

URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND PLACEMAKING

OPEN SPACES AND STREETS IN FAIRFAX COUNTY
VISIONING WORKSHOP REPORT

JUNE 20-21, 2024



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*INDICATES REPORT SECTIONS
SUMMARIZING WORKSHOP DATA AND
INPUT RESULTS

Workshop Facilitation and Report
prepared by:
AuthentiCITY Studio, Inc.
for the Fairfax County Planning Commission's
Urban Development and Placemaking Committee

September 5, 2024

REPORT DISCLAIMER

Information on the following pages represents feedback provided by workshop participants and best practice analysis by the Report authors. It does not necessarily reflect the opinions or position of Fairfax County staff, the Planning Commission, or the Board of Supervisors.



September 5, 2024

Letter of Introduction

Fairfax County has an exceptional team of professionals and engaged community leaders. It was a pleasure to work with this community and their commitment to creating a vibrant and inclusive built environment through Placemaking. The county has many exemplary plans, design guidelines, and continues to build off of this great work.

About the Practice:

AuthentiCITY Studios, inc. is an urban design practice focused on community engagement and empowerment. We design interactive workshops, or charrettes, creating a collaborative planning process that harnesses the experience of the community by engaging residents, community leaders, and policy makers to build consensus, share a vision, and set actionable goals. We provide a framework for sharing issues, ideas, and solutions in a collaborative, relationship building setting. Our founding principals have over 50 years combined experience in facilitation, architecture, urban design and development policy, and have worked throughout the United States and abroad.

AuthentiCITY's subject matter experts and facilitators:

Taryn Sabia, the Assistant Dean for Research at the University of South Florida's College of The Arts, where she serves as Chair of the Design Studies Program and is Director for the Florida Center for Community Design and Research. Professor Sabia is an urban design practitioner and researcher of context-based design anchored by a passion to involve citizens in actively shaping the built environment. Her research is committed to the merging of design and civics, with focus on climate change adaptation, transit modes and public space. Professor Sabia earned her Masters of Urban and Community Design from the University of South Florida, Masters of Architecture from Rhode Island School of Design, Master's of Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and Bachelor's Degree in Visual Art from Eckerd College.

Adam Fritz, is a founding Principal for AuthentiCITY Studio, Inc. and a consulting urban designer. He has over 25 years of architecture and design experience with projects ranging in scale and budget: including small storefronts, large-scale acre site design and master plans. He has managed over 200 design projects and participated in the design and construction of over 350 projects throughout Florida, New York and Puerto Rico. He has been active in the local and national community for over 20 years exemplifying an established record of participation in organizations, agencies, and initiatives related to the built environment and urban design issues. Mr. Fritz co-founded a non-profit organization, The Urban Charrette, dedicated to educating community leaders about urban design best practices and continues to serve on the Board of Directors. Mr. Fritz also serves as an Adjunct Professor in the School of Architecture and Community Design at the University of South Florida where he earned a Masters of Architecture.

Thank you for the opportunity and your incredible participation. We look forward to the future UDAP agenda for Fairfax County.

Taryn Sabia and Adam Fritz, AuthentiCITY Studio, Inc.

FORWARD

Fairfax County has nationally recognized examples of outstanding Urban Development and Placemaking including Lake Anne Village Center, Reston Town Center, Mosaic District, Fairfax Corner, and the Boro in Tysons. Lessons learned from these examples and others could be applied to the future development in Fairfax County.

Hosted by the Fairfax County Planning Commission Urban Development and Placemaking UDAP Committee, the purpose of the two-day workshop was to explore how to extend the legacy of placemaking for open spaces and streets already established in Fairfax County to future development. The geographic areas of interest by the Committee include Tysons, the Reston Transit Station Areas, the Commercial Revitalization Districts and Areas, and other Transit Station Areas (collectively referred to throughout this report as “Urban Areas,” “Activity Areas,” or “Districts”).



People gather at Mosaic District Central Green and Plaza

The collaborative initiative involved Fairfax County Planning Commissioners, staff, property owners, land use attorneys, professionals in civil engineering, transportation, recreation and parks, and landscape architecture in a creative process to augment and enhance future placemaking efforts.

This report captures their work, as organized by the workshop facilitators. As such, while not a verbatim transcript, this report seeks to convey their work in relatively raw form, without edit or interpretation. The facilitators do provide recommendations derived from key workshop findings and their understanding of placemaking best practices.



INTRODUCTION

PLACEMAKING

“Extend the legacy of outstanding placemaking for streets and open spaces found in the Reston Town Center, Mosaic District, the Boro and Fairfax Corner to the transit station areas and activity centers in Fairfax County.”

John Carter, Hunter Mill Planning Commissioner

Placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which the public realm is shaped to strengthen the connection between people and places. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution for the benefit of all.¹ Intentionally shaping open spaces and streets capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential to improve urban vitality, and create accessible, safe places.

SETTING THE STAGE

Programming is an element of placemaking that is initiated by community members and organizations. Well-designed spaces, streets, and buildings – generally the domain of governments and developers -- provide the environment and infrastructure to underpin the programming that brings these public spaces to life.

This approach to a place-based infrastructures is summarized best by the Brookings Institute's definition of “transformative Placemaking.” Transformative placemaking aims to nurture an economic ecosystem that is regionally connected, innovative, and rooted in the assets of local residents and businesses. It supports vibrant and connected local economic ecosystems, helping underinvested communities build broad-based community wealth. Transformative Placemaking involves investments in physical design and programs that create safe, attractive, socially interactive places and empower local entrepreneurs, community organizations, institutions, and workers to spur creativity, business development, and job growth.^{2 3 4}

¹ What is Placemaking? (pps.org)

² Transformative placemaking: A framework to create connected, vibrant, and inclusive communities | Brookings

³ What transformative placemaking taught us in 2020, and how it can help build a better future | Brookings

⁴ How placemaking can empower urban communities, not tear them apart | Brookings

KEY FINDINGS

The following key findings are derived from the data inputs from workshop activities. These directly reflect the words and phrasing documented in the exercises as closely as possible.



VISION

- Focus on urban areas in Fairfax County



CHARACTERISTICS

- Attributes of successful placemaking



IMPLEMENTATION

- Application of characteristics and typologies
- Overcome barriers

KEY FINDING # 1

Successful placemaking in Fairfax's urban areas requires flexibility--the ability to tailor design goals, adopt new techniques, and implement a context-sensitive approach for roads and infrastructure.

KEY FINDING # 2

Build from existing assets to ensure authenticity, a sense of "place," and cultural character that are "uniquely Fairfax."

KEY FINDING # 3

Mechanisms are needed to free Fairfax streets in defined urban areas from VDOT state-wide standards to implement placemaking characteristics.

KEY FINDING # 4

Public funding for a strategic network of open spaces should be a priority for Fairfax County supporting a system-wide masterplan and land acquisition.

KEY FINDING # 5

The planning and design of Local or Neighborhood Streets should generate a gridded street network and smaller pedestrian-scale blocks.

KEY FINDING # 6

Local or Neighborhood Streets should focus on safety for pedestrians and cyclists with slower speeds, narrower travel lanes, protected bike lanes and crosswalks, etc.

KEY FINDING # 7

Arterials or Boulevards should be transit-supportive, allowing for transit access and multimodal movement where congestion is an acceptable trade-off for increased pedestrian, bicycle and transit uses.

KEY FINDING # 8

Recreational Parks should principally focus on inclusivity, encouraging all backgrounds and ages to gather and experience.

KEY FINDING # 9

Pocket Parks should primarily focus on quality over size, emphasizing context and scale.

KEY FINDING # 10

Large Civic Spaces should emphasize activation that creates a vibrant sense of place throughout the year.



VISION

Fairfax County can leverage its established urban areas, infrastructure, community assets and design standards. to support community-based programming and bring its network of open spaces and streets to life.

VISION STATEMENT



The urban areas of Fairfax County will be transformed into communities that offer a connected network of urban parks and active streets. The thoughtful integration of memorable, safe, and engaging places will embrace all people and promote a sense of community through an activated public realm emphasizing culture, art, recreation, and gathering spaces that are uniquely Fairfax.



TRANSFORMATIVE PLACEMAKING

The following three qualities of Transformative Placemaking support the placemaking vision in Fairfax County.



First, transformative placemaking suggests a set of investments in both well-designed infrastructure and programs that not only create safe, attractive, socially interactive places where people want to “live, work, play, and learn” but which also empower broad and diverse networks of local entrepreneurs, community organizations, institutions, and workers to spur creativity, business development, and job growth.



Second, transformative placemaking suggests investments focused not only on design and programming of individual lots, plazas, or even blocks, but of “economic districts” — sub-areas of regions where a critical mass of economic assets cluster and connect.

Finally, transformative placemaking suggests that such investments be made not only in downtowns, waterfronts, and other high-amenity, often highly-resourced areas, but in districts where concentrations of human capital, physical, and economic assets have long been overlooked and undervalued by both the private and public sectors.⁵

⁵ How placemaking can empower urban communities, not tear them apart | Brookings



CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristics for placemaking represent the attributes of successful open spaces and streets. Characteristics may include specific elements or the “personality” of a space, place, or path. The following ‘Top 10’ lists reflect the consensus of participants to identify the most important characteristics for open spaces and the most important characteristics for streets in the context of placemaking. A few characteristics overlap and are shared within both categories. The lists are not ranked by priority but were narrowed from more than 200 characteristics proffered at the workshop.

Open Space

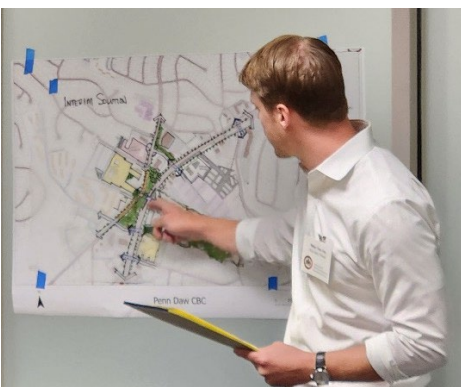
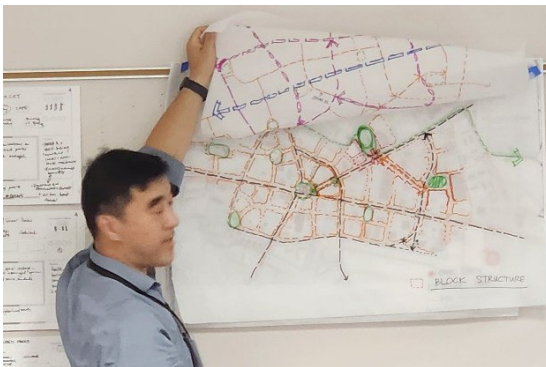
1. Well-connected to the street grid and other open spaces.
2. Trees and landscaping that provide shade and sunny zones.
3. Activation emphasizing a vibrant sense of place.
4. Context sensitive design supporting flexible space for active and passive use.
5. (Sense of) Culture and Identity, art and history.
6. Wellbeing: social, mental, and physical interaction.
7. Pride of Place: regular maintenance, cared for by the inhabitants.
8. Safe and comfortable for all.
9. Inclusive: encourages all backgrounds and ages to gather and experience.
10. Quality over quantity emphasizing context and scale.

