

# EXTENSION OF THE OFFICE BUILDING HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



LETTER FROM THE  
ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

TRANSMITTING

PURSUANT TO A PROVISION OF THE LEGISLATIVE APPRO-  
PRIATION ACT FOR 1926 (PUBLIC NO. 624) PLANS, SPECIFI-  
CATIONS, AND ESTIMATES FOR THE ERECTION OF AN AD-  
DITION OR EXTENSION TO THE OFFICE BUILDING  
OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



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1926

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## EXTENSION OF HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL,  
*Washington, D. C., December 5, 1925.*

To the SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

In the legislative bill approved March 4, 1925, making appropriations for the legislative branch of the Government for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1926, the following enactment is found:

To enable the Architect of the Capitol, subject to the direction and supervision of the commission in control of the House Office Building, to prepare and submit to Congress, on the first day of the first regular session of the Sixty-ninth Congress, plans, specifications, and estimates for the erection of an addition or extension to the House Office Building sufficient to provide two rooms for each Member, including any recommendations as to the acquisition of an additional site for the erection of an additional office building for Members, \$2,500.

Acting under the authority conferred by the section quoted, the Architect of the Capitol, after due conference with members of the House Office Building Commission, did on the 30th day of April, 1925, enter into an agreement with an organization known as "The Allied Architects of Washington, D. C. (Inc.)" for the preparation of the schemes which when submitted to Congress should contain the information desired under the portion of the law heretofore quoted.

From time to time conferences have been held between the Architect of the Capitol and the Allied Architects of Washington, and all necessary explanations and information have been afforded to the allied architects for the preparation of such plans and information as would enable the Congress to determine the question as to which, if either, of the plans submitted would be acceptable to that body.

It should be understood that this information prepared, and which constitutes this report, is submitted for the purpose of a full examination and discussion by the Congress and that the plans submitted and the drawings or illustrations accompanying the plans are carried only to such an extent as would permit the further development of the plans if considered expedient.

It will be noted that the legislation previously referred to provides not only for suggestions concerning an additional site, but also for information concerning an addition or extension to the present House Office Building, and in answer to so much of the legislation as relates to an addition to the House Office Building, I beg leave to submit herewith a report from Carrere & Hastings under date of November 28, 1924, in which a possible addition to the present House Office Building, providing for sufficient rooms to enable each Member of Congress to have two rooms has been outlined and described.

This report of Carrere & Hastings, with the accompanying drawings, will give such information as may be required by those who would prefer confining the changes to be made to be contained within the walls of the present House Office Building and without any recommendation upon either of the schemes as submitted this matter is respectfully referred for such action as the Congress may consider proper under the circumstances.

Respectfully,

DAVID LYNN,  
*Architect of the Capitol.*

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THE ALLIED ARCHITECTS OF WASHINGTON, D. C.,  
*December 3, 1925.*

Mr. DAVID LYNN,  
*Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C.*

SIR: In accordance with the agreement entered into on the 30th day of April, 1925, signed by you as representative of the House Office Building Commission, and by representatives of the Allied Architects of Washington, D. C. (Inc.), there are transmitted to you herewith preliminary plans and elevations for the extension of the House of Representatives Office Building.

It will be noted that two distinct and carefully studied schemes are presented for the consideration of the commission, one scheme A involving the use of the entire block lying immediately to the west of the present House Office Building, the other B occupying the northerly portion of the two blocks lying immediately to the west of the present office building and fronting on the south side of the Capitol. The possibility of using other sites is discussed in this report.

It should be stated at this point that the schemes submitted are based upon a general agreement reached between your office and the Allied Architects as to the number of additional offices required, the general character of these offices, the accessory elements of the building, and the essential requirement that it should be a serviceable, economic building, not "monumental." These requirements have been recognized in plan, story height, interior finish, and fenestration, and an effort has been made to produce a simple, dignified building, not out of harmony with its surroundings.

The program recognizes the existing or probable House membership as estimated by the members of your commission.

#### PRELIMINARY STUDY OF REQUIREMENTS AND POSSIBILITIES

It may be of interest to your commission to know that the program as thus originally outlined was submitted to the membership of the Allied Architects, by 17 of whom schemes were submitted for each of three different sites held out as worthy of consideration, namely, the two indicated above and a third possibility of utilizing the entire two blocks lying south of the Capitol. These preliminary studies were explained in detail by the designers, each one of whom had made a careful analysis of the relative advantages and disadvantages of the sites as they presented themselves to him. Following the explanation occurred a discussion of these preliminary plans, in which

all the architects present participated. As the result of this discussion, at which you were present, a second program was prepared, maintaining the same requirements but making available the desirable elements developed by different designers and eliminating various elements which were considered undesirable.

A second series of studies was then developed in which each designer focused his attention upon one scheme which seemed to him to have the best possibilities, and again there was a careful review of the submitted plans in which the selection and elimination were repeated. The plans were then developed in detail as herewith submitted. The detail of this process of development is given to show that the schemes submitted are the result of a very careful analysis of the situation from many different angles.

#### SCHEME A

PROJECT FOR A BUILDING OCCUPYING THE SQUARE BOUNDED BY NEW JERSEY AVENUE, B STREET, SOUTH CAPITOL STREET, AND C STREET

Considering first the scheme for the occupancy of the square lying immediately to the west of the present office building, the advantages and disadvantages appear as follows:

##### ADVANTAGES

1. Proximity to the present House Office Building, with main entrance from New Jersey Avenue and B Street at the upper level.
2. The occupancy of an entire square, avoiding cotenancy with private buildings, the necessity of setbacks, and possible future complications.
3. A building which in itself would cost less than the alternative scheme, which saving, however, would be offset to a considerable extent by the cost of acquiring the Congress Hall Hotel property.
4. The preservation of South Capitol Street, both for traffic and for view, thus leaving open the possible change in character of the district lying to the south of the Capitol, and recognizing the importance of an unobstructed vista from that section.

