In 1908-1909, Wyeth expanded his practice beyond society residences and executed two major federal commissions. As part of a partial reconstruction of the Tidal Basin, Wyeth designed the graceful, classically-accented Tidal

---

<sup>46</sup> Antoinette J. Lee. *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 212 is an authoritative source that cites this information. *The Official Register of the United States for 1903* also lists Wyeth as a designer at the Office of the Supervisory Architect.

<sup>47</sup> George S. Koyl. *Wyatt's American Architects* (R.S. Bowker, 1962), 784, accessed at <http://www.archive.org/details/americanarchitec001309mbp>, May 1, 2011

<sup>48</sup> National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Expansion). 2006. Washington, DC: National Park Service

<sup>49</sup> Lee, 212.

<sup>50</sup> "Architect of Office Building," *Washington Post*, April 12, 1904, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Koyl, 784.

<sup>52</sup> All permit information from DC Historic Preservation Office. "DC Building Permit Database." Also, see "Design Handsome Houses," *Washington Post*, October 6, 1907, R7.

<sup>53</sup> "New Residence Planned," *Washington Post*, May 2, 1909, CA7.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

Reservoir Inlet Bridge (1908-09) with Army Corps of Engineers Colonel Spencer Cosby.<sup>54</sup> His second federal project was the most noted commission of his early career. Almost immediately after his inauguration in March 1909, President William Howard Taft ordered a competition to enlarge and make permanent the White House's west wing offices.<sup>55</sup> Wyeth's winning design included a curved windowed wall and oval presidential office, patterned after the White House's Blue Room. Construction of this original Oval Office began while the Taft family was summering at Malden, Massachusetts and was completed in the fall of 1909. The finished office attracted considerable mention in the press.<sup>56</sup>

Besides his busy practice, Wyeth found time to act as patron to the Architectural Club of Washington, critiquing members' solutions to problems posed by the Beaux Arts Society of New York.<sup>57</sup> During the summer of 1911, he married Dorothy Lawson, the daughter of a wealthy Cincinnati manufacturer of tin plate who had spent several seasons in Washington with an aunt who was an intimate friend of First Lady Helen Taft.<sup>58</sup> After his marriage, Wyeth moved in Washington's most elite social circles.

After 1910, Wyeth his commissions were increasingly notable. He directed extensive remodeling of the British Embassy in 1910,<sup>59</sup> and remodeled the Pullman House at 1125 Sixteenth Street into a chancery for the Russian ambassador in 1914.<sup>60</sup> In 1913, Wyeth designed the Columbia Hospital for Women in the Italian Renaissance style<sup>61</sup> and, in 1915, the city's nine-story Emergency Hospital, which stood within two blocks of the White House.<sup>62</sup> In 1916, Wyeth began plans for his most impressive commission to date, Key Bridge.<sup>63</sup> Connecting the high bluffs of Georgetown above the C&O Canal to Roslyn, Virginia, the new bridge with its high, repeating arches replaced the early nineteenth century Aqueduct Bridge as the major Potomac River crossing. During World War I, Wyeth served as a major in the Army Sanitary Corps, and spent several years in Switzerland after the war, possibly recovering from exhaustion from overwork.<sup>64</sup>

During the 1920s, Wyeth rebuilt his practice in Washington, designing residences for wealthy Washingtonians and embassy buildings, but also seeking other types of commissions. In 1925, he was among a dozen architects named to assist Municipal Architect Albert Harris with a backlog

---

<sup>54</sup>"Nathan Wyeth Will Become City Architect," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1934, 15.

<sup>55</sup> In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt had commissioned the firm of McKim, Mead, and White to add west wing offices to the White House. McKim envisioned this space to be temporary, as he had endorsed Daniel Burnham's proposal for a permanent federal office campus in Lafayette Square centered on new presidential offices.

<sup>56</sup> "More Room for President," *Washington Post*, May 20, 1909, 3.

<sup>57</sup> "Prizes for Atelier Work," *Washington Post*, September 28, 1908, 6.

<sup>58</sup> "Miss Lawson Will Wed Mr. Wyeth," *Washington Post*, September 9, 1911, 7.

<sup>59</sup> "Improve British Embassy," *Washington Post*, July 13, 1910, 12.

<sup>60</sup> "New Chancery Ready November 1," *Washington Post*, September 13, 1914, R3.

<sup>61</sup> "Hospital Fund Ready," *Washington Post*, December 7, 1913, R3.

<sup>62</sup> "Rush New Hospital," *Washington Post*, November 23, 1913, R3. Also "Where the Sick and Injured Are Soon To Find Help," *Washington Post*, November 13, 1913, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Historic American Buildings Survey. "Gibson Fahnstock House, DC-259" (1978), 5.

<sup>64</sup> "Busy Nathan C. Wyeth Designs the Capital's Buildings," *Washington Post*, January 7, 1940, E1.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

of school design projects and he co-founded Allied Architects to undertake other public commissions.<sup>65</sup> In 1926, he began a successful architectural partnership with Francis P. Sullivan.

Wyeth's career reached a peak of prosperity with the 1920s. In 1929, he designed a complex of magnificent Georgian-themed houses which adjoined Sir Edwin Lutyens' new British Embassy,<sup>66</sup> one of which became the home of arts patron Paul Mellon. That spring, Allied Architects was selected to design the new Longworth House Office Building, with Wyeth as principal partner.<sup>67</sup> When Allied Architects' unsolicited proposal for a Municipal Complex was accepted by the District Government in 1929, Wyeth was retained as chief design consultant.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, Wyeth and Sullivan were serving as consulting architects for a new wing for the Russell Senate Office Building, which was completed in 1933.<sup>69</sup>

Wyeth might have retired after these commissions, but he lost a considerable portion of his wealth in the stock market crash and so continued to practice, now with a focus on public buildings.<sup>70</sup> In 1933, he became an employee of the Office of the Municipal Architect, and, in 1934, aged 64, he assumed its direction following the death of incumbent Albert Harris.<sup>71</sup> During his twelve-year tenure from 1934 until 1946, he supervised the design of numerous schools and libraries, and a new National Guard Armory, as well as the Municipal Center Campus. Although he spoke of continuing to design public buildings, Wyeth enjoyed a long retirement after leaving the Office of the Municipal Architect in 1946. He died in Washington at age 93 in 1963.

It is impossible to identify any architect's personal design contributions to the Municipal Center. Virtually all known plans, drawings, and blueprints that show the evolution of the campus are attributed to "the Office of the Municipal Architect," rather than to any individual designer. While Wyeth, after succeeding Harris as Municipal Architect, assumed responsibility for the overall design, the success of the project depended on the work of key partners and staff members.<sup>72</sup>

While Wyeth's partners in Allied Architects appear in early photographs of the Municipal Center design staff at work, it is unclear that they played a large role in the project after 1929-30. Of them, Frederick V. (Fred) Murphy (1879-1958) had the deepest connection to Wyeth. In 1903,

---

<sup>65</sup> "12 Named to Aid Harris," *Washington Post*, March 18, 1925, 2.

<sup>66</sup> "Small Group Plans Homes," *Washington Post*, October 8, 1929, 7.

<sup>67</sup> "New House Office Plans Completed," *Washington Post*, April 21, 1929, 9.

<sup>68</sup> "Allied Architects to Aid Center Plan," *Washington Post*, July 24, 1929, 5. See also "Individual Architects Employed on Center Plan," *Washington Post*, October 31, 1929, 10.

<sup>69</sup> "Russell Senate Office Building," Architect of the Capitol Website at <http://www.aoc.gov/cc/cobs/rsob.cfm>, accessed May 20, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. —Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Expansion)

<sup>71</sup> "Nathan Wyeth Will Become City Architect," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1934, 15.

<sup>72</sup> While the Allied Architects partners and Municipal Architect Albert I. Harris are credited with the design of Wilson High School (1932-1935), it is also impossible to distinguish individual contributions to that project as well. See National Capital Planning Commission, Woodrow Wilson Senior High School Modernization Project, NCPC file 6971, online at

[http://www.ncpc.gov/DocumentDepot/Actions\\_Recommendations/2010May/Wilson\\_High\\_School\\_Modernization\\_Delegated\\_6971\\_May2010\\_.pdf](http://www.ncpc.gov/DocumentDepot/Actions_Recommendations/2010May/Wilson_High_School_Modernization_Delegated_6971_May2010_.pdf), accessed September 1, 2013.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

Murphy and Wyeth had worked as designers for the Office of the Supervisory Architect of the Capitol. In 1905, Murphy won the annual fellowship for study in France bestowed by the Washington Architecture Club, whose competitions committee included Nathan Wyeth. During his Paris sojourn, Murphy was admitted to the Ecole des Beaux Arts. After his graduation and return to the United States, he became an outstanding Catholic ecclesiastical architect, the founder and longtime dean of the architecture department at the Catholic University of America, holder of the Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor, and a member of the Commission on Fine Art from 1945 until 1950.

Edward W. Donn (1868-1953) was employed by the Office of the Architect of the Capitol before serving as chief designer for the Supervisory Architect of the Treasury from 1900 through 1902, a period which overlapped Frederick Murphy's employment and possibly Nathan Wyeth's.<sup>73</sup> After leaving the Office of the Supervisory Architect, Donn founded the firm of Wood, Donn & Deming with Waddy Wood, which endured until 1912. He was later quite active in professional affairs and designed upscale residences in a number of cities, but is most noted as a restoration architect specializing in Colonial American buildings.

George Burnap (1886-1938) was an influential landscape architect whose sudden death robbed him of the opportunity to have an impact on the Municipal Center campus' design. Burnap designed municipal park systems for numerous mid-size cities, as well as Meridian Hill Park in Washington and a major expansion of Riverside Park in Manhattan.

Rather than his partners in Allied Architects, Wyeth's most significant collaborators were members of the Municipal Center design staff. A 1930 photograph in the *Washington Evening Star* shows the project architectural team as Wyeth, Harris, Donn, and Murphy, along with William B. Harris and Arved I. Kundzin. In the accompanying photograph of the drafting staff, Kundzin and Harris have removed their suitcoats and unbuttoned their vests to stand with the draftsmen they supervised. While Harris' tenure on the staff was apparently short, Kundzin's contributions may have been outweighed only by Wyeth's.

Arved Kundzin (1891-1950) was a native of Dorpat, Estonia, who worked as an architect in Finland, Russia, and the Baltic States after attending the University of Riga in Latvia. He came to the United States in 1922 as Secretary to Latvian representative Charles Louis Seya, who was seeking diplomatic recognition for his newly-independent country.<sup>74</sup> By 1923, he had settled in Washington, where *Boyd's District of Columbia Directory* listed him as a draftsman living in the Sheridan Circle area.