Streets

1. Safe for everyone: design for people with slower speeds, narrow lanes, protected bike lanes, and crosswalks.
 2. Gridded street network and shorter blocks supporting a human-scale environment.
 3. Transit-supportive.
 4. Vibrant, inviting, and comfortable.
 5. Trees to provide buffering, visual interest, and shade.
 6. Active ground level supporting public and private uses.
 7. (Pedestrian) Smart infrastructure, relative to pedestrian scale streetlights and underground utilities to ensure the best use of space for pedestrian activities.
 8. Context sensitive aesthetics— “uniquely Fairfax.”
 9. Connectivity focusing on circulation flow of vehicles and pedestrians (within defined urban centers).
 10. Connected networks: Multi-modalism, porosity, and resilience.
-

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation describes the processes for how Placemaking characteristics are realized as infrastructural elements in neighborhoods, districts, town centers, and other specific geographies through development or retrofit. The workshop considered strategies for implementing the characteristics and established street and open space typologies which include prioritized characteristics, barriers, and measures of success. Implementation strategies include plan and policy changes, resource allocation decisions, and design standards. These are reflected in the typology summary and in the urban area test-fit exercise.



Images: Participant Teams present Test-Fit strategies for Placemaking in urban areas in Fairfax.

TYPOLOGIES

Typologies are the different physical infrastructures that are used to define streets and open spaces at different scales. The workshop detailed three different typologies for streets and three for open spaces. The top 10 characteristics and elements for each category are prioritized into primary and secondary characteristics relevant to the typology. Following the identified characteristics, each typology provides specific implementation strategies including funding mechanisms, barriers to implementation, a list of benefits by implementing this typology, and “measures of success” to gage successful implementation for placemaking strategies.

Typologies for streets and open spaces include the following and are summarized in the section.

Streets Typologies

- Arterials (big roads, boulevards)
- Collectors (medium roads, avenues)
- Locals (little roads, neighborhood streets)

Open Space Typologies

- Large Civic Plazas
- Recreational-focused Parks
- Small Pocket Parks and Linear Parks



Typology Worksheet Example – Street Typology: Local Roads

STREET TYPOLOGIES

ARTERIALS (BIG ROADS, BOULEVARDS)

Description:

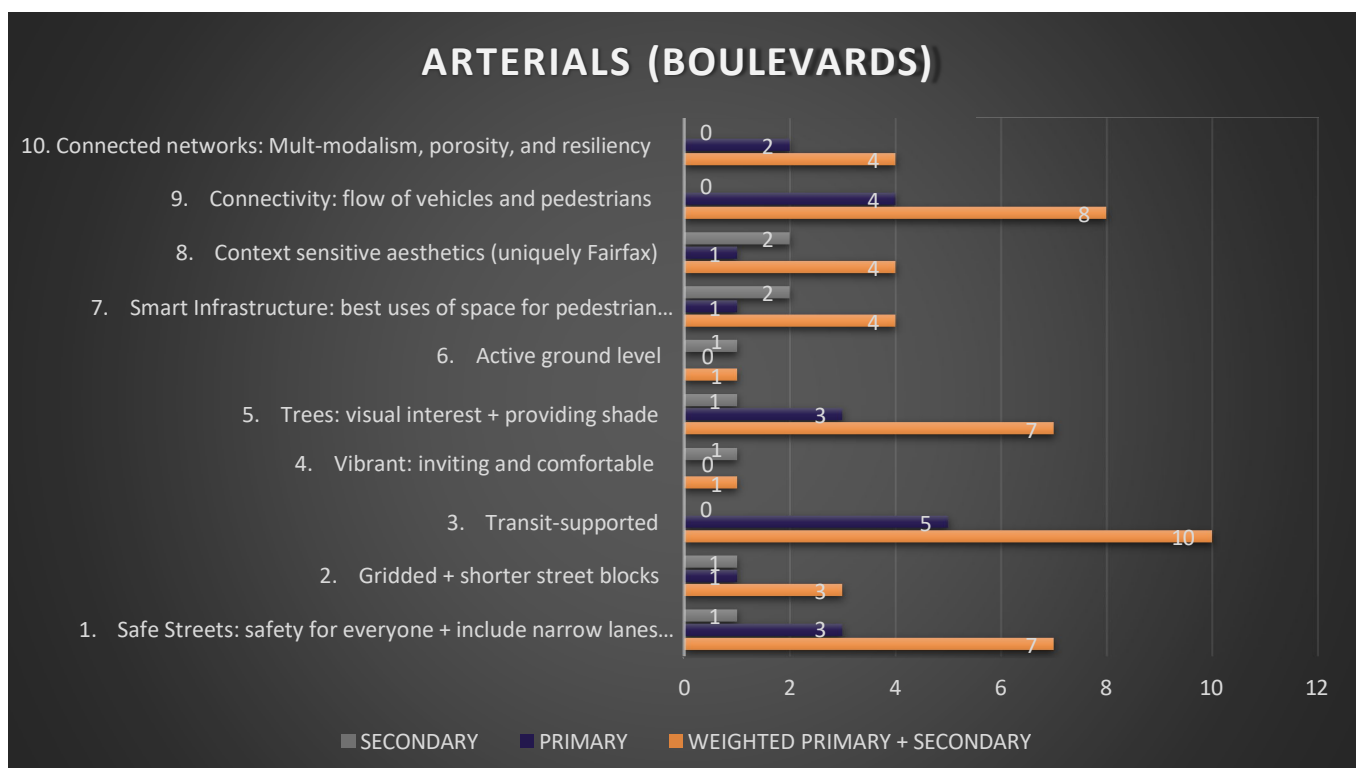
These major roads or boulevards are designed to balance the need for efficient movement of people and goods while fostering dynamic, multi-functional urban spaces. By integrating creative design elements, arterials contribute to the development of distinctive places that enhance community accessibility. Emphasizing transit expediency, these roadways are optimized for high-functionality transit operations and are strategically linked to collector streets.

Primary Characteristics (ranked in order):

- Transit-supportive
- Connectivity focusing on the flow of vehicles and pedestrians
- Safe for everyone: design for people with slower speeds, narrow lanes, protected bike lanes, and crosswalks
- Trees to provide buffering, visual interest, and shade
- Connected networks: Mult-modalism, porosity, and resilience

Secondary Characteristics (ranked in order):

- Smart infrastructure: underground utilities to ensure the best use of space for pedestrian activities
- Context sensitive aesthetics—"uniquely Fairfax."
- Gridded street network and shorter blocks supporting a human-scale environment
- Safe for everyone: design for people with slower speeds, narrow lanes, protected bike lanes, and crosswalks



Implementation Strategies:

- Focus on specific avenues to identify Fairfax County standards (separate from) VDOT standards
- Align county's Comprehensive Plan and VDOT plans (Update the Comprehensive plan)
- (Develop) a comprehensive master plan or corridor level master plan with flexibility.
- Defining and densifying arteries corridors – providing transit rich connections
- Increase multimodal
- Locally controlled roads
- Tactical urbanism and technical hardening (pilots)
- Prioritize transit investment
 - dedicated lanes to transit
 - revamp connector service

Barriers to Implementation:

- Purpose is to connect activities, Capacity in the activity centers should be a different character: however Urban + Suburban – Norms historically the same
- Costs
- VDOT Regulations / VDOT standards / VDOT Sight distance / Dominion + VDOT
- Transparent priority plan
- Funding- lack of funding for transit
- Better/motivated leadership
- Silos of expertise
- Implementation timeline
- Existing conditions + Scale + Large number of stakeholders to coordinate
- National Highway System Designation
- Implementation timeline

Funding Mechanisms:

- Focus on public investment i.e. bonds
- More transit funding (federal + state)
- Establish road funds for activity centers (but not based on a tax for lower income residents and business)
- Tax incremented financing (TIF)
- Private development
- Tree Preservation Fund
- Public / private partnerships
- Lobby the state for impact fees

Benefits:

- Safety -Saving lives
- Quality of life + more people on the street
- Competitive advantage / economic stimulus / boost
- sense of place + sense of community
- Higher transit usage
- Economic viability for surrounding uses
- Efficiency

Measures of Success:

- Safe speeds - Fewer crashes, improved safety; no fatalities
- Activated and Inhabited spaces - More people on the street / people using the street
- Economic viability for surrounding uses; Return on investment (ROI) with economic Development
- [Implement more of the] Mosaic model of success for TIFs – ex. for Richmond highway
- Transit reliability / Transit usage
- [Increase quantity of] Complete streets

STREET TYPOLOGIES

COLLECTORS (MEDIUM ROADS, AVENUES)

Description:

Medium size avenues that connect our community should be transit supportive with safe, comfortable access for people walking, biking, + otherwise traveling corridors.

Primary Characteristics (ranked in order):

- Safe for everyone: design for people with slower speeds, narrow lanes, protected bike lanes, crosswalks and pedestrian scale streetlights.
- Trees to provide buffering, visual interest, and shade.
- Transit-supportive.
- Connected networks: Mult-modalism, porosity, and resilience.
- Context sensitive aesthetics—"uniquely Fairfax."

Secondary Characteristics (ranked in order):

- Gridded street network and shorter blocks supporting a human-scale environment.
- Vibrant, inviting, and comfortable.
- Active ground level supporting public and private uses.
- Connectivity focusing on the flow of vehicles and pedestrians.
- Smart infrastructure: underground utilities to ensure the best use of space for pedestrian activities.



