

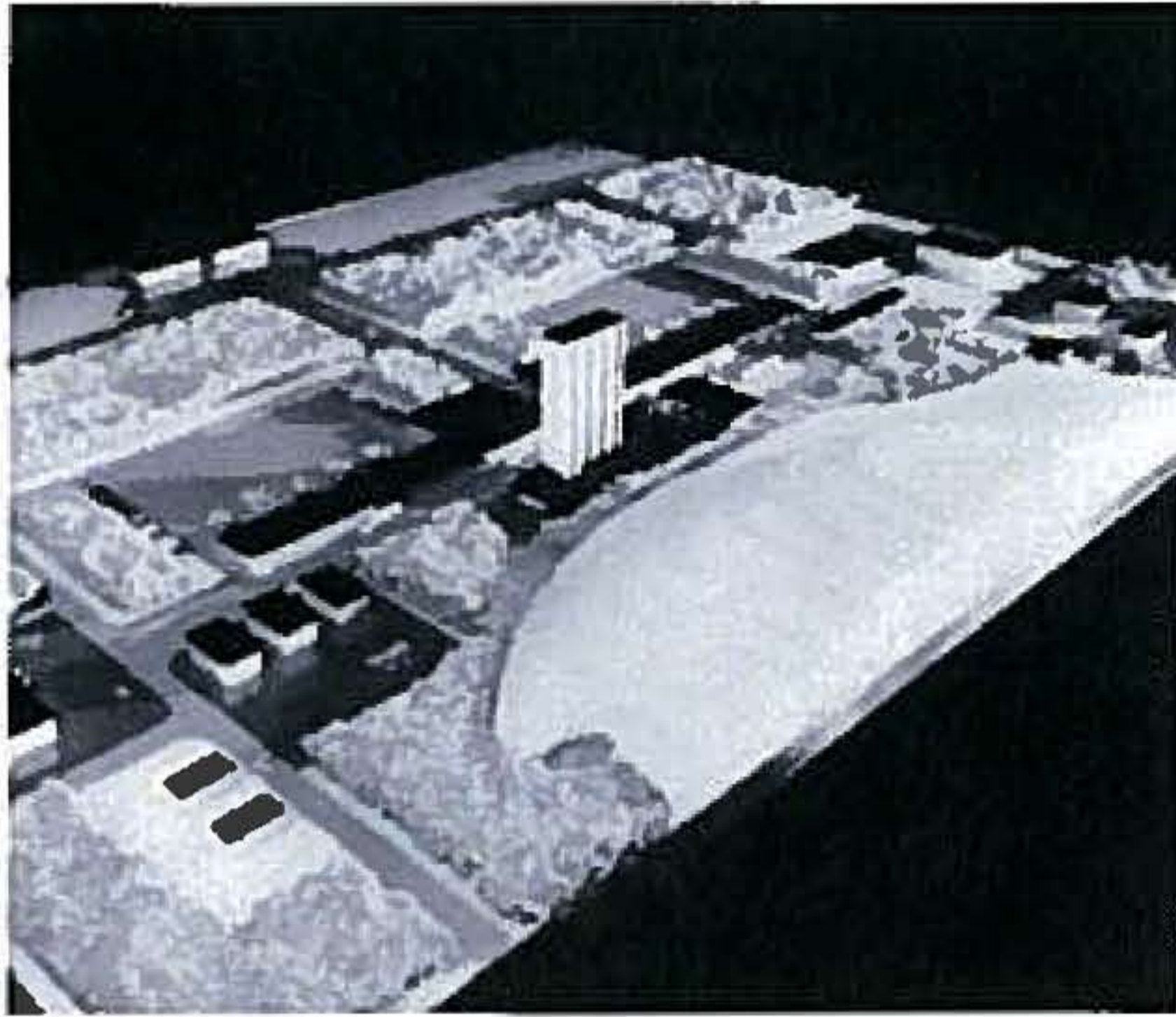
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Aaron Britt

Hirshhorn, Ontario: The Modern City That Never Was



above).

An exhibit up at the [Hirshhorn Museum](#) in [Washington DC](#) chronicles the museum's initial conception, and the Canadian, [Philip Johnson](#)-designed city in which it was meant to live.

Though the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture has come to be the most forward-thinking museum on the National Mall, a current exhibit [Directions- Public Spirit](#) by artist and historian [Terence Gower](#) tells the story of how Joseph Hirshhorn originally imagined his massive art collection as the centerpiece of a Utopian mining town in western Ontario.

Hirshhorn's fortune was built on the 1953 discovery of the largest cache of uranium in North America in western Ontario, and he enlisted architect Philip Johnson to help plan and erect what he envisioned as a "city of culture." Hirshhorn, Ontario was to embrace the latest urban planning strategies of the day and be anchored by a ten-story tower that would house the administration of the mining interest. A mean streak of protectionism from the nearby communities saw to it that Hirshhorn was never built, but in researching the origins of the museum, Gower was able to uncover images of models and plans for the city (pictured

Gower then went a step further and created "[Wilderness Utopia](#)," a computer-generated animation that essentially flies the viewer through the city Hirshhorn and Johnson would have built. The video takes a little while to load, but is pretty cool.

Though the city in the wilderness was not to be, a correspondence with President and Ladybird Johnson encouraged Hirshhorn to bring his collection of modern art to Washington DC, where it's housed in [Gordon Bunshaft's](#) squat, modernist [cylinder](#).

The exhibition runs until March 22nd, so for those in Washington, or just happening through, take advantage of this rare glimpse of a modernist marvel that never was.

Posted by: [Aaron Britt](#) on Feb 5, 09 at 09:30 AM PST