##### DISADVANTAGES

1. The financial disadvantage: Necessity of acquiring Congress Hall Hotel property, which might be offset by the fact that it will undoubtedly have to be acquired some day for Government purposes, and any subsequent purchase price would unquestionably be much higher than at the present time.
2. Disadvantage of limitations: The difficulty of obtaining any additional expansion of this scheme, beyond a possible 15 suites in a roof setback. The plans provide suites for about 50 additional Members over the present House membership, with an allowance for the conversion of 50 private offices in the present building to committee rooms.
3. Disadvantage of appearances: The unbalanced effect of this building, occupying only one of the two squares immediately south of the Capitol, with no certainty that a corresponding building will eventually be built upon the other square; also the certainty that if a building is erected upon the western square it will present great difficulties in design to harmonize it with the building on the eastern square, owing to the fact that the northern corner of the latter is some 50 feet higher than the southwestern corner of the former; also a narrow B Street frontage, accentuated by having no similar balancing frontage on the other square.

##### DETAILS OF ARRANGEMENT

This scheme makes provision for the following accommodations:

Two hundred and sixty-six suites of offices for Representatives, with all necessary features in the way of desk space, coat and lavatory space, office storage, etc. Eighty thousand cubic feet of additional storage space for Representatives.

A gymnasium 45 by 70 feet.

A swimming pool 28 by 124 feet.

Ample locker and shower facilities in connection therewith.

Space for lounge on roof.

Superintendent's room.

Clerk's room.

Folding room, and storage space for same; totaling 250,000 cubic feet.

The exact location and arrangement of these accommodations are shown in detail on the drawings, and need not be described here. The arrangement of the individual suite is the same for both buildings, and will be described in detail hereinafter.

*Estimate of cost*

The building	-----	\$6, 500, 000
The land	-----	1, 070, 000
Total	-----	7, 570, 000

These figures are approximations only, on a cubic-foot basis for similar work. The cost of the land to be acquired is an assumed condemnation value.

SCHEME B

PROJECT FOR A BUILDING OCCUPYING THE SOUTH FRONTAGE OF B STREET,  
LYING BETWEEN NEW JERSEY AND DELAWARE AVENUES

Considering next the scheme for the occupancy of the northern portion of the squares fronting on B Street, lying east and west of South Capitol Street, the advantages and disadvantages appear as follows:

ADVANTAGES

1. Next to the first scheme, this site is the most advantageous location with reference to the present House Office Building and the Capitol, its lesser desirability being in that it lies partly down the hill.

2. The minimum acquisition of ground is required, as the only important property involved is that occupied by the four-story annex to the Congress Hall Hotel.

3. There is ample room to meet present needs adequately and to leave sufficient room for future expansion. Also, there is ample storage room for documents and other space in the basement for the parking of automobiles.

4. Appearances: In connection with completing the setting of the Capitol Building, the scheme makes for symmetrical, balanced treatment of these two squares as seen from the Capitol, and does not leave the fate of the western square to the uncertainties of the future.

5. The court offers better light and ventilation than the preceding scheme and more pleasing possibilities for court gardens.

DISADVANTAGES

1. There is a considerable increase in the cost of this scheme over scheme 1.

2. The blocking of a main street, a procedure which, no matter how well justified in the past by expediency, has in every case where followed in the Washington plan brought subsequent criticism for interference with traffic or view.

3. The splitting of the building into two distinct parts in an effort to ameliorate the obstruction of the Capitol view from South Capitol Street (it will be noted, however, that there is intercommunication between these two sections on the first and ground floors, with additional second-floor communication by means of an open terrace passage). The break in circulation on the upper floors is not considered as serious as it might be, in view of the fact that all committee rooms remain in the present House Office Building, with little necessity for intercommunication between offices on the same floor.

## DETAILS OF ARRANGEMENT

This scheme makes provision for the following accommodations:

Two hundred and seventy suites of offices for Representatives (266 in alternative scheme), with details of arrangement the same as in the previous scheme.

Eighty-five thousand cubic feet of additional storage space (80,000 cubic feet in alternative scheme).

Gymnasium 45 by 70 feet (same as in alternative scheme).

Swimming pool 36 by 140 feet (28 by 124 feet in alternative scheme).

Locker space the same.

Folding room, clerk's room, superintendent's room, the same.

Space for congressional lounge.

Garage space for 100 cars in subbasement (not provided in alternative scheme).

The details of arrangement are as shown on the plans.

	<i>Cost</i>
The building-----	\$7, 800, 000
The land-----	364, 360
Total (alternative scheme, \$7,570,000)-----	8, 164, 360

These figures are also approximate, on a cubic foot basis, with the cost of the land not at present owned by the Government on an assumed condemnation basis.

## DISCUSSION OF A TYPICAL OFFICE SUITE

The typical office suite is the same in both schemes submitted. It has been the subject of considerable detailed study, to the end that not only should the needs of the Representatives be met in every respect but at the same time that the element of cost should have primary consideration. Various alternative arrangements were devised, but it is believed that the scheme submitted will meet all requirements as indicated, while at the same time the simplicity of arrangement and regularity of span will involve the minimum of construction cost.

For the purposes of furnishing a basis of comparison with the offices in the present House Office Building, the typical two-room suites in both the present and the proposed buildings have been shown at the same scale on one of the drawings submitted. The accommodations compare favorably, while the new arrangement effects considerable economy in construction. It will be noted that the floor area involved, which represents one office unit plus one-half of the adjacent corridor space, is  $13\frac{1}{2}$  per cent greater in the present building than in the proposed, while the cubical contents of this same unit are 72 per cent greater in the present building than in the proposed structure.

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS OF COST

The extreme difference in typical units indicated above shows one of the means by which a great saving has been made in the elements which materially affect the total cost, while, at the same time, by having due regard for simplicity of detail, it has been possible to obtain a stone-faced building in keeping with its surroundings and of quality befitting its purpose. The ceiling heights in the new building are 6 feet lower than those in the present building, but still 2 or 3 feet higher than those in the strictly commercial

office buildings. A further economy has been effected by the elimination of elaborate plaster cornices, pretentious corridors, and other similar expensive elements which, repeated throughout the building, materially advance its cost. It is felt that the building meets the requirement of simple, straightforward planning, while still recognizing its obligations as an important member of the Capitol group.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO SITE

No effort has been spared on the part of the Allied Architects thoroughly to canvass the various other possibilities of this problem, but limitations of time allowed have made it impossible to extend the study, as was desired, beyond the two sites for which drawings are submitted. At the same time, it should be made clear that these two sites by no means represent all the possibilities involved. Variations of the alternative scheme have been studied, and two other sites considered—one lying south of the Library of Congress and east of the present House Office Building, and the other west of Delaware Avenue. The former site was considered as too remote from the Capitol. The latter is the same distance from the Capitol as the present building, and could be connected to both by subways practically on grade. The elevators could be lowered to meet these subways, and they could be provided with monorail cars. There would be no congestion between the two buildings in the movement from offices to committee meetings comparable to that from the offices to House roll calls.