Implementation Strategies:

- Identity and authenticity – what is “uniquely Fairfax” articulate specific changes that will help move in that direction.
- Flexible standards that give the county more control
- Strong urban design guidelines and cross sections in intersections design guidelines that ensure all the requirements are incorporated (update comprehensive plan)
- Shorter term ideas to modify the existing infrastructure.
- Tactical urbanism/ pilots
- Search for partnerships /partners that can help with more public funding.
- invest in transit (frequency, coverage)
- Funding- set special funding (Road) for local CBC, CRD etc.
- Mediation between property owners
- Road diets needed

Funding Mechanisms:

- Focused public investments (bonds)
- Proffers from development business improvement districts
- Tax increment financing (TIF)
- Tree Preservation Fund
- Regional funding sources
- Proactively seek grants

Benefits:

- Placemaking: sense of place + sense of community
- Increase transit use / bike /pedestrian mode shares
- Quality of life and public health improvements (saving lives)
- Mixed activation
- Economic development benefit - boost of retail and economic development

Barriers to Implementation:

- VDOT / Dominion (Power) inflexible standards and regulations.
- (VDOT Regulations regarding trees in clear zones and sight distance)
- Funding- need a partnership between public and private to implement.
- Leadership- better / motivated
- Willingness to push back on VDOT Over engineering requirements to ridged.
- Siloed review staff who don't see the conflicts between comments.
- Existing conditions / retrofitting / lack of right away
- Need for nonstandard management agreement.
- “NIMBY” opposition
- Unwilling to give up parking
- Transportation Priority Plan

Measures of Success:

- Number of people on the street hanging out
- Lots of people walking and biking, including families and children (jaywalkers!)
- Safety (no fatalities)
- Achieve slower traffic (Maintain throughput through efficiency)
- Better / improved esthetic / consistent streetscapes well maintained
- Increased bike / pedestrian / transit mode share (increase bike / walk score)
- Balance: coexistence of vehicles and people
- Transit reliability
- Economic activity - more successful businesses

STREET TYPOLOGIES

LOCALS (LITTLE ROADS, NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS)

Description:

Neighborhood oriented streets forming activated vibrant pedestrian scale blocks with a pedestrian focus, context sensitive public areas, and an access to inward properties with activity corridors.

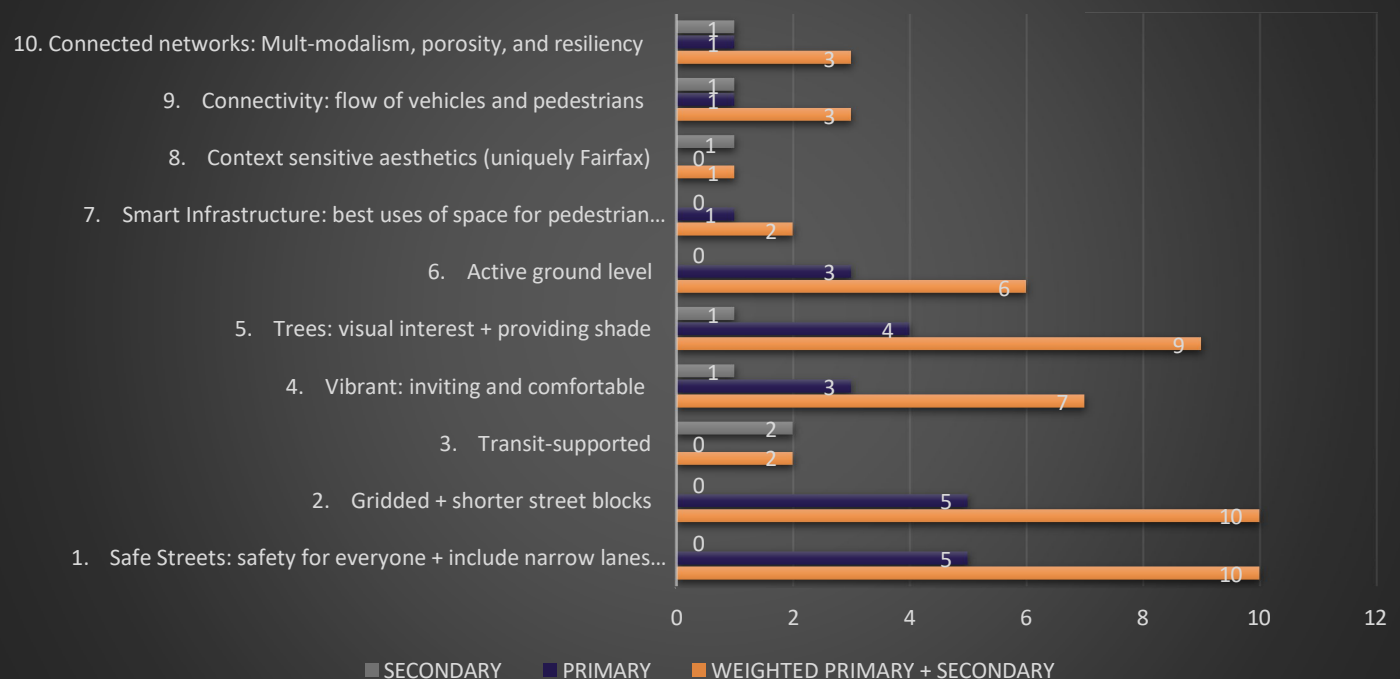
Primary Characteristics (ranked in order):

- Safe for everyone: design for people with slower speeds, narrow lanes, protected bike lanes, crosswalks and pedestrian scale streetlights
- Gridded street network and shorter blocks supporting a human-scale environment.
- Trees to provide buffering, visual interest, and shade
- Vibrant, inviting, and comfortable
- Active ground level supporting public and private uses

Secondary Characteristics (ranked in order):

- Transit-supportive
- Connectivity focusing on the flow of vehicles and pedestrians
- Connected networks: Multi-modalism, porosity, and resilience
- Connectivity focusing on the flow of vehicles and pedestrians
- Connected networks: Multi-modalism, porosity, and resilience

LOCAL (NEIGHBORHOOD) STREETS



Implementation Strategies:

- Uniquely Fairfax
- Change policy zoning code
- Flexible standards - public funding (for some) shared funding for major infrastructure
- Community based improvement districts
- Reward the leader (incentivize): all will be needed: associations (neighborhood), management companies, individuals, Place based organizations (BIDs, partnerships)
- Incorporate a neighborhood ombudsman
- Narrow street to slow the streets and include sidewalks
- Front porches (engagement with the street)
- Intentional about retail frontage – cluster (local serving retail / corner store)
- Shade is important, incorporate a cohesive planting strategy
- County or private control
- Make it private (festival closures etc.)
- Tactical urbanism – what can have immediate implementation? (short term)

Funding Mechanisms:

- Private development
- Public funds / grants
- Road fund

Benefits:

- Sense of Place
- Good Quality of life
- Opportunities for interaction and a “Social Fabric”

Measures of Success:

- High community members usage, [increased number of community members walking and biking and using the street envelope], [creating an authentic space/street that is] “Uniquely Fairfax”
- Activation: meaningful/ sense of community/ good quality of life
- High people throughput, (Fewer accidents + increased walk score)
- High environmental contributor – trees, shade, etc.
- Complete (completion of all phases of project executed)
- Walkability, flexible. Multi-use. People hanging out outside
- Proud residents, the streets are well maintained
- Funded place-based organization(s)
- Open storefronts and no dead ends

Barriers to Implementation:

- Relying only on private development - piece meal development. Challenge with initiating comprehensively versus differentiation / variety.
- VDOT road classification
- Inflexible standards - VDOT and Dominion Energy (lack of right away / easements, existing utilities / conflicts / Dominion Power streetlights / VDOT over engineering)
- Right of Way (ROW): fire access, service used, etc.
- Inflexible standards/ “over engineering”
- Property owner coordination and multiple stakeholders and (neighborhood associations, individuals).
- Parking
- Nimbys
- Street speed
- Intersection spacing
- Ownership

OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGIES

LARGE CIVIC PLAZAS/SPACES

Description:

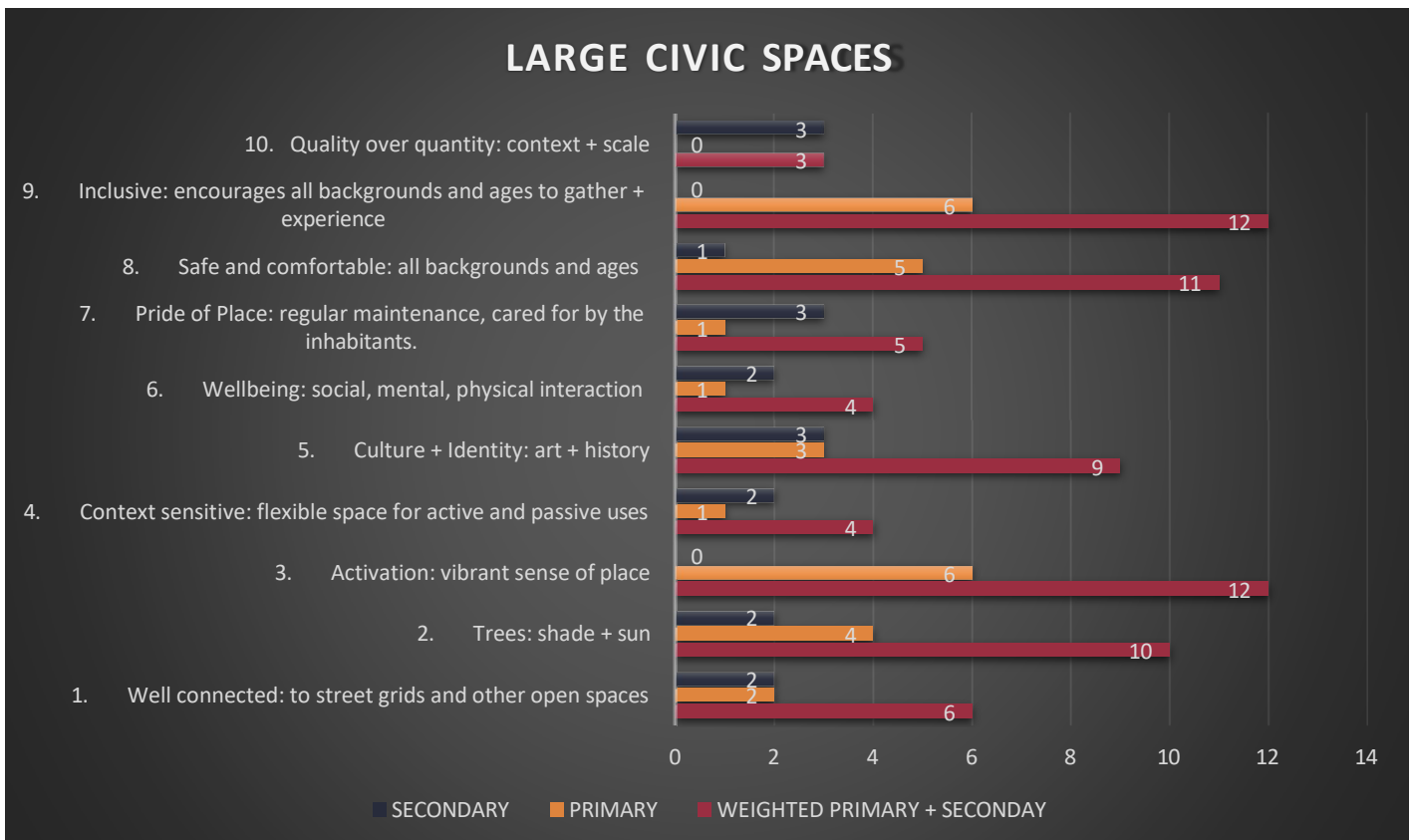
Flexible community gathering space that is publicly funded, operated and maintained.