Before joining the District Government in 1927, Kundzin had numerous employers, including George Oakley Totten and the Baltimore firm of Archer and Allen. In 1924, he became partners with Gilbert Rodier (1890-1971) in a firm that produced drawings for the restoration of Arlington House.<sup>75</sup> In 1926, Rodier & Kundzin's design for a Spanish-style bungalow was

---

<sup>73</sup> Lee, 212.

<sup>74</sup> *Current History*, Volume 15, (New York: The New York Times Company, 1922), 178.

<sup>75</sup> [http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/26646](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/26646)

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

published in *American Architect and Architecture*. The firm was credited with the design for the Bulletin Building at 717 Sixth Street NW in 1928, although the primary designer was likely Rodier, whose brother was the client.<sup>76</sup>

Kundzin's first known credited work with the Office of the Municipal Architect was a 1928 rendering of the John Marshall Place NW court in the Harris plan. Although he was periodically laid off from his District Government job, Kundzin continued to work on the Municipal Center through the 1930s. During one furlough in 1932, he may have worked directly for Allied Architects, as did his former partner Rodier.<sup>77</sup> In 1934, Kundzin was placed in charge of the Municipal Center design staff, a position which he held through the completion of construction in 1941. According to his long-time friend, the noted Washington photographer Volkmar Wetzel, Kundzin had overall responsibility for maintaining the aesthetic coherence of the Municipal Center and worked on the design of all the other Municipal Center buildings. During the war, he consulted on the design and construction of air raid shelters and was serving as chief of the design section for Municipal Architect Merrill Coe when he died of a sudden stroke in 1950.

Two other European émigrés who played major roles in designing the Municipal Center were Eric Menke (1901-1979), and Victor T. Givotovsky. Menke, an eccentric architect and muralist from Mannheim, Germany, was an architecture graduate of Yale University who later studied urban planning at MIT and engineering at George Washington University. He began his architectural career with the Philadelphia firm of Price & Walton, whose specialty was the restoration of Quaker meetinghouses.<sup>78</sup> A project at the Washington Friends Meetinghouse bought him to Washington in the late 1920s, and he joined the Municipal Center design staff shortly after its formation in 1930. Menke designed the center's plaza as well as the mosaic map of the District in the south lobby of the Municipal Center. After the Office of the Municipal Architect, he worked for the Zoning Commission until 1940, when he joined the Army Corps of Engineers. After retirement in the 1960s, he served as a member of the National Capital Planning Commission and was active in planning and preservation circles. At his death, he left his notable collection of thousands of books, maps, and prints to the Georgetown University library.<sup>79</sup>

Victor T. Givotovsky (1893-1956) was a civil engineering graduate of MIT who had fled Russia via Siberia after the 1918 revolution. An expert in reinforced concrete construction, he had become chief of the structural engineering section of the Municipal Center design team by

---

<sup>76</sup> *American Architect and Architecture*, May 20, 1926, plate 116, 566-567. Referenced in National Register Nomination: The Bulletin Building, online at [http://dchistoricsites.us/sites/default/files/Bulletin%20Building01072013\\_0000.pdf](http://dchistoricsites.us/sites/default/files/Bulletin%20Building01072013_0000.pdf), accessed August 1, 2013.

<sup>77</sup> Rodier, Wyeth, Frank Upman, and Louis Justement are credited as primary designers of the Longworth House Office Building. See <http://www.aoc.gov/capitol-buildings/longworth-house-office-building>, accessed August 1, 2013

<sup>78</sup> "Price & Walton," online at [http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/26646](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/26646), accessed September 15, 2013.

<sup>79</sup> "Eric Menke, Architect and Planning Consultant," *Washington Post*; Aug 30, 1979; B14.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

1932.<sup>80</sup> At the time of his death, he was deputy director of the DC Department of Buildings and Grounds.

Other members of the Municipal Architect's staff who played important roles in the construction of the Municipal Center included Archie G. Hutson (1899-1957), a former draftsman who supervised the construction of all the Municipal Center buildings.<sup>81</sup> Jesse Ivey Cuthriell (1897-1978), an architect from Portsmouth, Virginia who joined the Office in the early 1930s, became noted for his renderings of the campus buildings, which were widely reproduced in the newspapers.

### **Stalemate and Beyond, 1930-1936**

Through early 1931, the Municipal Center project appeared to be gathering critical mass, although Allied Architects' early proposals had been received negatively. The first, presented by Harris, Wyeth, Donn, and Murphy at the January 16, 1930 CFA meeting, was a revision and embellishment of the approved plan which moved the intersection of the unnamed avenue communicating with the Union Station Plaza and Pennsylvania Avenue to Four and a Half Street from Third Street NW. Its most notable attribute was a huge plaza with a fountain at its center, which extended almost 2,000 feet from the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue opposite the Municipal Center tract through the present site of the National Gallery of Art (**See architectural rendering, *Image 7***).

Harris contended that orienting the Municipal Center to Pennsylvania Avenue and the plaza would provide "a more symmetrical plan and better frontage." However, CFA Chair Charles Moore chided Harris for abandoning the project's orientation toward Judiciary Square. Other members of the CFA and NCPC, as well as the Architect of the Capitol, termed the plaza out of scale and not compatible with existing plans for the Mall, and complained that implementing the plan would inevitably create delay. The proposal was immediately abandoned.<sup>82</sup>

In October 1930, the same team returned to the CFA with a revision that aligned the Municipal Center buildings with the axis of Pennsylvania Avenue, rather than B Street (now Constitution Avenue NW). The CFA again disapproved with the proposal, which it felt conflicted with the alignment of the Federal Triangle, and the Municipal Architect again reverted to the approved plan.<sup>83</sup> The District Commissioners then commissioned a \$6,200 cardboard model by Ricci Studio of New York, which was to be on the same scale as the models for the Federal Triangle for comparative purposes.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> "Economy May Halt City Center Work: Indefinite Postponement Is Foreseen." *Washington Post*; Mar 1, 1932; 19.

<sup>81</sup> "Archie Hutson Is Dead at 57." *Washington Post*; Aug 2, 1956; 16.

<sup>82</sup> "Municipal Center, 1927-1933" Extracts from the Minutes of the Commission on Fine Arts, 10-12.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>84</sup> "City Center Model Contract Let," *Washington Post*; Oct 29, 1930; 5. Unfortunately, the cardboard model was not delivered in the specified time, and the Municipal Center architectural team was forced to work all night to deliver a clay model for a key legislative hearing. See "Costly Cardboard Models, Delayed, Are Now Useless," *Washington Post*; Jan 24, 1931; 1.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

In early 1931, the District Commissioners appointed a working group composed of the Engineer-Commissioner, his assistants, the Municipal Architect, and his consultants to expedite and coordinate construction.<sup>85</sup> A month later, newspapers hailed the Municipal Center architectural team's move to the Ford Building as "the formal beginning of the gigantic ... project," and announced plans to conduct test borings even before the District had acquired its full tract.<sup>86</sup>

However, the remainder of the Hoover Administration bought the Municipal Center project more pitfalls than progress. As the depression took hold in 1931, tax receipts fell, the city's relief-related expenses soared, and funding evaporated. The District's accumulated surplus on deposit with the Treasury was exhausted by early 1932. In the District budgets for 1932-33, Congress had authorized the expenditure of approximately \$1,300,000 for grading, utility relocation, and the acquisition of the remaining land, which had been stalled for nearly a year.<sup>87</sup> However, President Hoover soon began diverting substantial portions of these funds to relief of the city's unemployed.<sup>88</sup>

For a time, it seemed that an unwitting municipal real estate investment might provide the necessary construction funds. In the suddenly distant days of 1929, Republican Representative Simmons had proposed that the city commissioners sell the District Building to the federal government to raise funds for the project.<sup>89</sup> However, when the commissioners held out for a high price, they were first advised that the federal government was entitled to recoup the proceeds as reimbursement for its contribution to construction costs during the Taft Administration, and later that they had no right to sell a building in which the federal government held equity.<sup>90</sup> Despite this discouraging response, proposals for the city to finance the Municipal Center by selling the District Building continued to be made by both city and federal officials for the rest of the Depression.<sup>91</sup>

On April 30, 1932, the Office of the Municipal Architect announced that the drawings for Unit 1" of the Municipal Center Complex were complete. Any celebration was tempered by the rest of the announcement, which stated that:

---

<sup>85</sup> "City Heads Approve Center Committee," *Washington Post*; Feb 4, 1931; 5.

<sup>86</sup> "Architect's Office Moves Tomorrow," *Washington Post*; Mar 1, 1931; M16, and "First Municipal Center Contract to Be Awarded," *Washington Post*; Mar 27, 1931; 4.

<sup>87</sup> Robert C. Albright. "President's Estimate of Fund to Run Capital Is \$47,880,228," *The Washington Post*; Dec 5, 1929; 1, and "Municipal Center Must Wait Years: Postponement Revealed by Donovan," *The Washington Post*, Mar 31, 1932; 1

<sup>88</sup> "\$600,000 Relief Here, Taken From Budget," *The Washington Post*; Mar 18, 1932; 1.

<sup>89</sup> "Selling of District Building May Aid Municipal Center: Simmons," *Washington Post*; Apr 25, 1929; 1.

<sup>90</sup> "Building Deal Off, District Is Loser: \$6,500,000 Out Of Pocket As Result Of Ruling," *Washington Post*; Feb 3, 1933; 18.

<sup>91</sup> "Senator King Asks District Sell Building," *Washington Post*; Nov 28, 1933; 13. Also "Editorial: Unwarranted Delay," *Washington Post*; Dec 1, 1933; 6 discusses Senator King (D-Utah)'s proposal that the federal government buy the District Building to fund Municipal Center construction. "Plan to Sell City Building Is Revived," *Washington Post*; Jan 18, 1934; 11 and "D.C. Building Again Offered For Sale to U.S.," *Washington Post*; Nov 29, 1936; M16 describe similar plans from the District Commissioners.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

Due to the fact that the commissioners... decided to abandon work temporarily on the construction of Unit No. 1 and the preparation of drawings for Unit #2, the office was closed ... and 28 employees were released from their position.<sup>92</sup>

“Municipal Center Must Wait Years,” proclaimed news articles, which called the idea of a modern governmental complex “a fleeting mirage.”<sup>93</sup> The project received another blow just weeks before Franklin D. Roosevelt’s inauguration in March 1933, when Albert Harris, who had overseen the project since its inception, died of a heart attack.<sup>94</sup> He was succeeded by Nathan C. Wyeth, who had become an employee of the Office of the Municipal Architect the previous year.