Having in mind the various possibilities for development which have been indicated from time to time in the plans for the extension of the Capitol grounds, it would appear that the least desirable solution of this problem is the first scheme considered, namely, that occupying the single square. Against the advantage of economy, which is subject to debate, stands its great disadvantage of reducing all requirements to a minimum, leaving no room for expansion when the demand for expansion occurs, as it undoubtedly will. Next in order is the alternative solution submitted, certain merits and demerits of which have already been outlined.

The third solution in inverse order of desirability would appear to be the acquisition of the entire two squares lying south of the Capitol, restricting the building to the northern half of these squares, as indicated along the lines of the alternative scheme. This would allow room for expansion to the south, of future Government buildings. A modification of this scheme has been considered, namely, of building on the entire two squares at this time, but leaving a large central court or garden and preserving the open treatment of South Capitol Street. This would give more space than would be required, but the additional space might be well utilized for storage or other purposes, relieving congestion in some of the adjacent Government buildings.

Attention should be called at this point to the fact that both these schemes block all future possibilities of any development along the line of the project prepared for the Architect of the Capitol, for beautiful Capitol gardens lying to the south of the Capitol, corre-

sponding to the open treatment to the north. Whether or not any such scheme shall ever be carried out, it would seem unfortunate to take any steps at this time which would make practically impossible of realization the development of the scheme in case it should subsequently prove desirable. There is already one such problem existing in the area surrounding the Capitol, namely, the difficulty of developing any structure north of the Congressional Library which will harmonize with it in completing the enframing of the Capitol grounds.

From every point of view it would appear that the most generally desirable site for any such building as is required by this project is the square indicated to the west of Delaware Avenue. The grades are not enough pronounced to occasion serious difficulties in design or construction, and it is believed that the additional cost of acquiring the land in this square, in addition to that in the squares lying immediately to the south of the Capitol, which would in that event be acquired for the proposed Capitol gardens, would largely be offset by the saving in the construction of building. There would be no necessity for making two semidetached units, as indicated under the alternative scheme, and this, in addition to restoring the practical advantage of easy communication, would allow a great saving in the construction costs. Furthermore, the necessity for elaborate terracing, with high walls to overcome differences in grade, would be eliminated, making further cost reductions possible. There would be ample room for future office expansion or to meet new conditions which may arise in future. Ample parking space is easily obtainable, and the completion of the Capitol enframing would be one step nearer. Furthermore, while all property in the two intervening squares should be acquired under this scheme, it would not necessitate the immediate condemnation of Congress Hall Hotel, the preservation of which seems to be considered desirable by many Members of the House. Although it would seem that the recommendation involves somewhat extensive condemnation of property to consummate the scheme, it is submitted that it may in reality tend toward economy, in that there can be little question but that the land fronting on the National Capitol should be owned and occupied by the Federal Government, and that the value of this land is appreciating each year.

The Allied Architects of Washington express their appreciation of the opportunity which has been afforded them to study this project in collaboration with your office; and they further wish to express appreciation of your personal attitude, which has greatly facilitated and encouraged the collaborative effort. If further explanations or alternative studies are desired, they will be glad to have you call upon them.

Respectfully submitted.

ALLIED ARCHITECTS OF WASHINGTON, D. C. (INC.),  
Per HORACE W. PEASLEE, *Secretary*.

## SCHEME C

PROJECT FOR BUILDING AN ADDITION TO PRESENT HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

CARRERE &amp; HASTINGS,

*52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, November 28, 1924.*

DEAR SIR: In compliance with your request for a report as to a possible method of providing an additional number of rooms in the Office Building to meet the present requirements of Congressmen, we submit herewith a typical floor plan and a section which indicate extensions to the present building erected within the central court, together with additional rooms built on the B Street and C Street sides at what is now the roof level.

The exterior of the building as shown in the court is intended to be built to correspond with the present court finish, except that we have shown the stories only 12 feet 6 inches in height, as we believe that height, which is even higher than is commonly adopted in office buildings, amply sufficient for the purposes of this building. The additional rooms on the roof are so placed that they will be practically not noticeable from the street and will therefore not detract from the appearance of the building. These suggestions give a total of 375 additional rooms, with the stairs, elevators, and toilet accommodations necessary to provide for the enlarged building.

We have conferred with reliable builders of large experience as to the probable cost of the proposed changes and have calculated such cost on the basis of an allowance of 80 cents per cubic foot, which we believe to be a conservative figure.

The unusually large area of the building, which does not appear at first glance, calls for a very large cubage, and the approximate cost, on the above basis, would be \$3,000,000 for a steel-frame construction, as usually adopted for buildings of this height, with general plumbing, heating, ventilation, electric, and elevator work.

Respectfully submitted.

CARRERE & HASTINGS.  
THEODORE I. COE.

