



# Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy

University of Missouri

## Creating the Capital City Society of Fellows Summer Seminar • August 2019

How (and why) did the Founders take a swampy bog at the intersection of Virginia and Maryland and turn it into the Capital City? What questions and challenges arose during that process? Why did the Founders view the creation of the Capital City and its location as vital to the future of the new United States of America? What would these early architects think about Washington, D.C., today?

### Readings:

- **A Brief History of Pierre L'Enfant and Washington, D.C.: How one Frenchman's vision became our capital city** (by Kenneth R. Fletcher, Smithsonian.com, April 30, 2008)  
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/a-brief-history-of-pierre-lenfant-and-washington-dc-39487784/>

The above article from the Smithsonian will provide some historical backdrop for the readings and images that follow.

- **Correspondence between George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, 1791**  
Please review this correspondence carefully, with an eye toward understanding what exactly Washington and Jefferson are discussing, and why.
  - **Memorandum for Thomas Jefferson from George Washington, August 27, 1791**  
Available at: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-08-02-0321>
  - **Enclosure: Memorandum for Jefferson with Jefferson's Answers and Notes, August 27-September 8, 1791**  
Available at: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-08-02-0356-0002>
  - **Letter from Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, September 8 1791**  
Available at: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-08-02-0356-0001>

Readings are continued on the next page.

- **Images**

Take some time to carefully study each of the images below.  
For each image, please consider the following questions:

**1. What is being displayed in this image? What information does this image provide about the history or development of Washington, D.C.?**

**2. In what ways do these images correlate with or depart from:**

(1) the Smithsonian article's historical overview of Washington, D.C. and/or

(2) the correspondence between Washington and Jefferson on the Federal District?

**3. Consider the similarities or differences between the early plans and plan maps (images 1-4) and the later development of DC (images 5-10).**

What do you think Washington, Jefferson, and L'Enfant would think of the layout of the District of Columbia today?

Where would they be pleased to see their vision(s) fulfilled?

Where would they be dismayed or see difficulties?

1. Jefferson's Plan for the Federal District (1791)

2. Jefferson's Competition Advertisement for Plans for a Capitol Building (1792)

3. L'Enfant Plan Map

4. 1872-1873 Map

5. Focused view of the Mall

6. Broad view of the Mall

7. District of Columbia

8. Metro System Map 2019

9. Metro DC, VA, MD

10. Metro DC Focus