During 1933-1934, the years of the so-called “First New Deal,” the Municipal Center remained unfunded. The city’s repeated requests for construction money were refused by Congress, while the Public Works Administration, which was said to feel that Washington had already received its share of relief money, proved deaf to the contention that the project should be funded as a stimulus package for the industries of other states.<sup>95</sup> Even when the city scaled back plans to an initial building to accommodate only the Police Court and again proposed selling the District Building to the federal government, no money was forthcoming.<sup>97</sup>

Despite being mothballed, the Municipal Center project still clung to life in spirit. Arved Kundzin had constructed several studio-cabins at the Youghiogheny Forest Colony, a small artists’ retreat on property owned by geologist Frank Reeves and his wife Lotte in Aurora, West Virginia. During his long layoffs from the Office of the Municipal Architect, Kundzin retreated to the colony, often with collaborators Eric Menke and Victor Givotovsky. Here, Volkmar Wetzel, then the colony’s teenage caretaker, recalled, the colleagues conjured designs for the Municipal Center in the company of such kindred spirits as WPA muralist Robert Gates and sculptor Joe Goethe while eating communal meals at the Reeves’ log cabin tavern.<sup>98</sup>

At the same time, the dormant project retained the interest of key New Deal legislators. During the bleak early years of the Depression, the District began to discover an eventual champion in Democratic Representative “Battling Mary” Norton, a product of Frank Hague’s Jersey City

---

<sup>92</sup> *Report of the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia for 1932*, (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1932), 36.

<sup>93</sup> “City May Get It if Public Works Fund Is Ample,” *Washington Post*; Sep 10, 1933; 5.

<sup>94</sup> “Albert Harris Dies of Heart Ailment,” *Washington Post*; Feb 25, 1933; 3.

<sup>95</sup> See “Ickes Denies Funds for New City Buildings: Not Persuaded ... on Municipal Center,” *Washington Post*; Oct 8, 1933; 20, “Washington Has More Than Share Already, View of Chiefs,” *Washington Post*; Oct 10, 1933; 1, “District Work Shown as Aid to 28 States,” *Washington Post*; Nov 20, 1933; 13, “Civic Center Appeal to U.S. Again Likely: Commissioners Expected to Renew Request for Money,” *Washington Post*; Nov 26, 1933; 13, and “Lump Sum Rise for City Fades; Center Doomed,” *Washington Post*; Dec 12, 1934; 1 for examples of the many articles on this theme.

<sup>96</sup> James D. Secrest. “Congress Gives D.C. Financial New Deal, Makes Grant Without Fight,” *Washington Post*. Aug. 22. 1937, 13.

<sup>97</sup> “Center ‘Fragment’ Work Is Suggested To Cost \$2,000,000.” *Washington Post*; Feb 5, 1933; 18 and “A Home For The Courts,” *Washington Post*; Dec 25, 1935; 6.

<sup>98</sup> “Scientists Gather at Forest Lodge,” *Washington Post*,; Aug 20, 1933; S2. See also

<http://theintermountain.com/page/content.detail/id/557835/Driving-a-hot-goose-down-on-Christmas-Eve.html?nav=5286> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/WPcap/2000-02/05/055r-020500-idx.html>



District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

political machine who had become House District Committee chair in 1931. In 1933, she expressed support for the District's application for federal funds for the Municipal Center courthouse, calling the existing buildings "deplorable" and "a disgrace to our government."<sup>99</sup> Nicknamed "the lady mayor of Washington," she later would become instrumental in funding many critical municipal projects, including schools and a children's tuberculosis hospital.

Although Norton's concerns did not translate into immediate funding, the Municipal Center was frequently evoked as a high priority by city officials and business leaders, in part because it promised economic stimulus in the Depression's bleakest days. In September, 1933, Arved Kundzin was recalled to duty for three months to review the existing plans and specifications.<sup>100</sup> With authorization from Secretary Ickes, Kundzin returned to work on a more open-ended basis to revise these plans in the fall of 1934.<sup>101</sup> The stimulus for this revival seemed to be the formation of a Municipal Center Committee during the fall of 1934 at the behest of the District Board of Commissioners President Melvin C. Hazen. Under the direction of the Engineer Commissioner, this working group was to evaluate scaling down the project and simplifying its architecture. Hazen contended that the requirement that the Municipal Center harmonize with the Federal Triangle was essentially an unfunded federal mandate, and that, with a "less ornate design," its construction could be financed by selling the southern squares in the tract to the federal government, which could then construct its own monumental structures to screen the district civic core from view.<sup>102</sup>

However, these activities took place against a complicated backdrop. Earlier in 1934, the original Harris-era plan for twin monoliths sited in parallel with John Marshall Place had fallen under attack from another quarter. In March, Frederic A. Delano, chair of the National Park and Planning Commission and uncle of the president, had sent the District Commissioners and CFA Chair Charles Moore a lengthy memorandum protesting the acceptance of Harris' original plan. By Delano's account, the NCPC had agreed to this plan only because the CFA already had endorsed it, and Hoover Administration Engineer Commissioner John Gotwals had insisted that it be approved. In reality, the NCPC had been deeply concerned that the Harris plan blocked off traffic from both John Marshall Place and C Street NW, which might limit citizens' access to government and isolate a six square block area from the cityscape. The NCPC also had considered Harris' method for resolving the thirty-foot difference in grade between D Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW – a staircase at either end of a plaza – artificial and inconvenient, and the colonnaded building arcades on either side of John Marshall Place pretentious.

Delano announced that Harris, now one-year dead, had failed to keep a commitment to reroute the C Street streetcar line, and the unwritten deal on which the NCPC's approval was based was now null and void. Delano argued that the Municipal Center buildings should be of a "dignified but simple design of the late colonial or early American period," that C Street should remain open to through traffic as the site's most important axis and that John Marshall Place must

<sup>99</sup> "District Court Building," *The Washington Post*; September 23, 1933; 6.

<sup>100</sup> *Report of the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia for 1936*, (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1936), 59.

<sup>101</sup> "Early Work On Municipal Center Seen: Ickes Approves Drafting of Plans," *Washington Post*; Apr 1, 1934; 11

<sup>102</sup> "Hazen Asks Less Ornate City Center: Recommends Simpler Buildings." *Washington Post*; Nov 7, 1934; 18.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

provide vehicular access to the complex and a vista to the Hadfield Courthouse. To achieve these goals, Delano recommended dividing the Municipal Center into an individual building in each of the four squares that composed its site.<sup>103</sup>

It is unclear what influence Delano's memorandum had on the District Commissioners' decision to review and revise Harris' design. In a matter of weeks, Kundzin sent a set of nine schemes for the complex to the Engineer Commissioner. In November 1934, the District Commissioners charged the Municipal Center Committee with surveying all department heads and reducing their original space requirements to the bare minimum to make construction affordable. In December, the Committee selected four schemes and forwarded them to the Engineer Commissioner with the survey results and a recommendation that "Scheme D represented the best possibilities for good architecture and for good functional planning."<sup>104</sup>

Scheme D represented a radical alteration of the Harris plan and corresponded with several elements in Delano's memorandum. Rather than distributing court buildings among the site's squares as Delano had implicitly suggested, Scheme D placed individual courthouses for the police, municipal, and juvenile courts in Judiciary Square. Scheme D retained D Street and a segment of Indiana Avenue as an east-west axis which separated the Municipal Center's judicial buildings from its administrative sector. It preserved the judicial sector's symmetry by situating the new courthouses on the square's boundaries and leaving a central visual axis terminated by Hadfield's Old District courthouse. By placing the longer axes of the block-long Police and Municipal Courthouses along Third and Fifth Streets, the scheme visually acknowledged the superior status of Hadfield's City Hall and avoided diminishing Woods' Court of Appeals (**See architectural rendering, Image 8**).

Scheme D's most radical departure eschewed the Harris plan's massive twin buildings facing each other across a courtyard-like John Marshall Place. Instead, it maintained C Street as a thoroughfare by placing a single monolithic Administration Building across John Marshall Place on the access of Indiana Avenue. To make up for the deduction of John Marshall Place from the traffic pattern, Fourth and Fifth Streets NW were extended through the site to provide access to the Administration Building from all four sides.<sup>105</sup> Although this scheme violated Delano's provision that the vista from the Mall to the Hadfield Courthouse be preserved, it addressed his requirement that the administration building be easily accessed by the public and tightly woven into the cityscape.

With the District Commissioners' endorsement, echoed by the city's Board of Trade, and the NCPC's acceptance of the Scheme D plan, the Municipal Center project sputtered back into half-life.<sup>106</sup> In May 1935, the commissioners applied for Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works loans in excess of \$13 million dollars to construct public buildings, including the

---

<sup>103</sup> Letter from Frederic A. Delano to Charles Moore, March 26, 1934. (Unpublished, memorandum attached), National Archives, RG 66, Box 48.

<sup>104</sup> *Report of the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia for 1936*, 59.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

<sup>106</sup> "Approval Given To Two Plans For City Center: Board of Trade Rejects Two Other Proposals," *Washington Post*, Feb 9, 1935; 5.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

courthouses and a Recorder of Deeds Building. The Commissioners also authorized Municipal Architect Wyeth to hire a small staff of architects and engineers to design the courthouses, using the small balance of finds remaining from the 1929-1932 appropriations. In June, Wyeth consulted with the Architect of the Treasury on salary and staffing recommendations, and the Commissioners authorized a contract for soil test borings. In August, the CFA assigned all land in Judiciary Square south of F Street to the project and advised the Treasury Department, which was modifying the Pension Building, that F Street NW must be reconfigured to cross the square on a straight line.<sup>107</sup>

When the “Roosevelt recession” of 1936 plunged the country back toward the depths of 1933, some members of the press and congress resentfully labeled the District a “boom town” which deserved no further aid than its burgeoning federal payroll.<sup>108</sup> However, this proved to be the year that federal funding made the first elements of the Municipal Center a reality. In early 1936, both the NCPC and CFA approved the proposed design and locations of the Judiciary Square courthouses.<sup>109</sup> In April, Congress passed a bill authorizing the District Government to purchase steam for the Municipal Center from the Central Heating Plant.