Primary Characteristics (ranked in order):

- Activation emphasizing a vibrant sense of place
- Inclusive: encourages all backgrounds and ages to gather and experience
- Safe and comfortable for all
- Trees and landscaping that provide shade and sun
- Culture and Identity, art and history

Secondary Characteristics (ranked in order):

- Quality over quantity emphasizing context and scale
- Pride of Place: regular maintenance, cared for by the inhabitants
- Well-connected to the street grid and other open spaces
- Context sensitive design supporting flexible space for active and passive use
- Wellbeing: social, mental and physical interaction



Implementation Strategies:

- Strategic planning and programming
- Reward the leader – incentivize developers to create and maintain
- Proffers-incentivized to build up front versus later
- Explore and secures multiple sources of funding
- Design space around programming play space (organization)
- Cafes and retail space around perimeter
- Flexibility to allow farmers markets, concerts and other uses including interim uses
- Civic engagement to get people involved in the design process (community engagement)
- Acquire land
- “Fee in lieu of” some urban park regulations
- Public / private partnerships
- creative vibrant art that engages at community
- allow retail pop up
- public- master plan
- public- collective urgency
- public or private: CAM
- Include Bathroom
- Review the calculations for open space in the Urban Park Standards

Funding Mechanisms

- “in lieu of” fees (3)
- TIF (3)
- Bonds
- impact fees
- private land / funds
- potential park fund or part of TIF

Barriers to Implementation:

- County is missing the category of large-scale gathering spaces like Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, Central Park in New York City, Millennium Park, Chicago.
- Lack of appropriate space to locate large civic plazas - finding land + space that is large enough
- No system wide master plan
- Lack of flexibility in Comprehensive Plan
- Flexible uses for space
- Permitting and level of detail at zoning
- Policy plan updates / area specific
- Financial barriers - land costs/available land
- Incentive for developers to concentrate land for civic space
- Land consolidation /acquisitions
- Proffers
- Private companies defining what the space “IS” versus the community goals
- Lack of civic engagement beforehand - no one feels connected to the space
- Lack of activation due to prohibitions - free speech limitations on privately owned parks
- maintenance concerns (Free speech limitations on private-owned parks)
- Phasing - Multiple property owners surrounding the space and lack of coordination or different timelines
- county funding
- cost in general for implementation and maintenance
- need for consideration in certain PLOW

Comment Summary

The scarcity of available land for a significant public civic space, combined with the absence of a master plan and inadequate community engagement, results in a lack of connection and investment in the existing open spaces.

Benefits:

- Sense of community (community identity and cohesive social interaction)
- Culture + place to gather
- Well-being civic engagement
- Increased demand- economic driver for future development
- Health and well-being
- Attract local and non-local residents
- Environmental benefits: decreased stormwater runoff, reduction in urban heat temperatures

Measures of Success:

- Inclusively (availability and use by different demographic groups)
- People using space (numbers)
- The number of civic plazas in the county and more development occurring adjacent to Plaza or near Plaza.
- Amount of use / activity / number of events
- People using the park number of community events usage, income generation(private)
- Draw visitors from surrounding areas
- Well known beyond your local community visitors

OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGIES

RECREATIONAL-FOCUSED PARKS

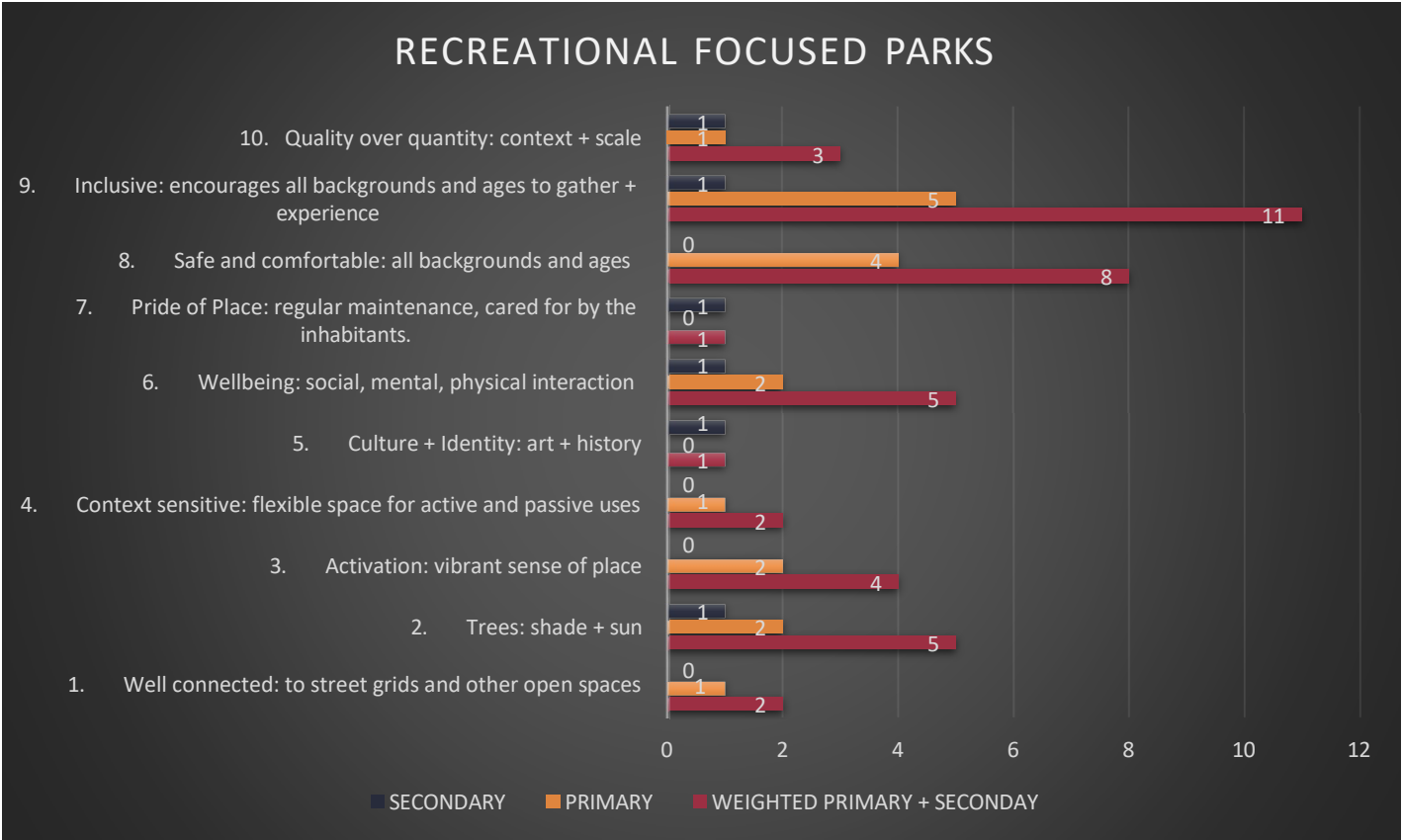
Description:
Recreational focused parks that feature passive or active spaces, including athletic fields, activity zones and or hiking trails.

Primary Characteristics (ranked in order):

- Inclusive: encourages all backgrounds and ages to gather and experience
- Safe and comfortable for all
- Trees and landscaping provide shade and sun
- Activation emphasizing a vibrant sense of place
- Wellbeing: social, mental and physical interaction

Secondary Characteristics (ranked in order):

- Trees and landscaping that provide shade and sun
- Quality over quantity emphasizing context and scale
- Culture and Identity, art and history
- Pride of Place: regular maintenance, cared for by the inhabitants
- Inclusive: encourages all backgrounds and ages to gather and experience



Implementation Strategies:

- Strategically acquire land
- Focus and leverage public / private partnerships
- master planning is necessary to place these strategically towards residential populations – implementation
- Safe inclusive means these need to be visible to areas where people are – implementation
- Incorporate better design guidelines - change policy to add more (1 acre/for 500 or less people)
- More flexible (fee in lieu)
- Consider rooftop facilities
- Encourage novel, unique designs
- Consolidate facilities in larger parks (greater efficiency of land use)
- Comprehensive framework
- Design elements to be included: restrooms, drinking water fountain, seating/ benches chairs chase etc. Include a room within or adjacent to flexible areas
- Include walking + trails – design with a purpose
- Create “insta-grammable” social media pictures / video opportunities [unique crowd branded places]
- Identify early funding and implementation
- Private for smaller, public for larger (County funded for larger facilities)
- Flexible on size standards
- centralized and target athletic field locations in urban areas versus dispersed

Funding Mechanisms

- Focused public investments and implementation
- Parks foundation
- Bonds
- Proffers and the implementation
- Funding (public grants)

Barriers to Implementation:

- Funding (3)
- Parking
- [Adjacent] Neighbors against sports lighting and noise
- Space / land / land cost / availability / parcel consolidation
- Space, area availability
- Lighting cost and need impact on neighbors and wildlife
- Environmental constraints-reuse of space, not greenfields
- Prescriptive focus on athletic fields (incomplete parks)
- Incompatibility with city block scale and size
- County standards
- Funding and maintenance budgets
- Trash, dog waste disposal on a timely, regular basis
- Access
- Should not be the primary park type of an urban area
- Land acquisition
- Calculations for open space for residential and non-residential uses

Comment Summary:

Large-scale spaces and activities necessitate substantial parking infrastructure, but their associated noise and lighting can pose challenges to existing neighborhoods and raise concerns about the impact on local wildlife.

