George Washington Memorial Parkway is an important national road extending from the Arlington Memorial Bridge to the Potomac River. The parkway serves as a memorial to the first modern motorway built by the federal government, the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, which stretches from Arlington Memorial Bridge to Mount Vernon. It was established in 1872 as the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, and was later incorporated into the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The parkway was designed by the American Scenic and Historic Railway Association to commemorate the first modern motorway built by the federal government and to provide a scenic route for visitors to Mount Vernon.

The northern sections of George Washington Memorial Parkway were designed by the influential landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. The parkway's memorial intent was reinforced by its alignment with the Washington Monument. The landscape near the monument was carefully designed to harmonize with the parkway landscape. Ornate metal guardrails and bus shelters were designed in rustic fashion to blend with the surrounding landscape.

The parkway's historical character is preserved by the number of memorial trees and tablets along the parkway and in the surrounding woodlands. Patriotic groups have placed memorials along the parkway to commemorate important events and figures. The parkway's natural appearance is maintained through planting plans that were designed for a natural appearance, so that the roadway blends seamlessly with the surrounding terrain. Over 250,000 trees and shrubs were planted between 1929 and 1932 alone. Native species predominated and planting around the parkway near Hunting Creek and between Washington Boundary Channel and other stream crossings. These plantings provide picturesque variety and help to preserve the parkway's natural beauty.

The parkway's landscape features include a variety of aesthetic and engineering concerns. Engineered features such as guardrails and bus shelters were designed to blend with the surrounding landscape. Ornate metal guardrails and bus shelters were designed in rustic fashion to harmonize with the parkway landscape. Ornamental stone barriers were designed to blend with the surrounding terrain. Ornate metal guardrails and bus shelters were designed in rustic fashion to blend with the parkway landscape. Ornamental stone barriers were designed to blend with the surrounding terrain.

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