

Topics

Master Planning

Containing Congress

Neither efficiency nor art has slowed down the proliferation of solid marble turkeys on Capitol Hill. The logic that has been lacking in this random expansion is about to be supplied by a master plan prepared for Congressional approval by the Architect of the Capitol. On paper, at least, that makes basic good sense.

With contraction rather than expansion of the Federal Government's role as the Reagan Administration's announced objective, this may not be the most propitious moment to talk about growth. But growth is as inevitable as budget deficits; the only debate is how to control the size of both. This master plan is actually a "limits-to-growth" proposal that would combine future

building with appropriate remodeling and reorganization of needs. These needs would be coordinated with circulation and services like transit and parking.

Such a rational approach would be a welcome change from the more familiar method of site selection and construction, which George White, the Architect of the Capitol, compares to "pinning the tail on the donkey." Sometimes, of course, it has been more accurately pinning the tail on the elephant. But the result has been a bipartisan kind of Marx Brothers improvisation. This new proposal would promote controlled growth, better services and the preservation of the park-like setting of the Hill. It promises something better than malaprop monuments.

The Bold Mr. Rouse

James Rouse has a knack for reviving moribund urban business districts. His most dazzling successes have been Boston's Faneuil Hall Marketplace and Baltimore's Harborplace. New York's South Street Seaport is next, but his sternest test lies beyond that.

He has announced formation of the Enterprise Foundation, to buy and renovate rundown housing for rental to the poor. How does he propose to succeed where others have failed? With volunteer labor and the income from inner-city shopping centers.

These are shaky props, as community groups can attest. But it has been riskier still to bet against James Rouse. We won't, because if he wins this time poor people will too.