Benefits:

- Health and Wellness- healthy communities and people
- Health enhancements – physical /mental health and well-being
- Quality of life- healthy community / people
- Pride of place
- Easier access
- Childhood development
- Social advantage-social infrastructure
- Sustainability

Measures of Success:

- Use and frequency: consistently used open spaces /parks (3)
- Popularity: Used for local, community events
- Amount of previous / green space with clear funding
- Goal of park space per person service populations were needed
- Well maintained and cared for
- Diversity of facilities- Co located with other park functions
- Award-winning
- Opportunities for all- no complaints about lack of recreation options
- Values around (surrounding property) rise

OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGIES

SMALL POCKET PARKS AND LINEAR PARKS

Description:

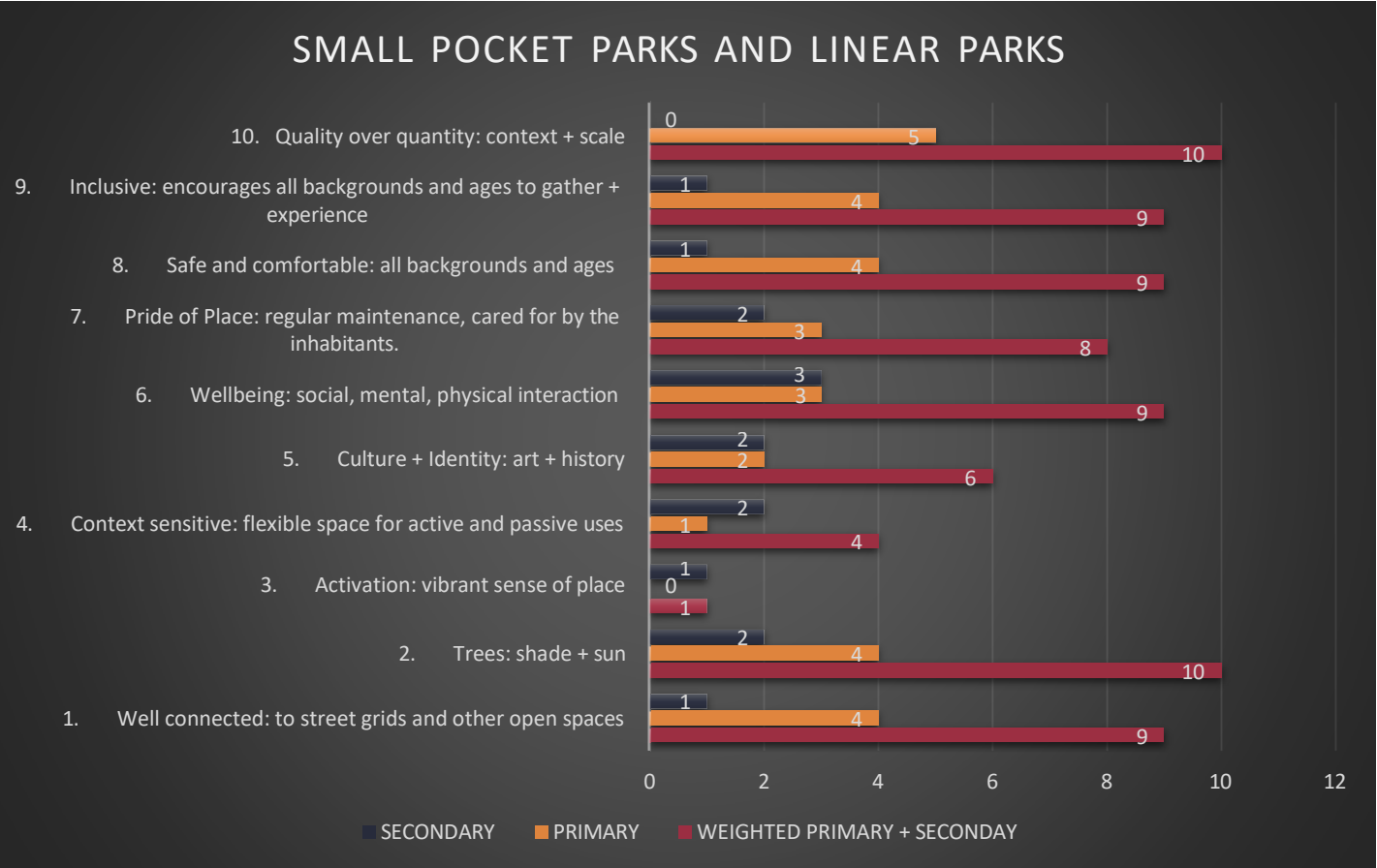
Small intimate gathering space + connecting green space. An important “local” park up to 1 acre surrounded by high density urban streets.

Primary Characteristics (ranked in order):

- Quality over quantity emphasizing context and scale.
- Safe and comfortable for all.
- Inclusive: encourages all backgrounds and ages to gather and experience.
- Trees and landscaping provide shade and sun.
- Well-connected to the street grid and other open spaces.

Secondary Characteristics (ranked in order):

- Wellbeing: social, mental, and physical interaction.
- Pride of Place: regular maintenance, cared for by the inhabitants.
- Trees and landscaping that provide shade and sun.
- Culture and Identity, art and history.
- Context sensitive design supporting flexible space for active and passive use.



Implementation Strategies:

- Community driven (maintenance) and maintained- consistent trash collection / services (improve service level standard)
- Good master planning + Community engagement
- Variety - better not bigger
- Unique uses and “target audience” but matched together with a common purpose.
- Connectivity between parks
- Park fund “in lieu” - If you need to consolidate land from multiple owners
- Public/ private partnerships - Inclusion of agencies
- Private open space (publicly accessible)
- Design standards (furnishings, common landscaping, and design elements, lighting)
- Context sensitive - seating/additional plantings
- Public art funds neighborhood associations/organizations (use and activation)
- Change standards for proffering Parks based on people (office conversion to residential)
- Strategies to secure and dedicated land - (Monetary dedication instead of space if this space is not usable)
- Need continuous land ownership
- Establish and nurture Place based organizations
- Private development
- Identification of the parks space/through signage
- Modify regulations for urban parks size to be more context sensitive
- Publicly available (accessible)

Funding Mechanisms:

- Proffers
- Park fund “in lieu” - If you need to consolidate land from multiple owners
- Flexible standards
 - Fee in lieu

Barriers to Implementation:

- Regulations for the amount of open space for urban parks. Not flexible
- Existing tree/forest counting towards park space
- Connectivity challenges
- Pre-planning
- Dedication (waiting for development)
- Timing of development/construction sequencing
- Land acquisition
- Land availability/cost
- Permitting and easements
- Cohesive vision - diverse opinions on amenities
- The “leftover space” challenge how to get meaningful space
- Prescriptive standards/policies
- Zoning/proffers
- Coordination and funding of policy with the county
- Lack of good service standards [consistent maintenance, uniform responsibility agreements, refuse collection, etc.]
- Safety and long-term maintenance
- DBA agreements in citing the parks

Comment Summary

Creating meaningful and purposeful spaces requires a cohesive vision that transforms them from mere leftover areas into valuable assets, while also addressing the initial challenges of land acquisition, space planning, and ongoing maintenance, including the provision of necessary easements.

Benefits:

- Health and Wellness- healthy communities and people (2)
- Health enhancements - physical/mental health and well-being (2)
- quality of life- healthy community/ people
- pride of place
- easier access
- childhood development
- social advantage- social infrastructure
- sustainability

Measures of Success:

- Use and frequency: consistently used open spaces /parks (3)
 - Popularity: Used for local, community events
 - Amount of previous / green space with clear funding
 - Goal of park space per person service populations were needed
 - Well maintained
 - Diversity of facilities- Co located with other park functions
 - Award-winning
 - Opportunities for all- no complaints about lack of recreation options
 - values around (surrounding property) rise
-



BARRIERS

During the workshop, participants shared **perceived** challenges and barriers to implementing placemaking characteristics in Fairfax. The discussion generated several themes. Three thematic areas that were heavily repeated as challenges are street standards that are rigid and inflexible, insufficient prioritized funding toward strategic planning, and insufficient coordination between agencies. The following provides a summary of barriers organized by topic.

SECTION DISCLAIMER

The information on the following pages represents feedback provided by workshop participants. It does not necessarily reflect the opinions or position of Fairfax County staff, the Planning Commission, or the Board of Supervisors.

“Inertia is powerful; friction is the resistance to motion.”

Phillip Niedzielski-Eichner,
Chair, Fairfax County Planning
Commission

Lengthy and Rigid Processes

Extended Approval Timelines

- The lengthy process for approvals hampers timely development.
- There is an insufficient amount of flexibility in zoning requirements, necessitating too much detail at early stages, preventing adjustments as projects evolve.

Inconsistent Processes and Standards

- Inconsistent state review standards and changing requirements at various stages add to delays.
 - Inefficient bureaucratic procedures, particularly with VDOT, impede innovative and timely placemaking.
-

Funding and Economic Constraints

Funding Priority

- Limited funding from state, regional, and local levels constrains the ability to make needed improvements.
- High land costs and conventional financing mechanisms further restrict development and placemaking initiatives.

Dependence on Private Development

- Over-reliance on private developers to fund and implement infrastructure and amenities leads to fragmented development.
 - Proffer systems are unreliable and unpredictable, complicating the funding landscape.
-

Coordination and Common Vision

Insufficient Coordination Among Agencies

- Poor coordination between various agencies involved at different stages of review hampers project progress.
- Disconnect between planning and zoning processes affects the consistency and continuity of placemaking visions.

Utility and Infrastructure Challenges

- Utility companies act independently, often disregarding the needs of the community and the broader placemaking vision.
 - Conflicting standards for utility placement, pedestrian scale lighting and dated, unaccommodating VDOT regulations hinder effective development.
-

Design and Implementation Issues

Car-Centric Design Philosophy

- VDOT's car-centric design standards need to be updated and do not prioritize pedestrian safety or urban design needs.
- There is a lack of flexibility in adapting suburban standards to urban settings, impacting street and park designs.

Challenges with Ground Floor Activation and Mixed-Use Zoning

- Activating ground floors on all sides of buildings is challenging, especially where retail uses are not viable.
 - There is a lack of mixed-use zoning, limiting the potential for vibrant, multi-functional spaces.
-

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Community Resistance

- Nearby neighbor opposition to street improvements and development projects is a significant challenge.
- Engaging the community to understand and support placemaking goals remains difficult.