In June 1936, Congress appropriated \$1,000,000 of the \$1,500,000 estimated cost for the new Police Court, with the city to contribute the remainder.<sup>110</sup> That same month, the first renderings of the courthouse, which was anticipated to meet the District’s needs for the next hundred years, appeared in the press.<sup>111</sup> The building, which was described as being of “early federal style” to harmonize with the Hadfield Courthouse had plaster walls, with oak paneling in the courtrooms and judges’ chambers and black marble baseboards with cork floors throughout its public areas. Its plan was fully modern, with air conditioning, and separate banks of elevators for the public, prisoners, and judges. Its first floor was occupied by offices for legal staff and marshals, with a press room and banks of public telephones. Its second story was devoted to soundproof courtrooms, each with separate cell blocks for male and female prisoners, while similar courtrooms, judges’ chambers, and a law library occupied its third floor.<sup>112</sup> It was not completed until early 1938 because of frequent strikes, some in sympathy with workers at other sites.<sup>113</sup>

Federal funds continued to flow to the Municipal Center even after Representative Norton was promoted to the chair of the House Labor Committee in 1937. In 1938, the city received \$2.2 million in appropriations and PWA loans to build Juvenile and Municipal Courthouses.<sup>114</sup> This news was soon dwarfed by front page articles announcing that a series of PWA grants and loans would fund the main Municipal Center building, once “relegated to the realm of myth by the

---

<sup>107</sup> *Report of the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia for 1936*, 60.

<sup>108</sup> Federal employment undoubtedly helped fuel a one-third increase in the city’s population during the 1930s. See Wentzel, 11-12.

<sup>109</sup> *Report of the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia for 1936*, 69-72.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 72.

<sup>111</sup> “Police Court Building Plan Is Approved,” *Washington Post*; Jul 8, 1936; X13.

<sup>112</sup> “Court Building Will Have Most Modern Features,” *Washington Evening Star*, November 30, 1936. 1.

<sup>113</sup> “Garnett Wins Suite in New Police Building: U.S. Attorney to Have Only One Courtroom Under Compromise,” *Washington Post*; Nov 21, 1937; 12.

<sup>114</sup> “D.C. Building Projects Win \$2,800,000: Money Is Allotted for Courts,” *The Washington Post*; Jul 14, 1938; 1.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

depression.”<sup>115</sup> The initial module to be constructed was the wing which would house the Metropolitan Police Headquarters.

### **Building the Municipal Center**

In the year 1938, the so-called “Administration Building,” later referred to as the Municipal Center, became more than plans and sketches. However, despite a dozen years of deliberation, the project would pass through several wrenching transformations. The first transformation, which had been hovering in the background for more than a year, involved yet another power struggle among federal and District commissioners. Since 1935, Nathan Wyeth and his architectural team had been developing the so-called Scheme D endorsed by the District Commissioners, which included a single administrative building spanning John Marshall Place south of Indiana Avenue. A June 1938 memorandum prepared for Wyeth’s signature by Kundzin enumerated the practical reasons for this decision, which echoed many of the concerns voiced in Frederic A. Delano’s 1934 letter. The original Harris plan that required closing C Street as well removing vehicles from John Marshall Place threatened devastating traffic tie-ups. Bridging C Street or dividing the Municipal Center into separate buildings on each of the four squares, as Frederic A. Delano had recommended, was deemed impractical. When, in the depths of the Great Depression, the commissioners considered selling the tract’s southern-most squares to the federal government, the Municipal Architect had determined that moving the courthouses to Judiciary Square and constructing a single administrative building in the two squares north of C Street could both accommodate the space needs of the city government and provide parking for 600 cars in lots at either end of the site.

Now, in the summer of 1938, with millions of dollars in PWA funds contingent on starting construction by January 1, 1939, the CFA and the tentatively-allied NCPC and District Commissioners were at loggerheads and progress had stalled. The Kundzin-Wyeth memorandum implied that this was the product of innocent bureaucratic confusion. The Office of the Municipal Architect had believed that both the CFA and NCPC at least informally had approved the Wyeth-Kundzin plan in 1936 and continued to refine it. However, when presented with the Municipal Architect’s drawings in April 1937, CFA Chair Charles Moore had protested the closing of John Marshall Place because the administration building would block the view of the Hadfield Courthouse from the Mall. However, CFA apparently had neither advised NCPC that it had approved only the Judiciary Square courthouse plan in 1936, nor that it had rejected the Wyeth-Kundzin administration building scheme in 1937. Apparently innocent of this conflict, NCPC had endorsed the Wyeth-Kundzin plan formally in the spring of 1938.

Charles Moore had retired, but, when he learned of NCPC’s decision, current CFA Chair Gilmore D. Clarke became equally adamant about preserving the visual corridor between National Mall and courthouse. The result was a three-cornered district-federal controversy, couched in the polite but pointed formal language of the time, which raged all summer as the clock ticked toward the PWA’s deadline for starting construction. The Office of the Municipal Architect stuck to its guns, contending that a divided Municipal Center would be impractical and

---

<sup>115</sup>James D. Secrest. “District’s Municipal Center Now Raised From Realm of Myth,” *The Washington Post*; Sep 4, 1938; B7.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

uneconomical. The Wyeth-Kundzin Memorandum opined that “the scale of the Old Court Building is such that it demands a more intimate scale than the grand vista opening on the mall” envisioned by the CFA, and Hadfield’s City Hall was already appropriately framed by the trees and new court houses on Judiciary Square. The memorandum belittled Moore’s passionate belief that the vista from Pennsylvania Avenue was of any practical benefit. For anyone who sought to view the courthouse from the south, “the heavy automobile traffic on Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues makes the enjoyment of this vista a very hazardous undertaking, even if the old elms, now blocking it, were sacrificed.”<sup>116</sup>

A memorandum of July 12, 1938 from CFA Secretary H.P. Caemmerer summarized the commission’s position, quoting Charles Moore’s 1937 letter to Wyeth, which had included the charge that “the blocking of John Marshall Place would be nothing short of an act of vandalism that would bring continued reprobation on its originators.”<sup>117</sup> Caemmerer enumerated the Commission’s objections to the Wyeth-Kundzin plan, stating that blocking John Marshall Place would be a “serious and unnecessary mutilation of the L’Enfant Plan, convey disrespect to the memory of the great chief justice, obscure an architectural touchstone which had inspired the style of the Federal Triangle, and prevent the Municipal Center from linking the Union Station Plaza and the Capitol Grounds as intended.”<sup>118</sup>

Gilmore Clarke spent July orchestrating a correspondence barrage with present and former CFA members. From his retirement home in Washington State, the still-influential Charles Moore wrote that a Municipal building that straddled John Marshall Place was “a serious menace to the orderly development of Washington.” In a cover letter for Caemmerer’s July 12<sup>th</sup> memorandum to the commission’s members, Clarke suggested that each architect member write Frederic A. Delano to express opposition to the Municipal Architect’s plan. He also noted that he had discussed the issue with William A. Delano, a partner in the New York firm of Delano & Aldrich who had played a prominent role in designing the Federal Triangle. He reported that William Delano, who was Franklin D. Roosevelt’s nephew as well as Frederic Delano’s grand-nephew, would not endorse the old plan placing a monolithic building in parallel with John Marshall Place because of its gradient, but had agreed with Clarke’s proposal that the administrative building be split into two buildings separated by that street.<sup>119</sup> This plan was essentially a subset of Frederic Delano’s 1934 proposal that the Municipal Center be divided into individual buildings set in each of the site’s four squares. Meanwhile, CFA Secretary Caemmerer requested counts of traffic from the DC Department of Highways, and implied that the commission would re-evaluate its approval of the closing of John Marshall Place to vehicles, as he believed that,

---

<sup>116</sup> Nathan Wyeth and Arved I. Kundzin. “Memorandum Explaining the Development of the Plans for Municipal Center,” (June, 1938?), (undated and unpublished) National Archives, RG 66, Box 47, 2.

<sup>117</sup> H.P. Caemmerer. “Memorandum Regarding the Municipal Center,” (July 12, 1938) (Unpublished). National Archives, RG 66, Box 47, 1.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>119</sup> Clarke’s handwritten draft of this letter underlines the insular, clubby world of high echelon public architecture, with its reference to meeting “Billy Delano” at the grounds New York World’s Fair, where Clarke served as chief landscape architect.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

because the building of the National Gallery had now blocked Sixth Street NW at the Mall, more traffic was diverted to it.<sup>120</sup>

Despite the pressure exerted by Clarke, Nathan Wyeth, with the backing of the District Commissioners, continued to advocate for a single administration building spanning John Marshall Place. He found an ally in Frederic Delano, who, after receiving the Wyeth-Kundzin memorandum at the June 17<sup>th</sup> NCPC meeting, had written to Caemmerer promising to send him the meeting minutes, which:

We are hoping [might contain] reasons, which may not have been fully presented to your commission, your commission might be inclined to agree with the wisdom of such course from a planning standpoint.<sup>121</sup>

On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, Delano responded to letters from several CFA architects by stating that the NCPC had endorsed the Wyeth plan after “long debate” because “we thought the closing of C Street was very inadvisable” and “the great difference in grade between Pennsylvania Avenue and D Street made the treatment that was originally proposed almost impossible.” However, Delano left Clarke an opening by stating that the NCPC would restudy the plan “in the light of any new data that may be bought up.”<sup>122</sup>

After an all-day joint CFA-NCPC meeting in Washington examined the issue on July 29<sup>th</sup>, Delano telegraphed Clarke with the news that, while the NCPC had sustained its original endorsement of the Wyeth-Kundzin plan, District Engineer Commissioner Colonel Dan I. Sultan had agreed to have Wyeth prepare a “restudy” of the problem. William A. Delano was also named a member of the working group of CFA architects and Office of the Municipal Architect staff charged with the new study. Apparently Nathan Wyeth continued to advocate for his plan.<sup>123</sup>

Clarke then advised Delano that, on August 10<sup>th</sup>, the CFA would hold a special meeting in Manhattan, to which Wyeth would be invited “so that he may present his new studies.”<sup>124</sup> The week-and-a-half before this meeting saw frenzied activity by both the Municipal Architect and the District leadership. Engineer Commissioner Sultan advised Clarke that he was concerned not only about the cost of the CFA-favored plan but the threat to the project’s PWA appropriation if the disagreement delayed construction beyond January 1, 1939. With his letter, he enclosed a copy of a memorandum addressed to Wyeth, advising him that “the matter of the location, general layout, and appearance of the Municipal Center is, as you know, in a bad tangle.” Sultan’s memorandum instructed Wyeth to prepare renderings showing the Municipal Center as two separate buildings connected by tunnels in the northern squares and a flight of steps on John

---

<sup>120</sup> H.P. Caemmerer to Henry Shepley, (Unpublished letter), July 23, 1938, National Archives, RG 66, Box 47

<sup>121</sup> Frederic A. Delano to H.P. Caemmerer (Unpublished memorandum), June 18, 1938, RG 66, Box 47

<sup>122</sup> Frederic A. Delano to William Lamb and Frederic A. Delano to Henry A. Shepley (Unpublished letters), July 23, 1938, National Archives, RG 66, Box 47,

<sup>123</sup> H.P. Caemmerer to Henry A. Shepley (Unpublished letter) , July 23, 1938, National Archives, RG 66, Box 47,

<sup>124</sup> Gilmore D. Clarke to Frederic A. Delano, (Unpublished letter), July 30, 1938, National Archives, RG 66, Box 47.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

Marshall Place between C and D Streets NW. At the same time, Wyeth was to prepare a full cost-benefit analysis comparing the two schemes that also incorporated the costs of further delay.