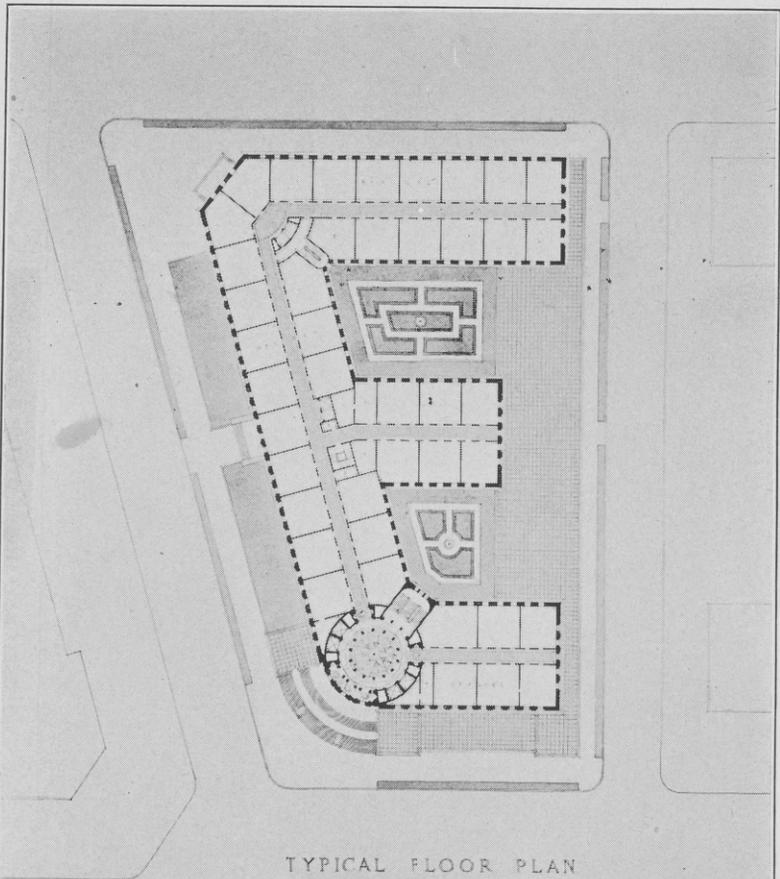
DAVID LYNN, Esq.,

*Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C.*



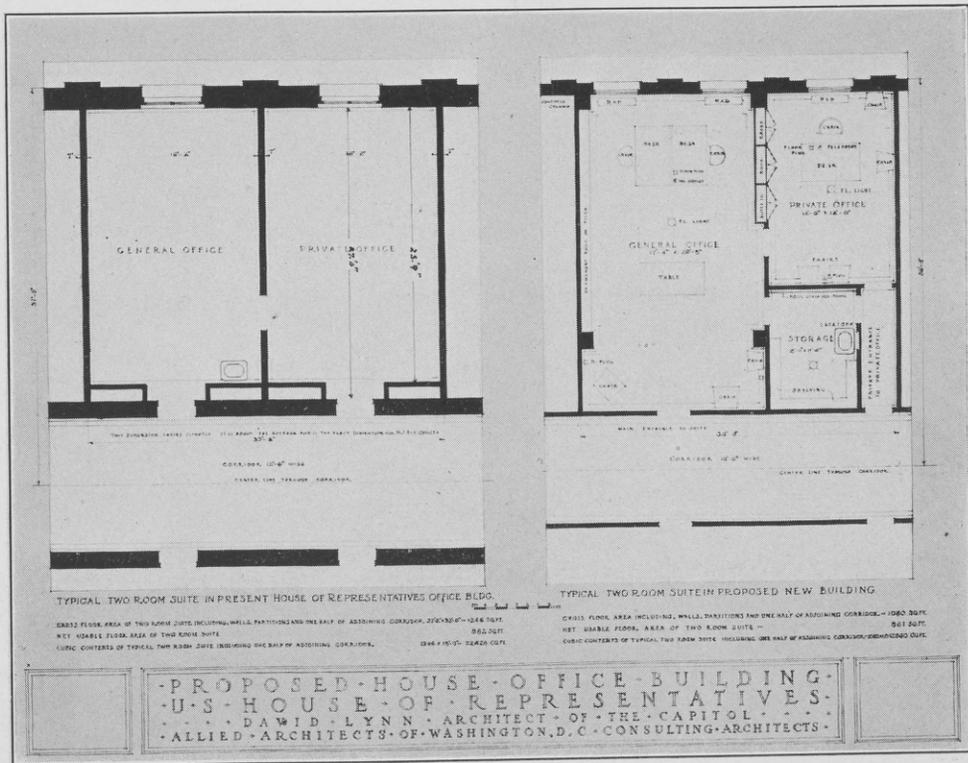
PROPOSED NEW HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

No. 1.—Scheme A

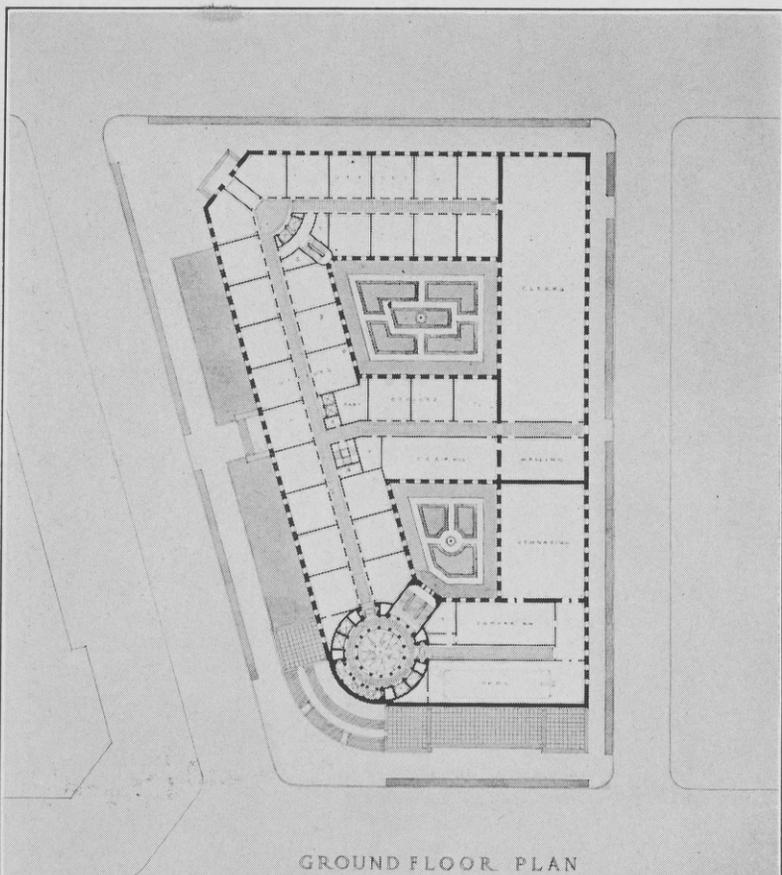


·PROPOSED HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING·  
·U-S HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES·  
· - - - DAVID LYNN ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL - - - ·  
· ALLIED ARCHITECTS OF WASHINGTON, D.C. CONSULTING ARCHITECTS ·