On August 5<sup>th</sup>, Presiding District Commissioner Hazen wrote to Clarke, urging that “the views of the citizens who pay taxes for municipal improvements and expenses should be considered in matters of this kind,” and complaining that, as “rough” plans for the Wyeth-Kundzin scheme had been in circulation for years, the District’s attempts to implement it should hardly be a surprise to anyone. Clarke’s exact reaction to this populist plea is not recorded, but it might be surmised from a handwritten note that he attached to a clipped *Washington Evening Star* article that same day. The brief and noncommittal announcement of the agenda for the planned Manhattan meeting had quoted Caemmerer, and Clarke irately informed the commission’s secretary that:

I don’t like this statement. It is the kind of thing that creates controversies among people who are totally unqualified to discuss the matter intelligently. We must keep out of the press...<sup>125</sup>

The outcome of the Manhattan meeting was predictable, with the District represented only by Sultan’s two assistants and Wyeth. The District Government representatives estimated the costs of abandoning existing plans as over \$400,000, with a \$10,000 greater annual operating cost for two buildings, and an increased risk of losing the PWA funds from planning delays and repeating the points made in the Wyeth-Kundzin Memorandum.<sup>126</sup> On August 12<sup>th</sup>, Clarke advised Hazen that the CFA had endorsed Wyeth’s restudy, which split the Administration Building into two structures separated by a 250 foot vista across John Marshall Place, and urged the commissioners to implement this plan. If it was intended to persuade, Clarke’s letter was a strange blend of condescension and near-insult. It mingled reassurances that the CFA’s architect members were “men of large experience in their profession covering many years” who believed that the new plan “was more pleasing” than the “uninteresting” plan favored by the Municipal Architect and commissioners. Fortunately, these “men of large experience” were divorced from petty and ephemeral local concerns, for:

If practical and economic considerations, as stated by the Assistant Engineer Commissioners, had been the governing factors, Washington would not be the beautiful National Capital that it is today... We must not let future generations blame us for deliberately making mistakes and in the opinion of this Commission, it is never too late to change an architectural plan if a lasting good will be accomplished.<sup>127</sup>

However, the CFA’s distrust of local capabilities did not originate with Clarke. As former Chair Charles Moore had confided in his July letter to Clarke:

<sup>125</sup> Gilmore D. Clarke to H.P. Caemmerer. Handwritten note of August 5, 1938 attached to undated *Washington Evening Star* article “Municipal Center on Arts Agenda,” National Archives, RG 66, Box 47

<sup>126</sup> District of Columbia Government. “Relative to Change in Plans Resulting in the Opening of John Marshall Place from C Street to Indiana Avenue,” (Unpublished memorandum), August 1938. RG 66, Box 47

<sup>127</sup> Gilmore D. Clarke to Melvin C. Hazen, (Unpublished letter), August 12, 1938, RG 66, Box 48.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

Some day before very long, the District will be managed as a function of the general government. It has long outgrown the District Commissioners. There's not a man in the District eligible for a commissioner whose mind is big enough for the job. It was bad in my day. It is worse now – much worse.<sup>128</sup>

At this point, the project was stalemated, with the CFA and NCPC in conflict, and the District Commissioners requiring approval to spend their appropriation. However, on August 17<sup>th</sup>, Wyeth advised Caemmerer that he had learned that President Roosevelt had sided with his nephew rather than his uncle and upheld the CFA, thus closing the discussion.<sup>129</sup> This development was not announced publicly, and discussion of the issue continued in the press, until September 14<sup>th</sup>, when Interior Secretary and PWA Administrator Harold Ickes announced that he had personally resolved the dispute by backing the CFA plan.<sup>130</sup> Wyeth had meanwhile won what seemed a minor consolation prize when the CFA agreed to reduce the width of the John Marshall Place vista from 250 to 230 feet to accommodate twin buildings (**See architectural rendering, *Image 9***). This became the site of Eric Menke's plaza with its staircase flanked by splendid sculptural bas relief panels. Significantly, the PWA simultaneously increased its construction grant to \$5,700,000.<sup>131</sup>

Ostensibly the CFA won the Battle of John Marshall Place. But, when Nathan Wyeth published the final site plan for the Municipal Center in the September 1939 issue of *Pencil Points*, it became clear that the real victor was Frederic A. Delano. Delano (1863-1953), a successful railroad president who had played an important role in the city planning of Chicago and New York, had proved to be the antithesis of the stereotypically ineffectual gentleman dilettante planner. Wyeth's final scheme showed a building in each square of the tract, with C Street open to traffic.<sup>132</sup> Virtually the only provision from Delano's 1934 letter not realized was keeping John Marshall Place open to traffic, a position he had apparently abandoned by the time the NCPC approved the Wyeth-Kundzin Plan in 1938. Although Delano and Wyeth had differed sharply on the question of the single administration building, there was enough overlap and seeming linkage in the timing of their efforts to suggest some sort of long-term alliance.

From that point on, the Municipal Center project moved forward rapidly. Front page stories, feature articles, and construction photographs became staples in each of the city's five daily newspapers (**See newspaper article, *Image 10***). The District Commissioners determined that the East Building would be erected first, selecting the DMW Company of Brooklyn as general contractor.<sup>133</sup> In addition to the Police Department headquarters, it was to house elements of the Recorder of Deeds and Welfare Agency Offices, the Vehicle and Traffic, Fire, Playground and Insurance Departments, the Weights, Measures, and Markets, Minimum Wage Divisions, Parole,

<sup>128</sup> Charles Moore to Gilmore D. Clarke, (Unpublished letter), July 23, 1938, National Archives, RG 66, Box 47

<sup>129</sup> H.P. Caemmerer to Henry A. Shepley, (Unpublished Memorandum). August 18, 1938, National Archives, RG 66, Box 47

<sup>130</sup> Ickes Orders Twin-Building D.C. Center: Structure to Be Split, "*The Washington Post*," Sep 15, 1938; X13.

<sup>131</sup> "DC Given Millions to Build 'City Hall,'" *Washington Daily News*. August 30, 1938.

<sup>132</sup> By this time, the Municipal Center Campus plan included a Central Library in Square 491 and a Municipal Auditorium in Reservation 10, which was never built.

<sup>133</sup> "Municipal Center Contract Let," *Washington Evening Star*, August 14, 1938.



District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

Alcoholic Beverage Control, and the Barber and Beautician Boards. The West Building was to be devoted to the Commissioners' offices, the municipal engineering and surveyor's offices, the Health Department, and a variety of fiscal and legal functions.<sup>134</sup>

In 1939, Wyeth, in collaboration with the CFA, began the process of selecting art for the building and its adjacent plaza. Ceramic tile murals for the building's twin interior courts were selected by a jury, which selected Hildreth Meiere's "Health and Welfare" for the east court and Wayland Gregory's "Democracy in Action" for the west. A tile mosaic map of the District of Columbia was created for the floor of the main C Street lobby by Eric Menke. The staircase ascending John Marshall plaza from C Street to Indiana Avenue was flanked by two sculptural bas relief panels by sculptors Lee Lawrie and John Gregory.

Construction of the Municipal Center and its plaza took almost two years, with the first office staffs moving into the building on May 19, 1941 (**See Historic photos, *Image 11 and Image 12***). By then, events had far outstripped planners' expectations. Half the building was to be occupied by War Department employees from the Quartermasters' Corps, and the only District agencies to be accommodated were the Police, Traffic, Refuse, and Fire Departments, along with the Department of Health Laboratory.<sup>135</sup>

Two other Municipal Center buildings had been funded by the PWA in 1940, but their construction was delayed as materials were diverted to defense projects. The Recorder of Deeds Building, which replaced the old Police Court at the corner of Sixth and D Streets NW was completed according to its original plan in 1943. The Central Library at 499 Pennsylvania Avenue NW in Square 491 was not entirely built as conceived. Only one of the library's six modules was to be built initially, and, after Pearl Harbor, this fragment was allocated a low construction priority. Although ground had been broken at approximately the same time as the Recorder of Deeds Building, construction of the library began only after the District Commissioners agreed to lend it to the War Emergency Board to be used as office space for the war's duration. The remaining modules of the Central Library were never constructed in Square 491. Known as the "Library Annex", the existing building was retrofitted as awkward office space for the Library Board and other city agencies, including the Redevelopment Land Agency. In 1971, the Mies van der Rohe-designed Martin Luther King Library opened in midtown, and the Library Annex became surplus space. With the neighboring Ford Building, which survived until 1979, it was demolished to make way for the Canadian Embassy, erected in the mid-1980s.

## Epilogue

During the late 1940s, the city budget was strained by responding to needs unmet in wartime and, during the 1950s, by suburban flight and de-urbanization. The result was that the Municipal Center construction remained incomplete, and Squares 491 and Reservation 10 eventually passed out of the District Government's hands. However, rather than returning to strictly commercial use, this land remained destined for a variety of governmental and cultural purposes.

---

<sup>134</sup> "Municipal Center Garages Planned for 432 Autos," *Washington Evening Star*, October 1938.

<sup>135</sup> "3 Agencies Move to New D.C. Center," *Washington Post*; May 8, 1941; 5. The article referred to furniture being moved into the building, Office staffs followed a week later.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

Reservation 10, slated for a Municipal Auditorium in Wyeth's 1939 plan, was purchased by the federal government and became the site of the U.S. Court of Appeals (1950). Designed by Louis T. Justement, the building follows the lines of the Municipal Center building.