No. 2.—Scheme A

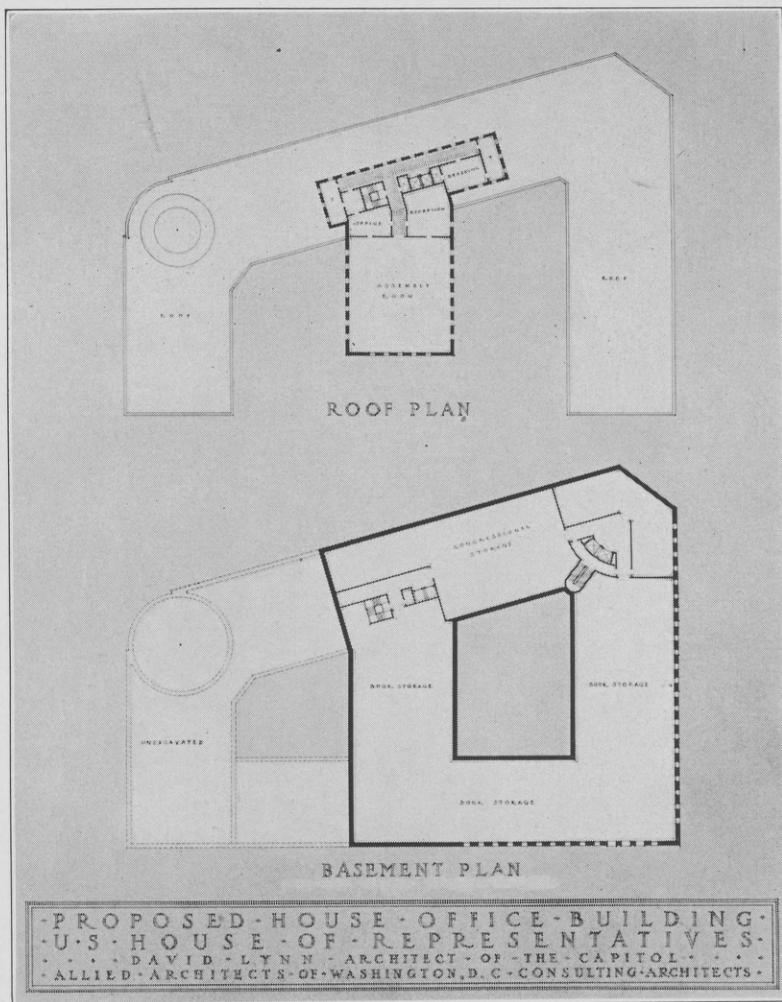


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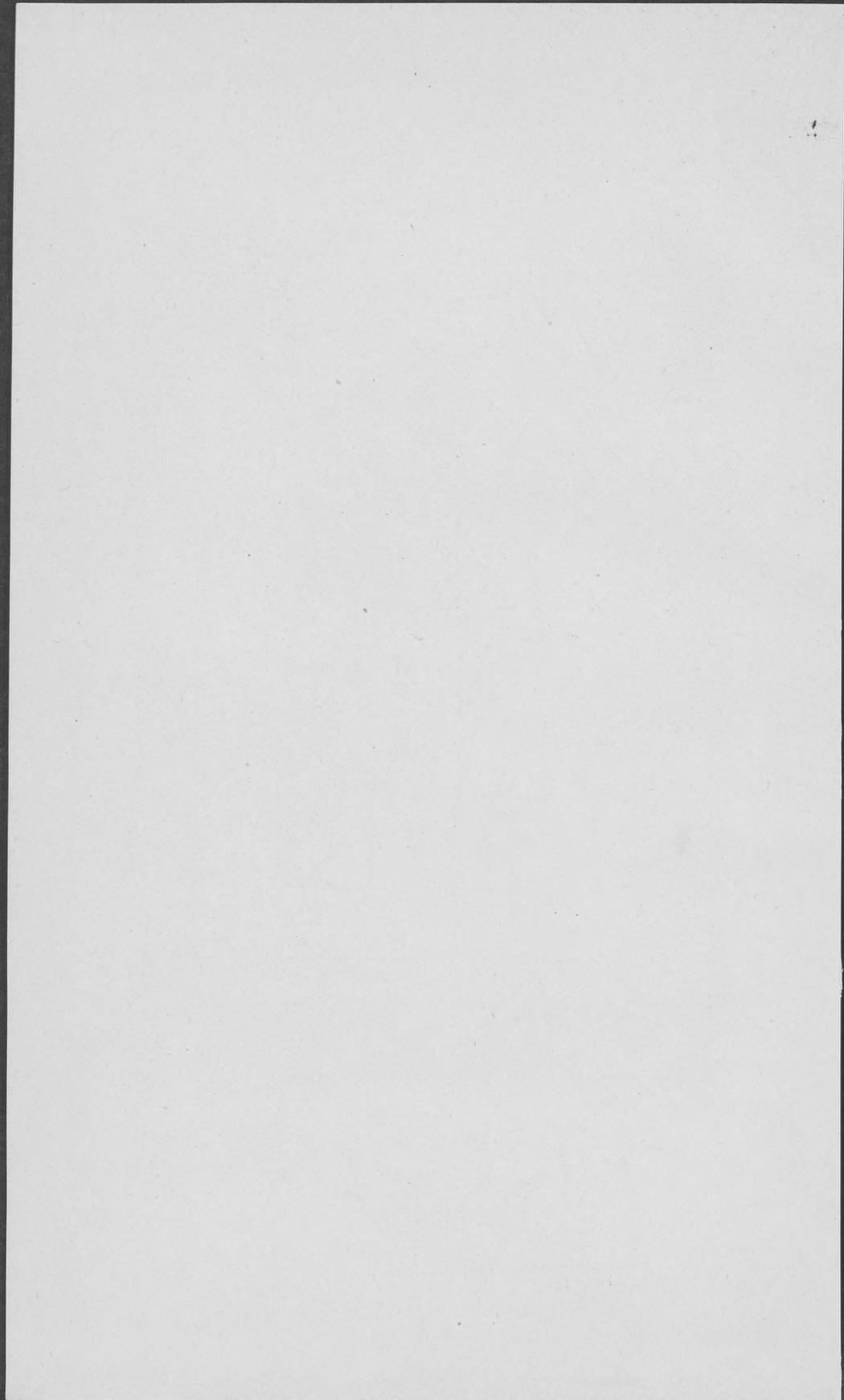


· PROPOSED HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING ·  
· U · S · HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ·  
· · · · · DAVID · LYNN · ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL · · · · ·  
· ALLIED ARCHITECTS OF WASHINGTON, D. C. CONSULTING ARCHITECTS ·

No. 4.—Scheme A

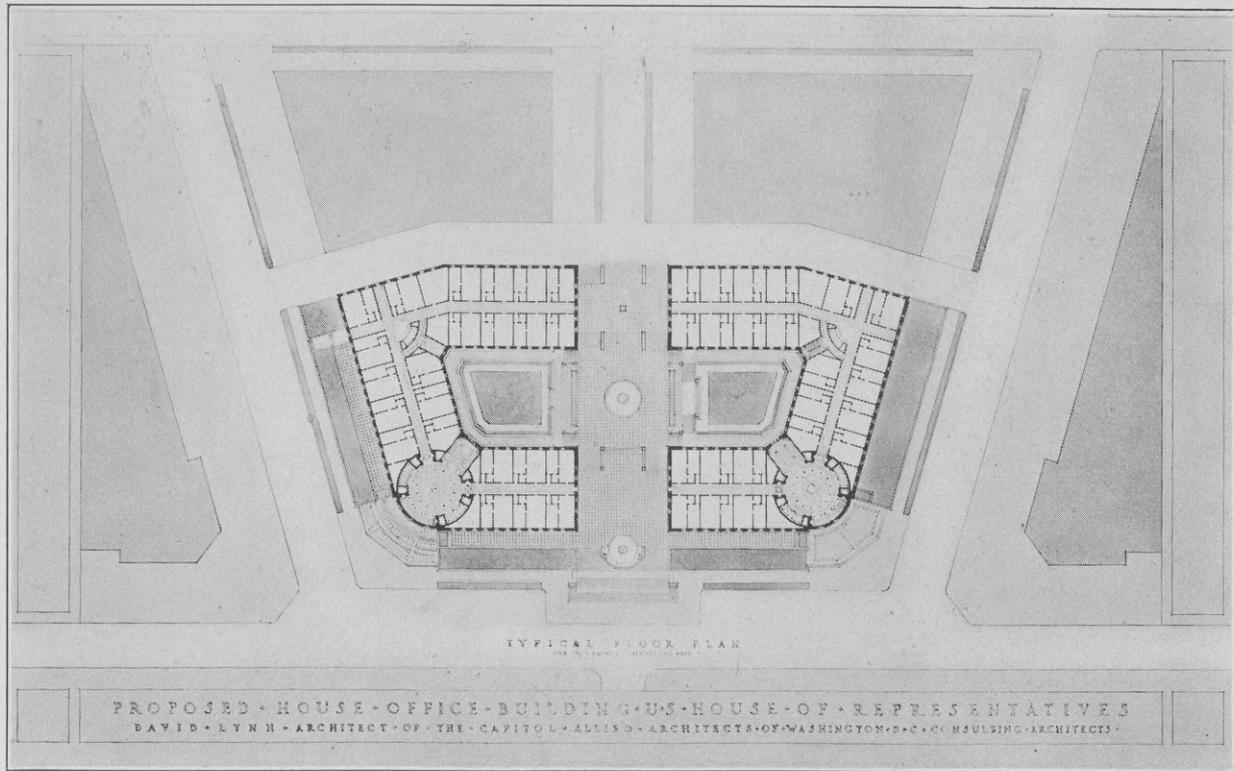


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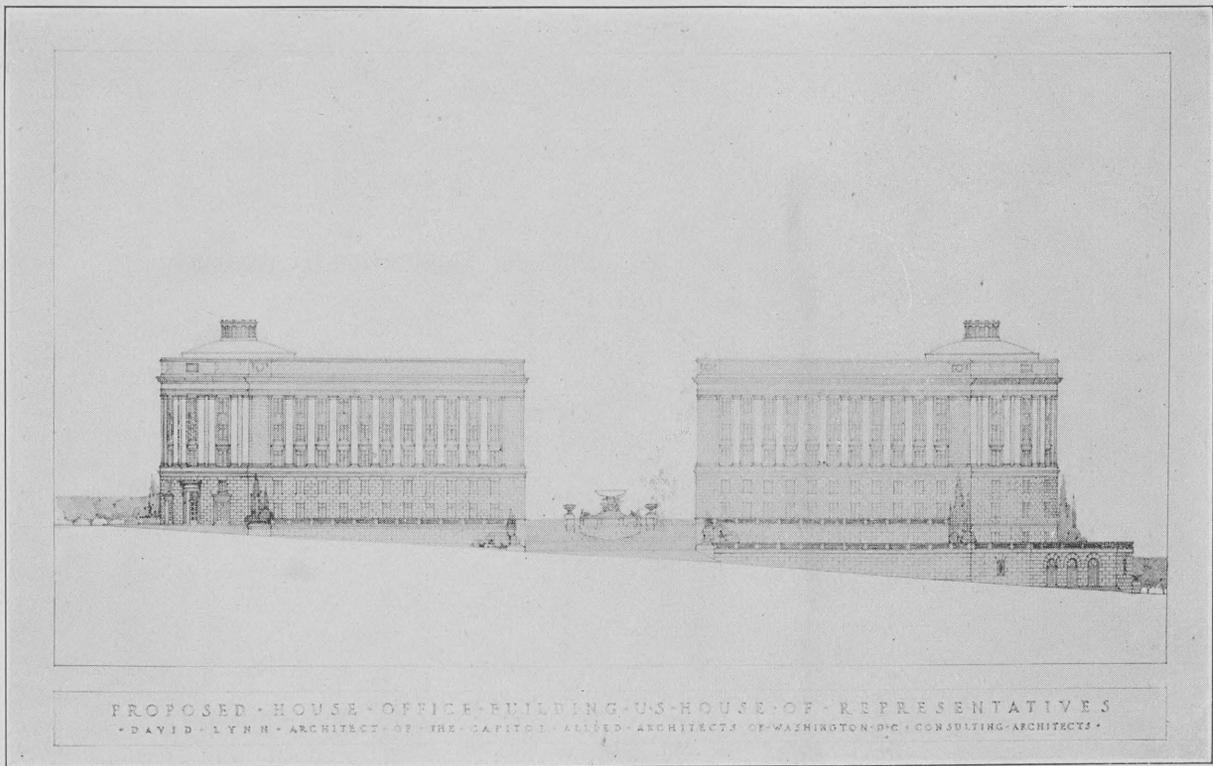