In 1961-1963, the Employment Security Building, which was not a component of the original Municipal Center plan, was erected at Sixth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW on land donated to the federal government by the District. The building, which housed both federal and municipal employment services, was designed by the firm of Class and Riggs in a rather stripped International style.<sup>136</sup> It was demolished without fanfare in 2003 and its site became the location of the Newseum, a mixed-use, privately-operated museum which opened in 2008.

Although the District continued to request construction funds as late as 1956, the West Building of the Municipal Center was never built. In 1976-78, the DC Superior (now Moultrie) Courthouse was constructed on its site.<sup>137</sup>

The East Building, long simply known as the Municipal Center, has continued in service as city office space since its dedication in 1941. In recent years, it has served the administrative and investigative divisions of the Metropolitan Police Department as well as the Department of Motor Vehicles. On November 22, 1994, a suspect in a triple murder case entered the building and fatally shot FBI agents Martha Dixon Martinez and Michael J. Miller, as well as Metropolitan Police Sergeant Henry J. Daly in the Cold Case Squad Room. The building was renamed in Sergeant Daly's honor in 1995.

---

<sup>136</sup> "Employment Office Is Dedicated Here," *Washington Post*; Oct 24, 1963; B2.

<sup>137</sup> Eugene L. Meyer, "D.C. Courthouse Is Built To Foil Bombers, Killers: Courthouse Plans Stress Top Security," *Washington Post*; Aug 25, 1976; B1.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

---

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Bernstein, Barton J.. "The New Deal: The Conservative Accomplishments of Liberal Reform," in Barton J. Bernstein, editor. *Towards A New Path: Dissenting Views in American History*, (New York: Vantage, 1967)

*Current History*, Volume 15, (New York: The New York Times Company, 1922)

Flanagan, Richard M.. "Roosevelt, Mayors and the New Deal Regime: The Origins of Intergovernmental Lobbying and Administration." *Polity*, Volume XXXI, Number 3, (Spring 1999)

Gebhard, David. "The Moderne in the U.S., 1920-1941" in *Architectural Association Quarterly*. (July 1970) (London: The Architectural Association)

Gebhard, David and Thomas Martinson. *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis; University of Minnesota Press, 1977)

Gibson, Campbell. *Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 To 1990: Population Division Working Paper 27* (Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 1998)

Goode, James. *Washington Sculpture: A Cultural History of Outdoor Sculpture in the Nation's Capital* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press), 2008.

Grossman, Elizabeth. "Paul Cret and The Federal Reserve Board Building: A Case Study in Architectural Politics during the New Deal," *Revue française d'études américaines*, 2004/4 no 102

Gurney, George. *The Sculpture of the Federal Triangle*. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1979)

Hiltzik, Michael. "What the New Deal Accomplished," online at [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/history\\_lesson/2011/10/new\\_deal\\_accomplishments\\_do\\_conservatives\\_who\\_attack\\_the\\_new\\_dea.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history_lesson/2011/10/new_deal_accomplishments_do_conservatives_who_attack_the_new_dea.html), accessed March 11, 2013

Koyl, George S.. *Wyatt's American Architects* (R.S. Bowker, 1962), 784, accessed at <http://www.archive.org/details/americanarchitec001309mbp>, May 1, 2011

Lee, Antoinette J.. *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000)

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

Mohl, Raymond A. "Shifting Patterns of American Urban Policy Since 1900, Arnold Richard Hirsch, ed. *Urban Policy in 20th Century America*; (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993)

National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Sixteenth Street Historic District (Boundary Expansion). 2006. Washington, DC: National Park Service

*Report of the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia Annual Volumes, 1926-1942* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office)

Wentzel, Volkmar. *Washington by Night*. (Washington, DC: Starwood Press, 1992)

Wyeth, Nathan C.. "Notes on the New Municipal Center, "Pencil Points, (New York: American Institute of Architects, September 1939)

---

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 3.4 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.89432 | Longitude: -77.01654 |
| 2. Latitude:          | Longitude:           |
| 3. Latitude:          | Longitude:           |
| 4. Latitude:          | Longitude:           |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

The Municipal Center and Plaza occupies a site bounded by Indiana Avenue NW on the north, C Street on the south, an open grassy area separating the Municipal Center from the Department of Labor (Frances Perkins) building on the east, and the Superior Court of D.C. (Moultrie Courthouse) on the west. The Municipal Building occupies Lot 831 in square 533 and the plaza occupies Lot 830 in Square 490. The plaza which was built across the former roadbed of John Marshall Place extends from C Street NW on the south to Indiana Avenue NW on the north and spans the area between the Municipal Center on the east and the Superior Court of D.C. (Moultrie Courthouse) on the west. On the northeast, the boundary also takes in part of Lot 832 in Square 533 to include the northeast corner of the building not including in Lot 831 in Square 533 and its retaining wall that curves around the east side of the building. The outside (eastern) edge of the sidewalk between the building and the grassy area to the east is both the edge of Lot 831 and the eastern boundary of the National Register property.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include the Municipal Center building and its plaza, both designed and built as part of the Municipal Center complex and intact to their 1941 Period of Significance. The open space on the east between the Municipal Center and the Frances Perkins Department of Labor Building is not included as it was primarily a product of the construction of the Frances Perkins Department of Labor building to its east. The boundaries follow the lot lines of the building and plaza, while also pulling in a part of Lot 832 in Square 533 to regularize the boundaries such that it includes the complete building and its site.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Douglas Peter Sefton  
organization: D.C. Preservation League  
street & number: 1221 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 5A  
city or town: Washington, D.C. state: \_\_\_\_\_ zip code: \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail: psefton@comcast.net  
telephone: 703-836-2015  
date: February 2019

---

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

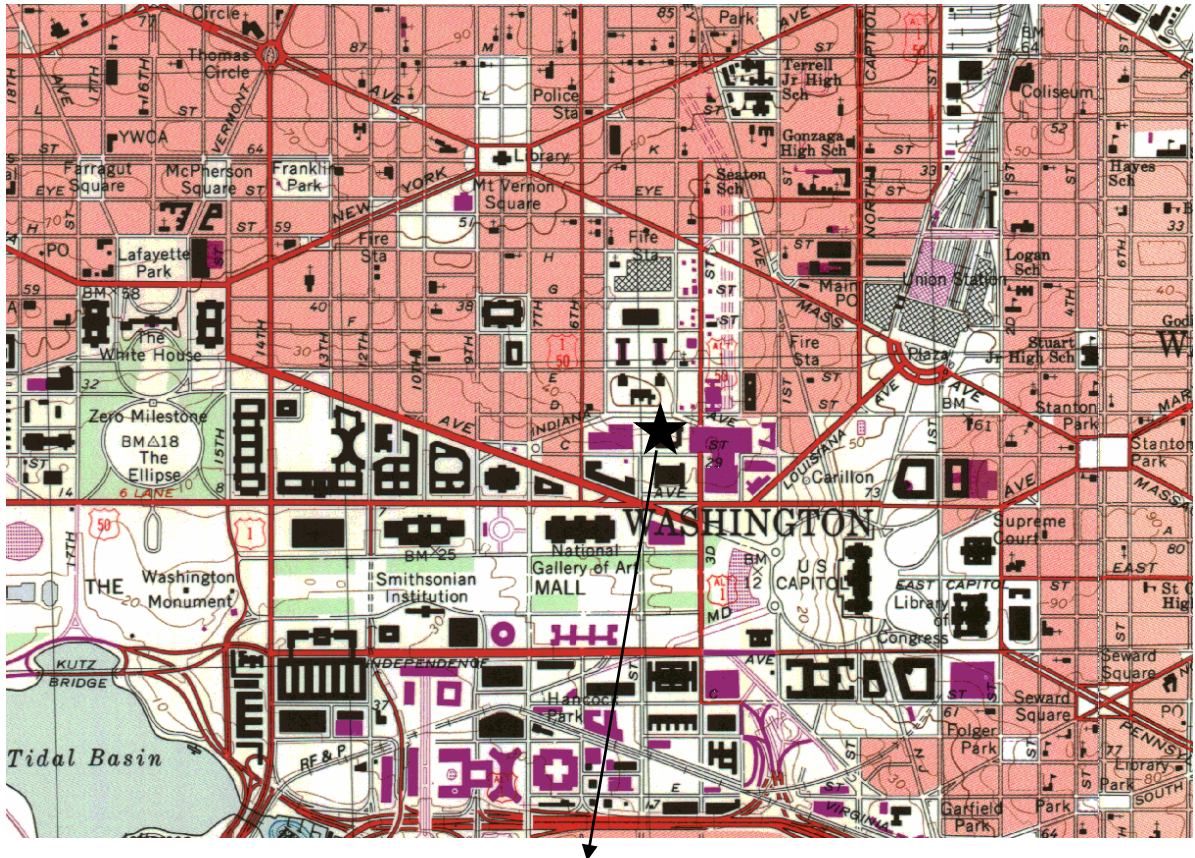
District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)



Geographical Map showing location of Municipal Center NW  
300 Indiana Avenue NW  
(USGS Quad Washington West)

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

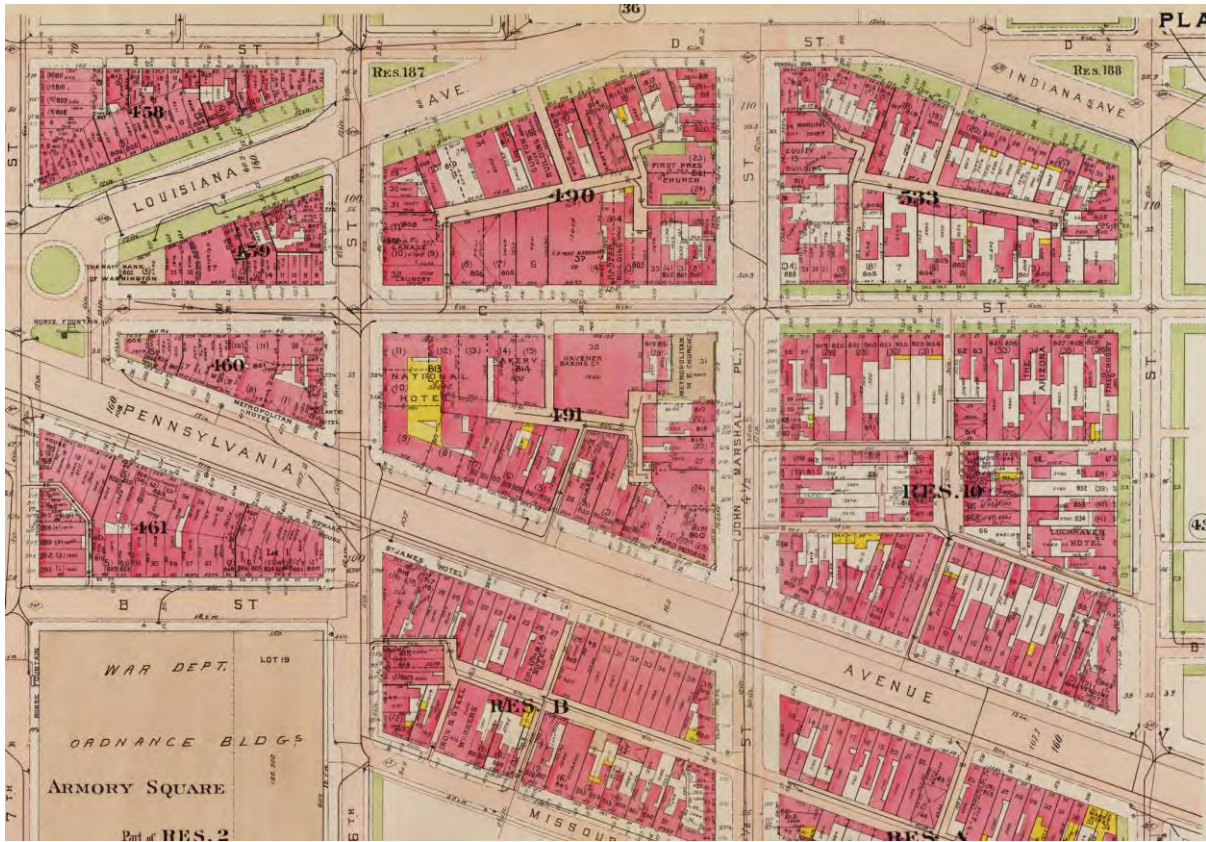


**Image 1: Judiciary Square**  
*(Detail from 1919 Baist Real Estate Atlas)*



District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

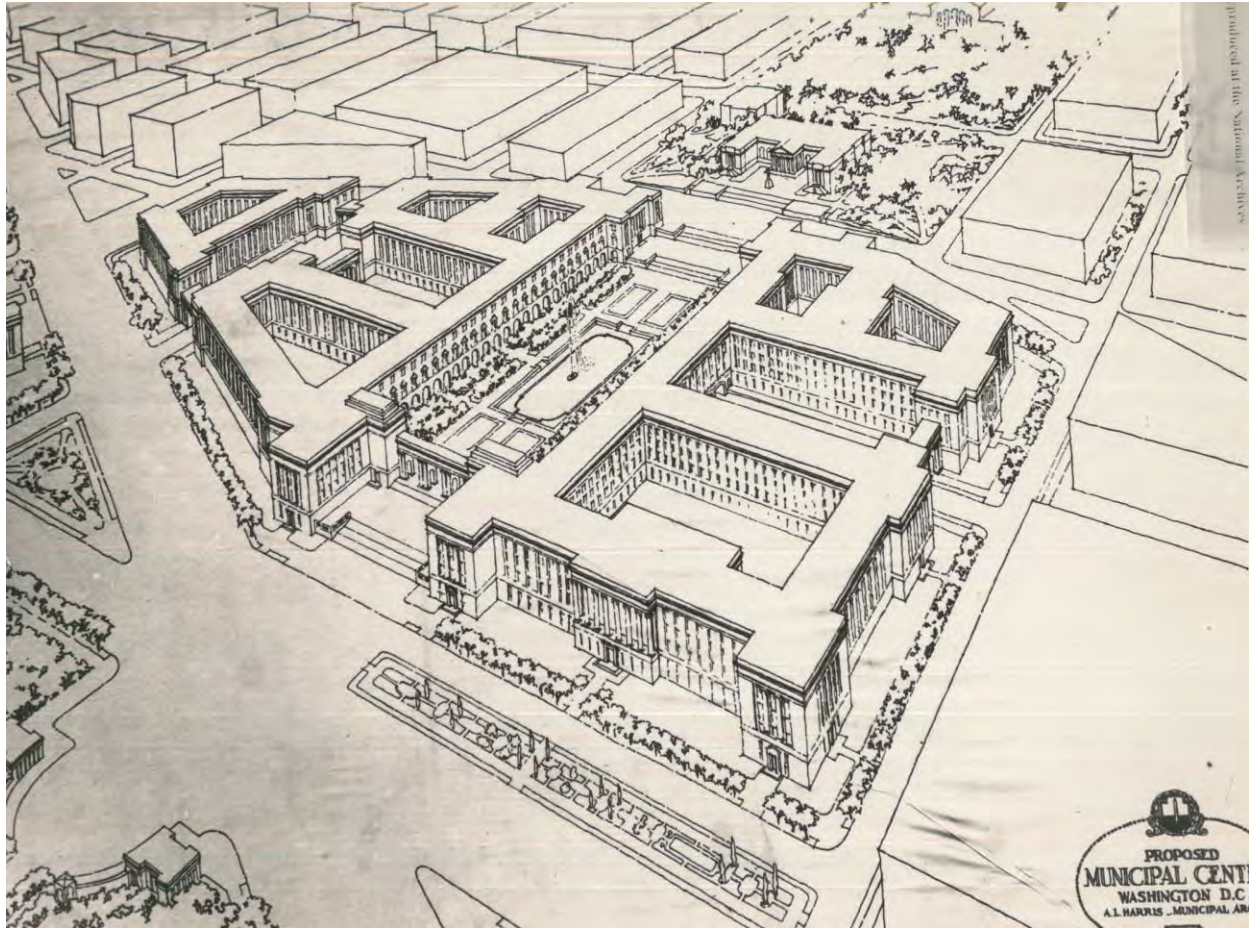
Washington, D.C.  
County and State



**Image 2: Detail of 1919 Baist map showing site of Municipal Center Campus**

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

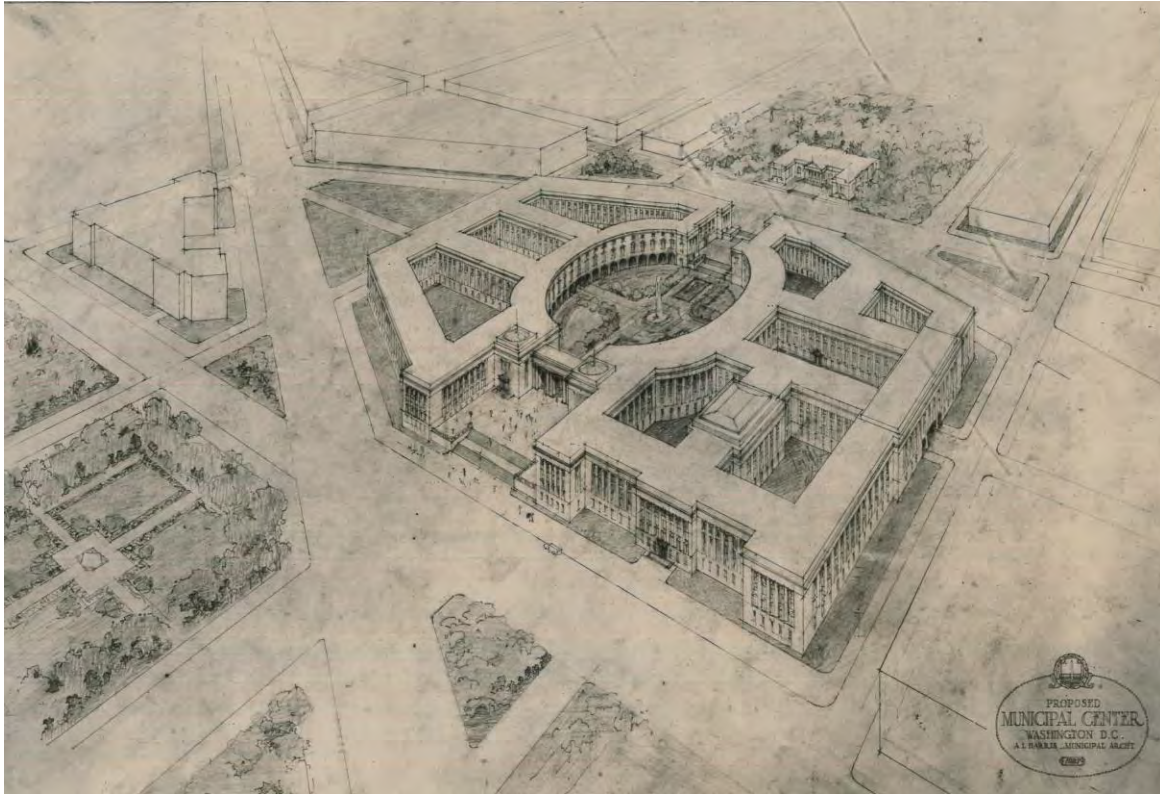
Washington, D.C.  
County and State



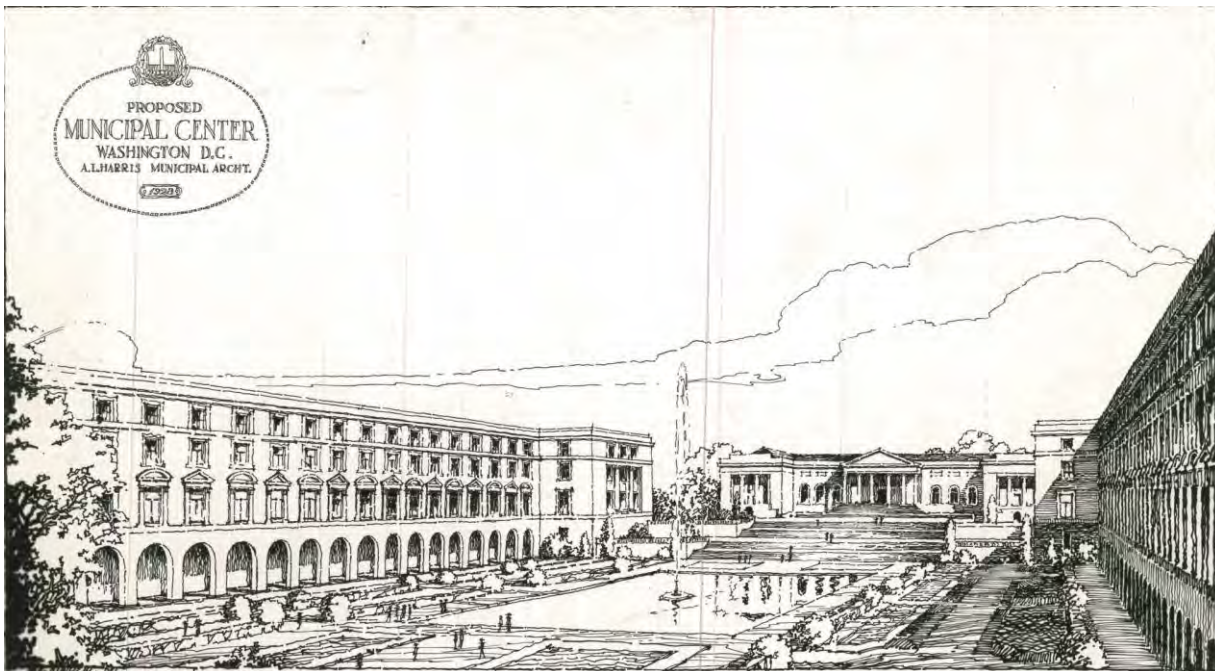
**Image 3: Harris Plan rendering of approved Municipal Center**  
(National Archives, Record Group 66)