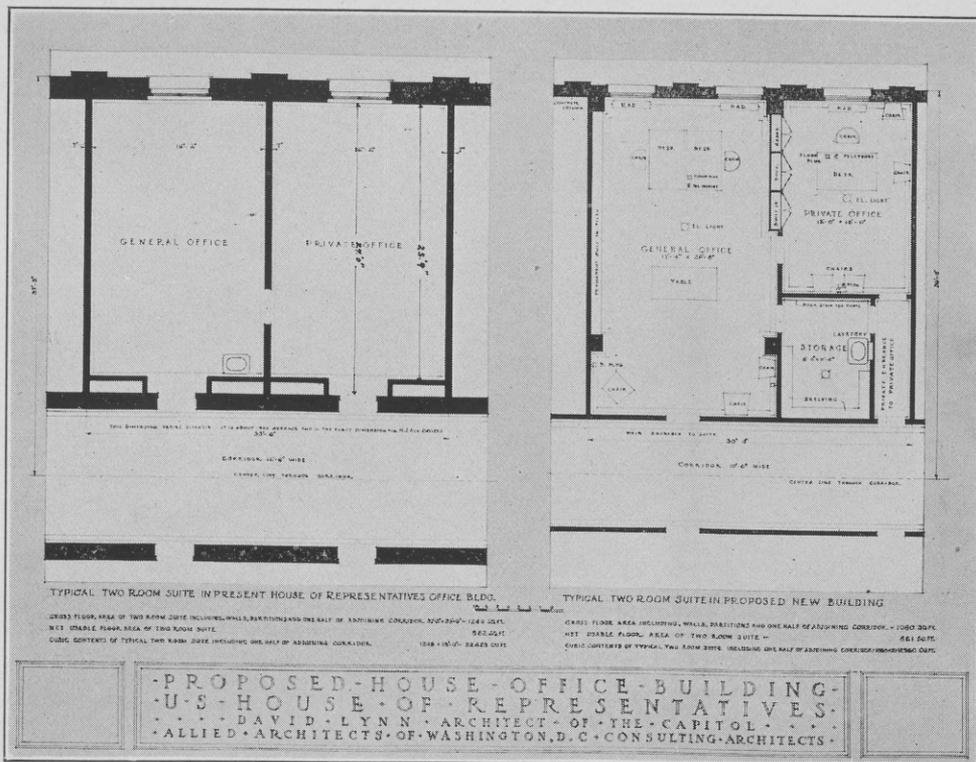
No. 6.—Scheme B



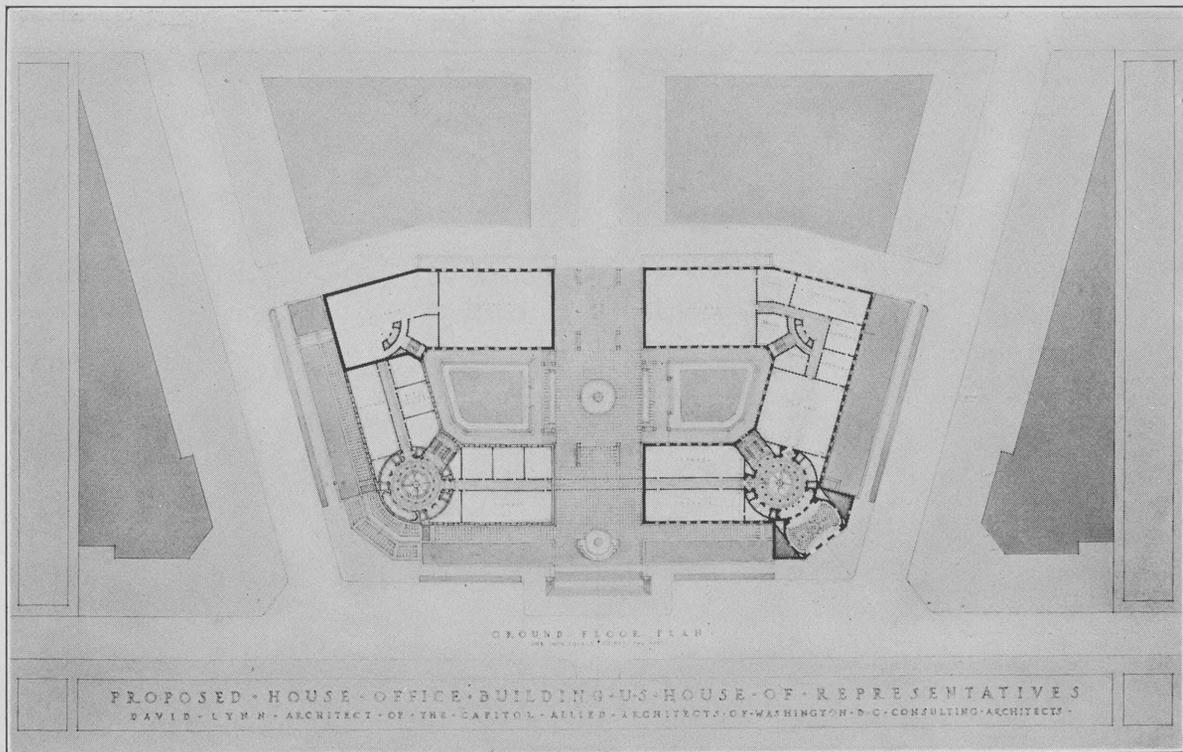
No. 7.—Scheme B



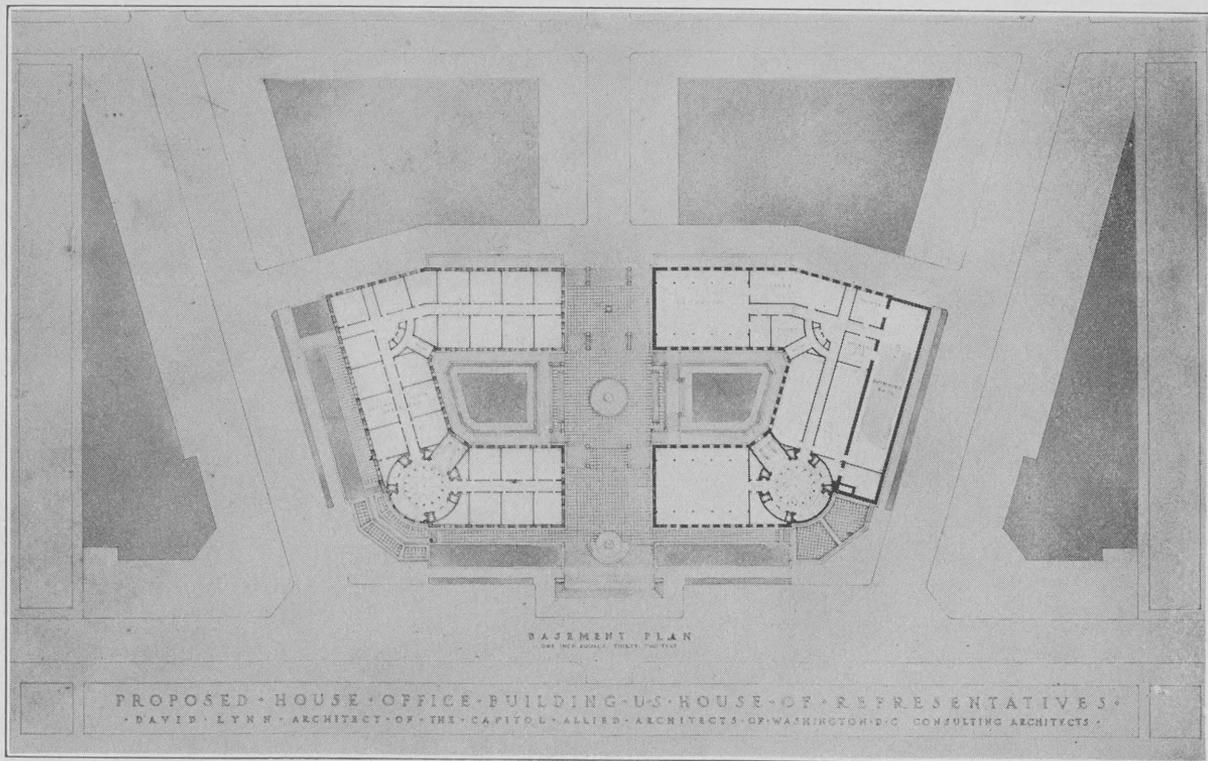
No. 8.—Scheme B



No. 9.—Scheme B



No. 10.—Scheme B



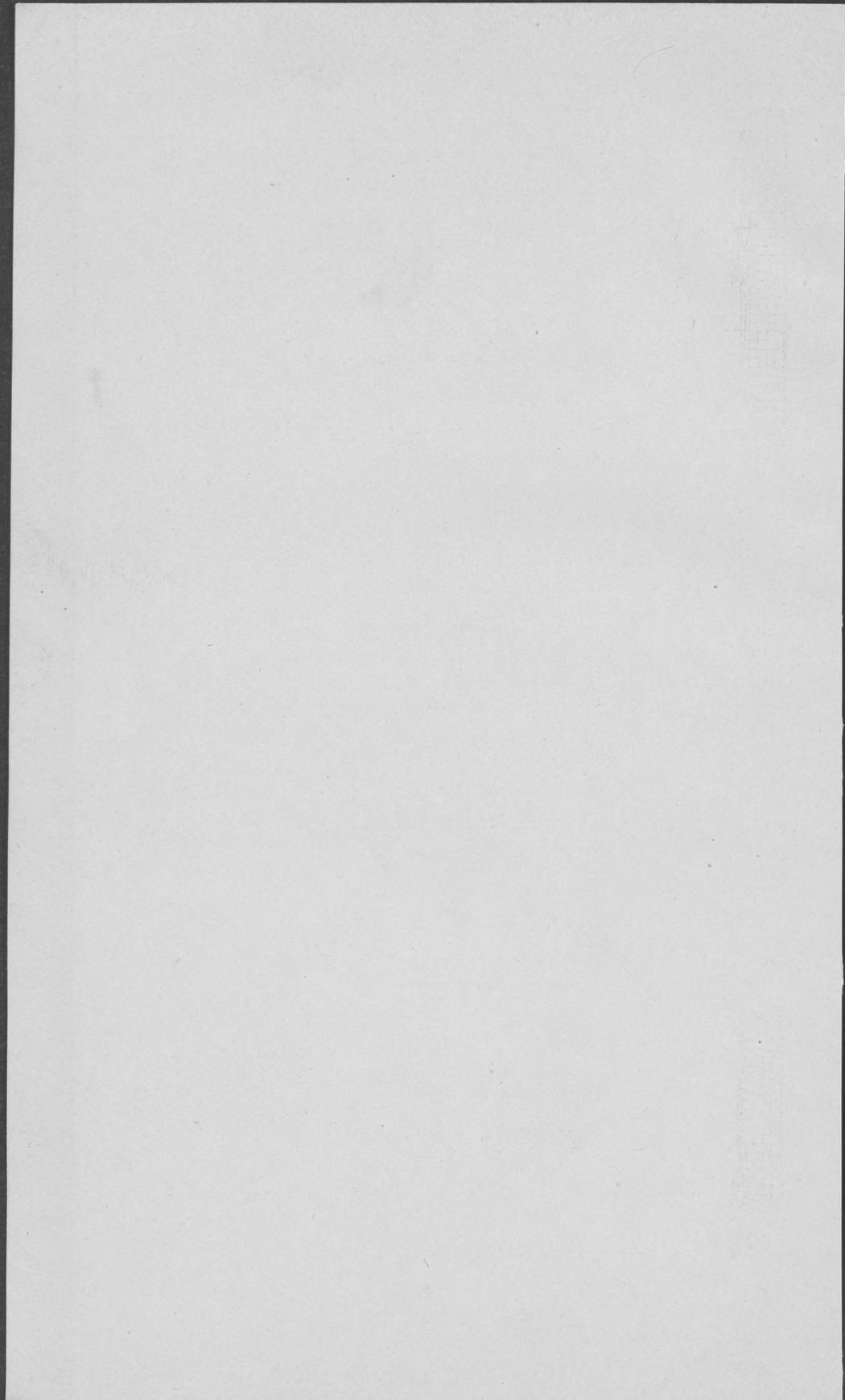
No. 11.—Scheme B



PROPOSED ADDITION TO  
OFFICE BUILDING  
U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DAVID LYNN, ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL  
CARRERE & HASTINGS, CONSULTING ARCHITECTS

No. 12.—Scheme C



PROPOSED ADDITION TO  
OFFICE BUILDING  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
DAVID LYNN, Architect of the Capitol  
CARRERE & HASTINGS, Consulting Architects