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State



**Image 4: 1927 Harris Plan, circular court alternative** (*National Archives, Record Group 66*)



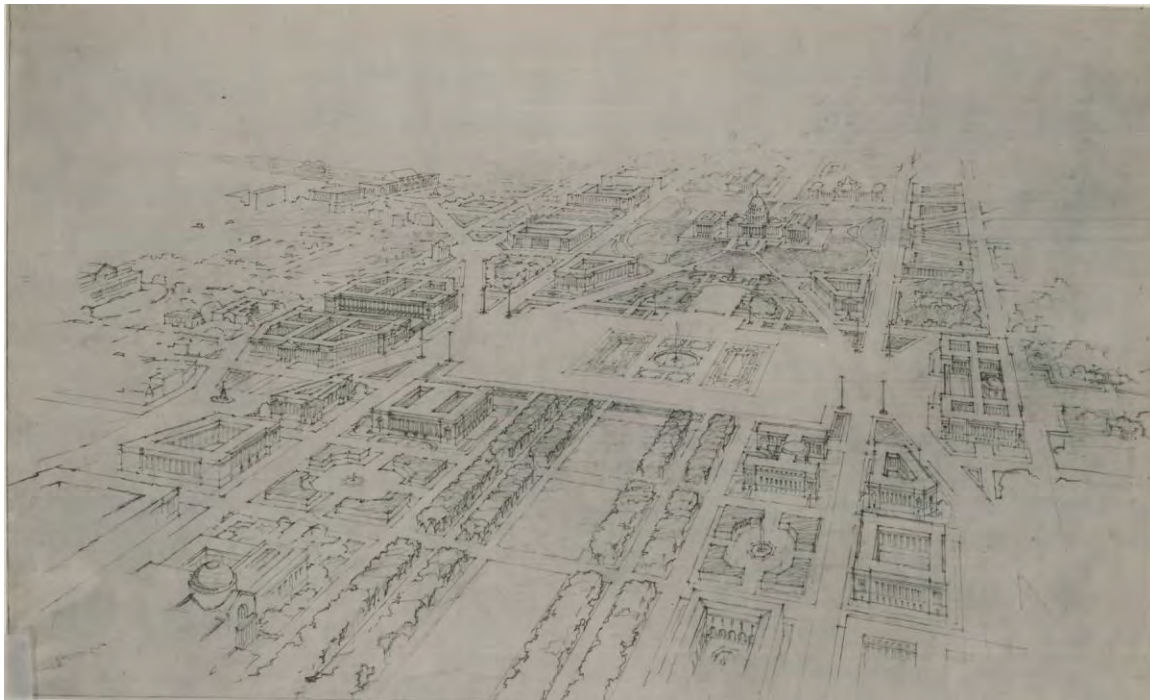
**Image 5: 1928 Harris Plan, plaza rendering, Arved L. Kundzin, delineator** (*National Archives, Record Group 66*)

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State



**Image 6: Office of the Municipal Architect, Municipal Center draftsmen in September 1930.** From left to right: J.P. Crowgey, Arved L. Kundzin, Louis Moolenkoph, C. Wepley (seated), E. Schreier (standing), William B. Harris (seated), and Edwin T. Pairo (standing).  
(*Washington Evening Star, September 28, 1930*)



**Image 7: Allied Architects plaza on mall proposal**  
(*National Archives, Record Group 66*)

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State



**Image 8: Rendering of Kundzin-Wyeth “Scheme D” of single building spanning John Marshall Place NW, 1935-1938. (National Archives, Record Group 66)**



**Image 9: Municipal Center, final plan, A.L. Kundzin, delineator, 1938. (Pencil Points, September 1939, p. 581)**

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

Image 10: Aerial View of Municipal Center Site



(Washington Evening Star, August 11, 1938)

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State



**Image 11: View south of Indiana Avenue looking north along John Marshall Place to City Hall/Courthouse before construction of the Municipal Center and Plaza**  
(National Archives, RG 66)

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State



**Image 12: Historic View of the Municipal Center looking SE from Indiana Avenue NW from Old City Hall, ca. 1941.**  
(*National Archives, RG 66*)



District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State



Map showing National Register Boundaries of the Municipal Center and John Marshall Plaza outlined in red.

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State



Key to photographs

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Municipal Center

City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.

County:

State:

Photographer: D. Peter Sefton, Photos 1-9; Kim Williams Photos 12-22

Date Photographed: October 2018; November 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

View looking NW from intersection of 3<sup>rd</sup> and C Streets NW showing south and east elevations  
1 of 22

View looking southwest near intersection of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Indiana Avenue NW at east elevation  
2 of 22

View looking south from Judiciary Square across Indian Avenue to north elevation of Municipal Center  
3 of 22

View looking south showing entrance doors of north elevation from Indiana Avenue  
4 of 22

View looking south of details of window and door on north elevation  
5 of 22

View looking south at entrance doors on north elevation  
6 of 22

View looking southeast from John Marshall Plaza showing portico on west elevation of Municipal Center  
7 of 22

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

View looking southeast from top of stair landing on John Marshall Place showing southern part of west elevation  
8 of 22

View looking northeast from C Street showing south elevation of Municipal Center  
9 of 22

View looking northwest (skyward) showing detail of attic level at west end of south elevation of building  
10 of 22

View looking north showing detail of pilasters on south elevation  
11 of 22

View looking north showing sunburst detail over doors on south elevation  
12 of 22

View looking south looking obliquely at east elevation  
13 of 22

View looking east at east wall of the west interior courtyard showing Waylande Gregory's *Democracy in Action* frieze  
14 of 22

Detail of firefighters in *Democracy in Action* frieze  
15 of 22

View looking west at west wall of west courtyard, opposite *Democracy in Action* frieze  
16 of 22

View looking east at east wall of east courtyard, opposite *Health and Welfare* frieze by Hildreth Meiere  
17 of 22

View looking west at west wall of east courtyard at detail of *Health and Welfare* frieze  
18 of 22

View of typical interior corridor  
19 of 22

View from south end of John Marshall Plaza looking north toward Hadfield's City Hall (Courthouse) along axis of John Marshall Place NW and showing *bas relief* panels on stair piers  
20 of 22

District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

Detail of sculptural panel on east pier of John Marshall Plaza stair landing  
21 of 22

View looking south from Indiana Avenue at Police Memorial near northwest corner of  
building  
22 of 22

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.











D I S T R I C T O F C O L U M B I A

300  
HENRY J. DADY  
BUILDING

300  
HENRY J. DADY  
BUILDING

NO PARKING  
EXCEPT  
FOR  
LOADING  
UNLOADING  
OR  
DELIVERY

BETTER IN THE MARKET  
100 YEARS OF SACRAMENTO  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

300  
HENRY J. DALY  
BUILDING

EMPLOYEE  
ENTRY  
ONLY

EMPLOYEE  
ENTRY  
ONLY



METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT  
1861 • SESQUICENTENNIA

HISTORY IN THE MAKING  
150 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE  
POLICING THE NATION'S CAPITAL





PUBLIC  
ENTRY  
ONLY

300  
HENRY J. DALY  
BUILDING

PUBLIC  
ENTRY

300  
HENRY J. DALY  
BUILDING

EMPLOYEE  
ENTRY  
ONLY

EMPLOYEE  
ENTRY  
ONLY





NO SKATEBOARDING  
NO ROLLERBLADING  
NO BICYCLING





D

I

S















NO  
SMOKING











10333

10333





WASHINGTON AREA  
LAW ENFORCEMENT  
MEMORIAL

WASHINGTON AREA  
LAW ENFORCEMENT  
MEMORIAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza

Multiple Name:

State & County: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, District of Columbia

Date Received: 6/4/2019      Date of Pending List: 6/25/2019      Date of 16th Day: 7/10/2019      Date of 45th Day: 7/19/2019      Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100004189

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal	<input type="checkbox"/> PDIL	<input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue
<input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photo
<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver	<input type="checkbox"/> National	<input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary
<input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Period
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> TCP	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> CLG	

Accept       Return       Reject      7/19/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The District of Columbia Municipal Center and Plaza is locally significant and meets National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Art, Architecture, Community Planning & Development, and Politics/Government. Constructed between 1938 and 1941 with Public Works Administration (PWA) funding, the six-story, limestone-clad office building is an excellent local example of Classical Moderne (Stripped Classical) design. A collaborative design effort, the building also features notable interior and exterior artwork including terracotta friezes and mosaic tile inlays. Intended as a component of a much larger civic center, the New Deal-sponsored building served as a major location for the consolidation of municipal services; its extended planning the development history reflecting the often contentious nature of city planning in the District resulting in a significant addition to the city plan.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept NR Criteria A and C

Reviewer: Paul Lusignan      Discipline: Historian

Telephone: (202)354-2229      Date: 7/19/2019

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No      see attached SLR : **Yes**

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



MEMO

DATE: May 30, 2019

TO: Paul Lusignan

FROM: Kim Williams *KW*

RE: Transmittal Letter for The D.C. Municipal Center and Plaza

Please find enclosed two disks for The D.C. Municipal Center and John Marshall Plaza National Register nomination. The enclosed disk, Disk 1 of 2 contains the true and correct copy of the nomination. The enclosed Disk 2 of 2 contains photographs as per the NR photo requirements.