Leadership and Visioning

- Strong leadership from county executives and decision-makers is needed to prioritize and implement effective placemaking.
 - Ensuring a consistent sense of place and vision across multiple projects is challenging.
-

Environmental and Maintenance Concerns

Maintenance and Sustainability

- Funding for the perpetual maintenance of nonstandard items in streetscapes is a challenge.
- Incorporating sustainable design elements and renewable energy sources in developments is difficult due to funding challenges and inflexible standards.

Open Space and Park Design

- Creating large public parks, linear parks, and interconnected open spaces requires significant investment and strategic planning.
 - Urban Park standards need to be adapted to reflect the unique needs of urbanizing areas.
-

Barriers Summary

The Workshop attendees believe the probability for successful placemaking in Fairfax County's evolving urban communities will be greatly strengthened by, streamlining review processes, increased funding, better inter-agency coordination, more flexible design standards, community support, and accommodations for maintaining community spaces and assets over time. Understanding the challenges and barriers is important in order to create vibrant and sustainable open spaces and streets.

Though these challenges were identified, participants are optimistic that placemaking successes in communities like Mosaic District and McLean are possible in all of Fairfax's urban areas.

Participants addressed many of these barriers and challenges through suggested implementation strategies and specific and in the test fit scenarios. This report includes specific recommendations that address the most common barriers.



TEST FITS

The workshop participant teams used real-world examples to apply and test the placemaking strategies developed through characteristics and typology exercises for great streets and open spaces to achieve the placemaking vision for Fairfax. Three different Urban Typologies in Fairfax were examined. Each Urban Typology, or area, was examined by two different teams for comparison. Below are the three Urban Typologies and a specific prompt to help guide the teams' test fits.

Urban Type 1: Edge City – Springhill Metro in Tysons

- How can the siloed spaces be linked together through placemaking characteristics and a “center” or “central gathering space” be created?

Urban Type 2: Older Commercial Areas – Annandale

- How can a central gathering space be created to be the heart of a multicultural community through placemaking?

Urban Type 3: Emerging Corridor - Penn Daw, Embark Plan

- How can the corridor support a more cohesive public realm, enhancing connectivity through placemaking?
-

PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS

Teams considered the following questions and issues in their approaches to implementing strategies for placemaking in these urban areas within Fairfax.

A vision statement that identifies area specific authenticity and the characteristics that apply to the area.

Identify values that are supported by the typologies that apply to the area for Streets and Open Spaces. How can these placemaking mechanisms achieve the vision of the area?

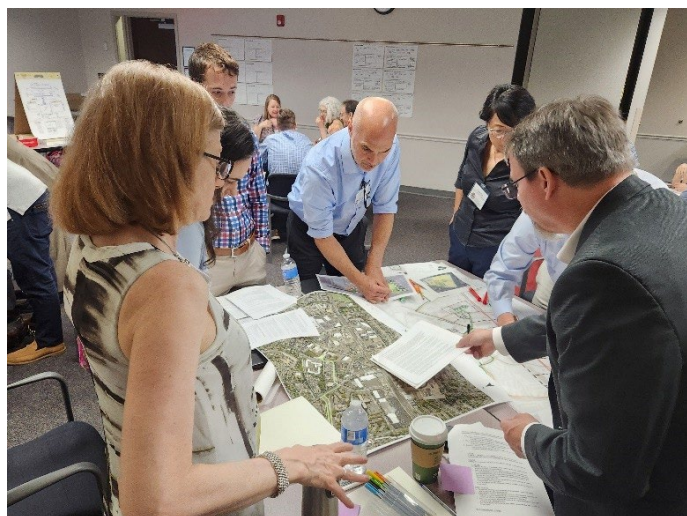
STREETS

- Review the street typologies on the maps and identify which streets are opportunities for placemaking.
- Describe the barriers that impede success for VDOT, private, and County-owned streets in the area. What barriers or challenges are there in implementing the characteristics and typologies? Consider barriers and opportunities as it relates to Ownership (creation) and Operations (management).
- List opportunities or important locations for implementing the selected characteristics and typologies.
- Are there additional characteristics and/or priorities that are important to include?

OPEN SPACES

- Review the existing open space typologies on the maps and identify new opportunities for placemaking.
 - Describe the barriers that impede success. What barriers or challenges are there in implementing the characteristics/ingredients?
 - Determine different implementation options for the area.
 - List opportunities or important locations for implementing the selected characteristics and typologies.
 - Are there additional characteristics and/or priorities that are important to include?
-

Teams represented their approaches to placemaking strategies through maps and diagrams, plans, sections, and other sketches to illustrate the characteristics and typologies relevant to the area. The following section highlights the overall approach for each Urban Typology.



Images: Teams work collaboratively on real-world “test fits” for placemaking strategies in Fairfax County’s urban areas.



EDGE CITY

Springhill Metro in Tysons

Character:

In the 1960s, Tysons began its transformation from a rural area to a major commercial and economic center. In 2010, based on plans to extend Metro to the Dulles Airport with 4 Tysons stations, the area was re-planned to Transit Oriented Development (TOD).

The Tysons West District is recognized as a gateway to Tysons from the west. The District is currently characterized by industrial and office uses along with car dealerships.

Vision for Development:

- The development character emphasizes compact, walkable neighborhoods interspersed with green spaces and public amenities.
- The Plan envisions Tysons West as an arts and entertainment district.
- The areas closest to the Metro station are prioritized for office use, while retail uses are anticipated to support an arts and entertainment hub that remains active beyond work hours.
- The streets adjacent to the Metro station are envisioned as vibrant retail corridors, attracting commuters from the Metro and integrating with new residential communities.
- Residential areas are planned to feature tree-lined streets and inviting facades at street level, while a network of urban parks will offer attractive walking spaces and opportunities for community gatherings.

Tysons West Happenings/ Points of Interest

- The PARC at Tysons (The PARC) is designed to be a hub for placemaking and community building within the Tysons area and the entire Fairfax County community. In what began as the Container Store, Celebrate Fairfax has transformed the building and the parking lot areas into a vibrant center for everyone to enjoy. Events such as markets, live entertainment, lawn games, and children's activities are hosted at the PARC year-round. The interior space is limited to a maximum of 50 people per building code, but building updates are currently under consideration.
- The Exchange: A Community Center and affordable housing at Dominion Square West
- Redevelopment of the Spring Hill Kiss 'N Ride with a Transit Center & Fire Station
- Plans for a Performing Arts Center at The View

Community Diversity and Composition (Tysons Urban Center)⁶:

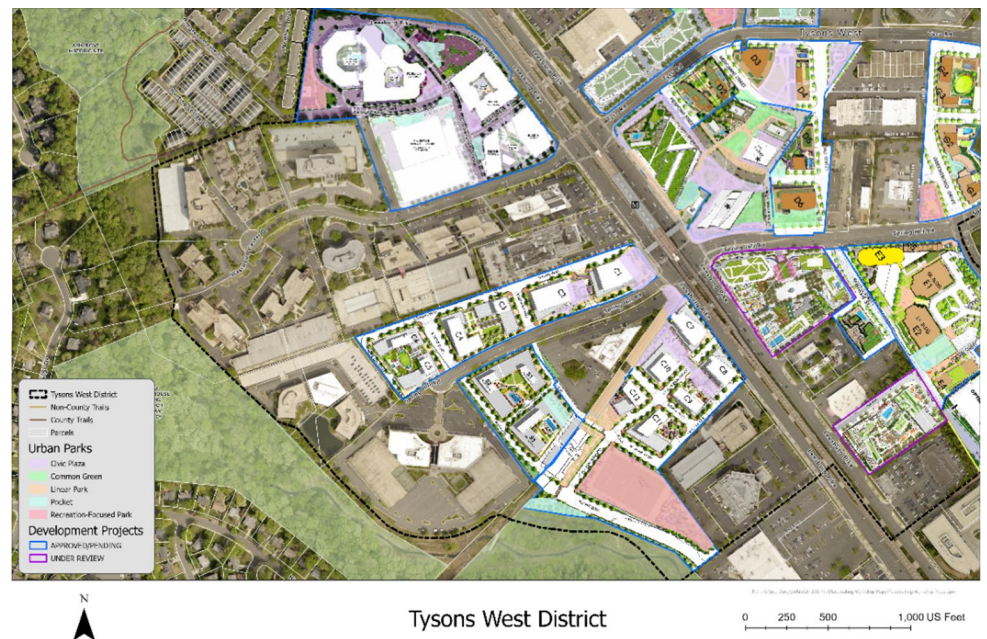
- The Tysons Community Alliance, a non-profit community improvement organization, provides data, activations, volunteer opportunities, and public

**How can the
siloed spaces be
linked together
through
placemaking
characteristics?**

⁶ 2020 Census Data

space enhancement projects to support the ongoing transformation of Tysons.

- **Population:** ~31,000
 - 17% under 18; 31% age 18-31; 29% age 35-54, 23% 55 and up
 - 49% White; 30% Asian; 8% Black; 10% two or more races
- **Employees:** ~103,000
- **Median household income:** \$129,000
- 5.4 million annual visitors
- 8% of Fairfax County's Tax Revenue



BARRIERS:

Streets:

- Connectivity/large blocks
- Underdeveloped points of destination
- VDOT control
- Private ownership / control
- Geographic separation

Open Space:

- Private ownership,
- Easement control,
- Collective overall buy-in
- Funding

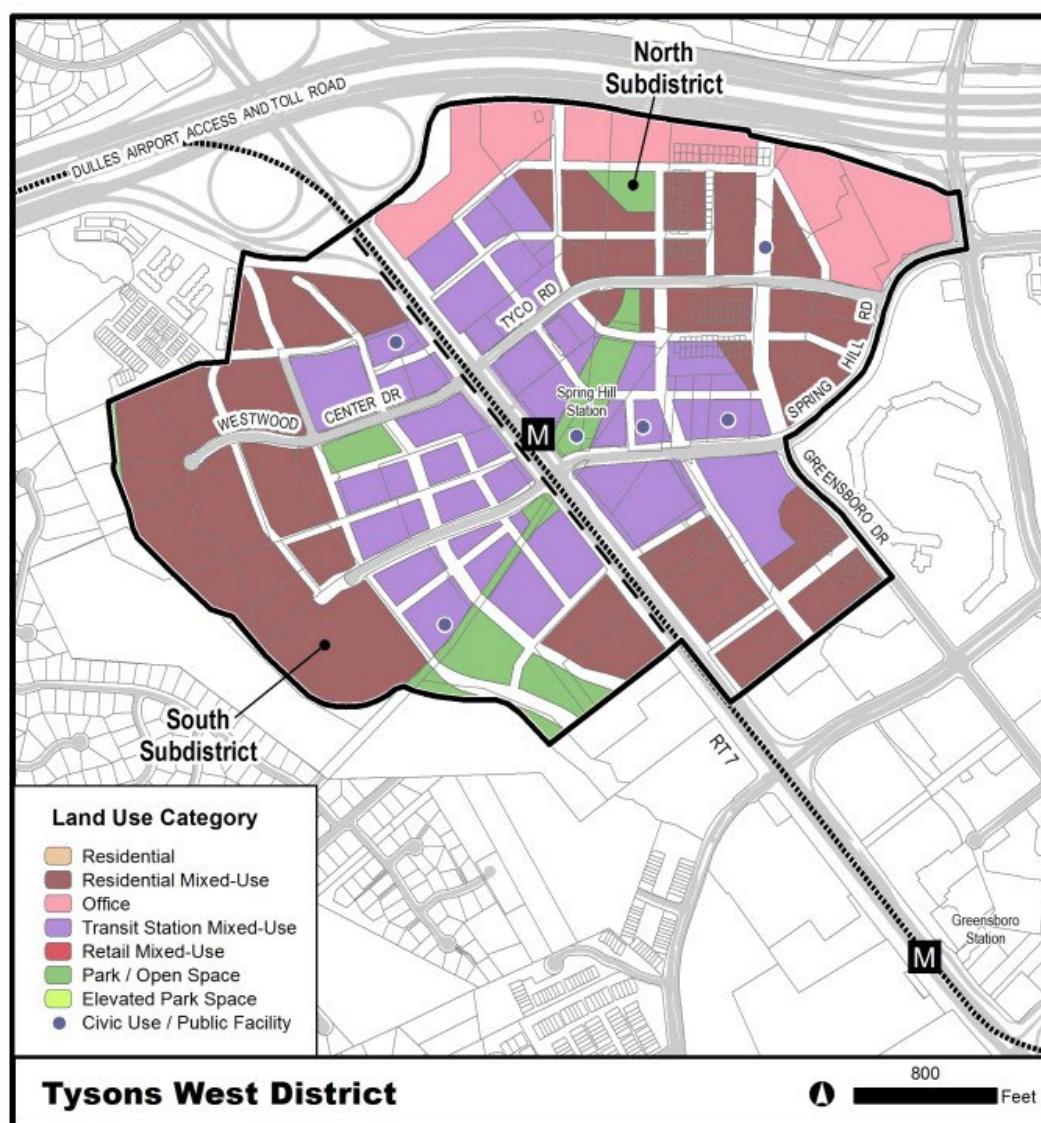
BARRIERS:

Streets:

- WMATA,
- Vacant private lots (to be used for art installation).

Open Space:

- Dominion Power / Utilities,
- Street crossing adjacent to parks.



Note: Planned park spaces are shown conceptually on Map 9.

MAP 13



OLDER COMMERCIAL AREAS

Annandale Community Business Center

Character:

Annandale is a predominantly commercial area with a concentration Korean and Latino-owned businesses. The foundation of Annandale was laid as a result of construction of Little River Turnpike in 1805 and Columbia Pike in 1808. Most of the area consists of highway-oriented strip commercial development, neighborhood shopping centers, and low and medium intensity office buildings which were built between the 1940s and 1990s.

Vision for Development in the Comprehensive Plan:

- A vibrant urban center characterized by a mix of diverse businesses and housing, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, and a sense of community identity.
- Architectural diversity, green spaces and community gathering areas are encouraged to foster a sense of place and belonging, reinforcing Annandale's unique identity as a destination for both commerce and culture.
- Encourages the retention and enhancement of businesses serving the community.
- Roadway improvements reflect context sensitive design principles and include elements of “complete streets.”

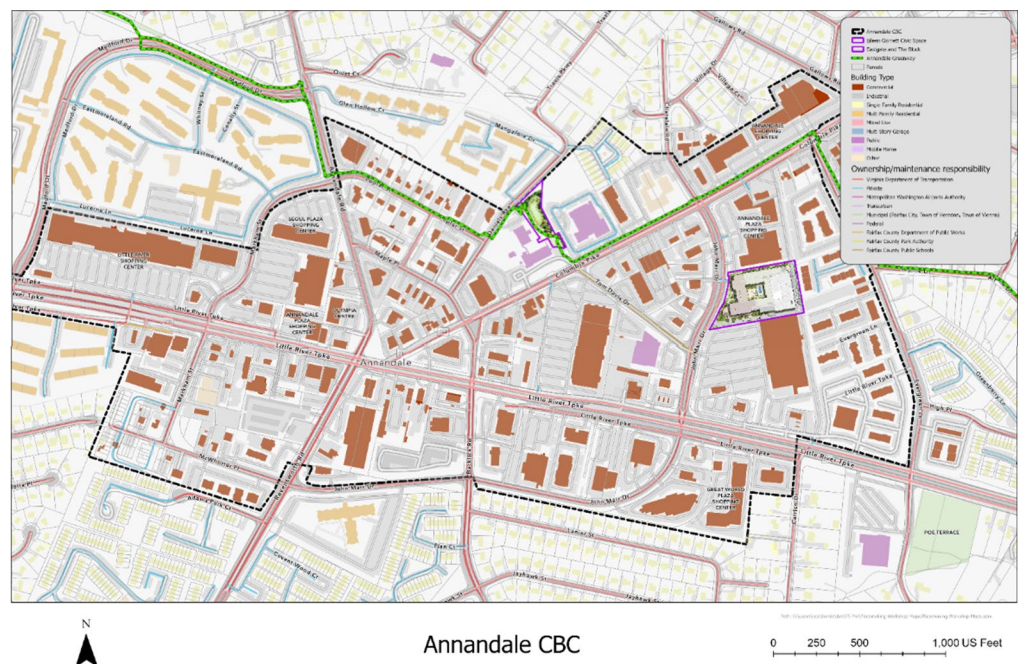
Happenings / Points of Interest:

- **Brand New Eileen Garnett Civic Space** – FCPA owned and managed park started as a pop-up park on county-owned land by the Community Revitalization Section in DPD. After \$200K in investment, the park is now being programmed with a monthly event series and a community garden.
- **Eastgate Development** – the first new residential development in Annandale since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted and part of a larger redevelopment plan for a KMART shopping center. 280 dwelling units (8% workforce housing); 6 stories; 11,220 SF of retail; 3.23 FAR.
- **The Block Food Hall** – is an 8,000SF Asian-themed food and nightlife venue. It is slated to relocate from the existing shopping center into the Eastgate Development once completed.

How can a central gathering space be created to be the heart of a multicultural community through placemaking?

Community Diversity and Composition (CBC + ½ mile surrounding area)⁷:

- **Population:** ~18,000
- **Median Household Income:** \$78,350
- **Highly Diverse Residential Population:** Asian (21%) and Latino (32%)
- Many locally-owned Korean and Latino restaurants and businesses.
- Nightlife destination with a variety of karaoke bars.
- Annual festivals
 - KORUS festival (cultural event hosted by the Korean American Association)
 - Taste of Annandale (food festival)
 - Annandale Parade (celebrating the many diverse communities of Annandale)



⁷ 2020 Census data

Annandale Community Business Center

Placemaking Concepts and Approaches

Team 3 – Annandale

VISION: Create a vibrant and inclusive community connecting public green spaces with urban nodes and celebrating local culture.

VALUES: vibrancy and cultural destination focus; connecting green spaces.

OPPORTUNITIES/STRATEGIES:

- Annandale Greenway- signage, standard sections,
- enhancements to public land around civic spaces,
- Little River Turnpike- road diet with placemaking characteristics,
- Tom Davis drive transformed connecting EG civic spaces to Eastgate planned pocket park
- Annandale Greenway
- land behind Volunteer Fire Department
- Poe terrace-undeveloped FCPA park



Diagram of Annandale – Team 3

Team 4 – Annandale

VISION: Celebrate, enhance and preserve the community diversity of people and businesses that comprise an Annandale CBC increase and create a healthier and safer environment.

VALUES: Community diversity focus; healthy and safe community.

OPPORTUNITIES/STRATEGIES:

- Strategically targeted affordable road solutions
- many locally owned, diverse businesses, including Korean and Latinx restaurants and businesses can cluster activity,
- nightlife destinations,
- network of local streets and street grid – block structure.



Diagram of Annandale – Team 4

BARRIERS:

Streets:

- Funding for Tom Davis Drive street improvements and sidewalks,
- Little River Turnpike noise and traffic,
- VDOT design standards.

Open Space:

- Lack of public owned land,
- Fragmented ownership

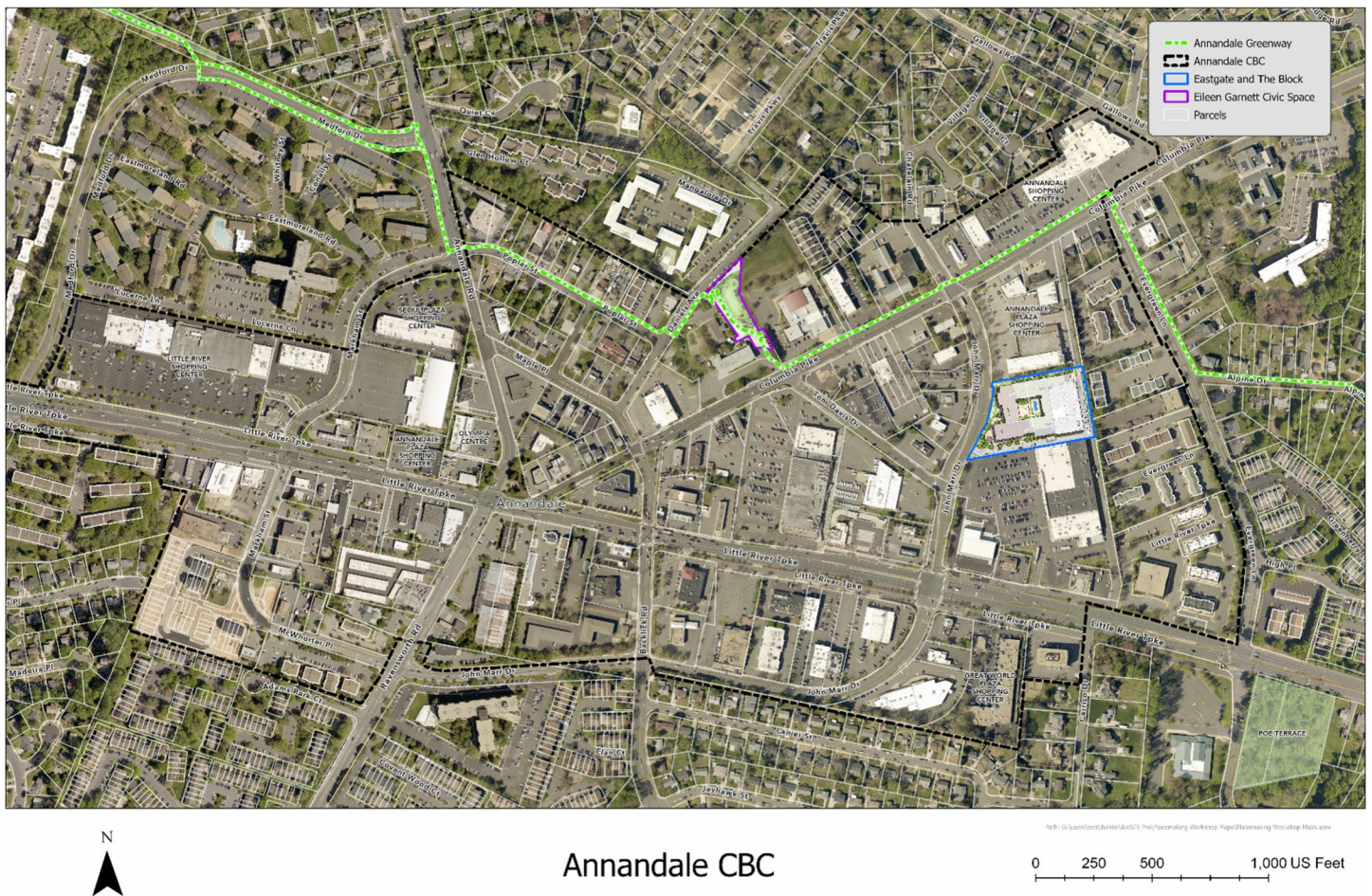
BARRIERS:

Streets:

- VDOT STARS program for Annandale contradicts the comprehensive plan,
- parcel consolidation will displace the vision of keeping vibrancy and culture.

Open Space:

- Cost of buying land/parcel,
- STARS program.





EMERGING CORRIDOR

Penn Daw Community Business Center

**How can the
corridor
support a more
cohesive public
realm,
enhancing
connectivity
through
placemaking?**

Character:

Penn Daw is at the crossroads of Kings Highway and Richmond Highway. The intersection of Richmond Highway and North Kings Highway creates significant challenges for safe and convenient pedestrian circulation and accessibility. Its proximity to the Huntington Metrorail Station makes it an important activity center for retailers and other businesses. The former FCPA-owned property behind the Walmart contains steep slopes and environmentally sensitive features. Existing development consists of retail centers, mixed-use development, multi-family, and townhouses.

The 7.5-mile Historic Richmond Highway corridor is part of route US1 which runs from Florida to Maine and historically saw many tourists and vacationers on their ways to nearby destinations such as George Washington's Mount Vernon. Prior to its highway designation, the corridor was part of the historic Potomac Path and was used by George Washington to travel between his home, the City of Alexandria, and Washington DC.

Multiple transportation projects totaling over \$1B of improvements are slated to be completed by 2031. These include:

- 7.5-mile BRT system from Huntington Metro Station to Fort Belvoir with 7 stops
- Widening of the roadway to three lanes as well as wide sidewalks, cycle tracks, street trees

Vision for Development in the Comprehensive Plan:

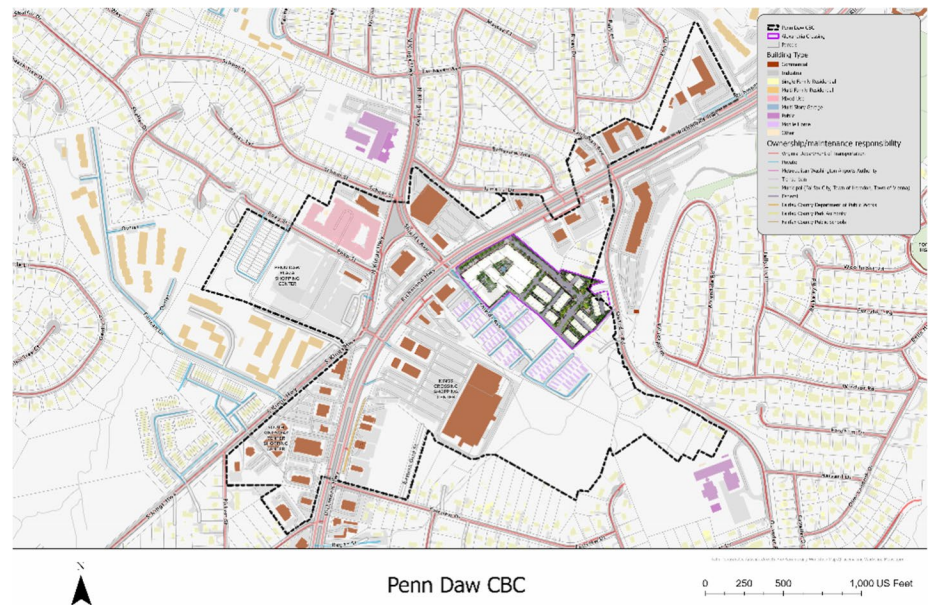
- A high-intensity, Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) node.
- A proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station aims to improve connectivity, with redesigned intersections and public spaces fostering multimodal transit use.
- A vibrant, connected community that prioritizes the pedestrian experience by enhancing circulation and walkability, transit accessibility, and environmental stewardship.
- A variety of urban park spaces are recommended, including, a combination of civic plazas, and a "Livability Spine" consisting of continuous pedestrian zones with publicly accessible urban park space on both sides of the street.
- The Fairchild property should be protected, restored, and enhanced, as a park.

Happenings/ Points of Interest:

- **South Alex** – major grocery-anchored mixed-use development recently opened
- **Alexandria Crossing** – large multi-family project that is the first to implement a portion of the planned street grid will start construction later this year.
- **Bow-tie Plaza** – possibility of implementing a pedestrian-plaza in the remnant space between Kings Highway and Richmond Highway as part of the BRT project.

Richmond Highway Diversity and Composition (CBC + ½ mile surrounding area)⁸:

- **Race and Ethnicity:** 34% white, 23% Latino, 20% black
- **Median Household Income:** \$79,500



⁸ 2020 Census data for the entire Richmond Highway Corridor

Penn Daw Community Business Center

Placemaking Concepts and Approaches

Team 5 – Penn Daw

VISION: intentional, near-term, pedestrian connections and enhancements will retrofit the Penn Daw corridor into a vibrant and inclusive neighborhood anchored by a network of parks and civic spaces.

VALUES: pedestrian connection and inclusivity focus; near-term approach to strategies.

OPPORTUNITIES/STRATEGIES:

- Strategic reconfiguration of streets to frame future BRT wall making immediate impact,
- reclaim surface parking for park space - establishing pedestrian spaces in current vehicle realms,
- infuse public art sculptures and colorful crossings for gateway features,
- create essential identity,
- flexible and pedestrian scale interaction
- establish vital connections to diverse neighborhoods,
- Street Network
 - Richmond highway arterial \ Blvd.
 - Kings' highway collector \ local St.
 - Rest of the streets are local streets
- Gateway Park, civic plazas, public art, pop-up retail, flexible spaces:
 - Fairchild Park recreation park- trails,
 - community gardens, pocket parks / linear parks

Team 6 – Penn Daw

VISION: Respecting the varied history of the community and visually bringing this history into the public realm in a respectful way.

VALUES: Uniquely Richmond Highway focus; incorporate history through design in long term implementation.

OPPORTUNITIES/STRATEGIES:

- Incorporate history through design – lighting, bollards, paving, materials, landscape, historical markers, trees, street furniture - everything reinforces the concept.
- Central Park space as an activated node,
- Gateways,
- continuous street trees,
- BRT/transit,
- mixed income housing,
- consistent building wall / frontage,
- connections to schools for bikes and pedestrians,
- uniquely Richmond Highway in design and feeling,
- local street network connectivity,
- increased density



Diagram of Penn Daw – Team 5



Diagram of Penn Daw – Team 6

BARRIERS:

Streets:

- Impact to street trees due to VDOT standards related to site distance, lateral offset, and utilities. Virtually every project implemented is impacted,
- VDOT standards do not allow urban street designs. The process requires many waivers or may not be allowed altogether,
- waivers have a stigma with the community - developers do not want to do them and VDOT does not want to permit them,
- requiring peak hour analysis

Open Space:

- Implementation of the vision and impact in the near term while waiting for long term funding and construction for redevelopment,
- Reactionary planning.

BARRIERS:

Streets:

- VDOT standards,
- lack of investment to comprehensive,
- lack of funding in the County budget.

Open Space:

- Cost of buying land/parcel,
- Ownership of parcels,
- land consolidation,
- neighbor opposition.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a set of recommendations for the Urban Development and Placemaking Committee to evaluate as it develops a Placemaking Action Plan for full Commission consideration and ultimate recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. Recommendations are based on the input of participants; review of planning documents; recognized best practices; and material generated during the workshop.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Apply coordinated, high-quality design standards to achieve a cohesive public realm throughout an urban area. There are several design guideline documents for areas such as Tysons and McLean that are considered exemplary. Fairfax County, in collaboration with private developers, has successfully implemented placemaking using good standards in other places such as the Mosaic District and The Boro. Mosaic is even featured in Case Studies of Retrofitting Suburbia: Urban Design Strategies for Urgent Challenges 1st Edition,⁹ describing the enhancement of the social environment through good urban design. However, these are isolated pockets of good design and walkability. County regulations such as the Public Facilities Manual, the Zoning Ordinance, and building codes, should be coordinated with the design guidelines and the Comprehensive Plan. Adherence to urban design guidelines can shape public infrastructure projects to achieve a cohesive public realm.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Address impediments to placemaking through enhanced collaboration between departments, external agencies, and County leadership. Conflicting and rigid road design standards and regulations were noted as being one of the largest barriers to implementing placemaking characteristics and practices. Coordination between departments and agencies using Working Groups or other team management practices can reduce siloed operations and improve timelines toward desired outcomes for placemaking.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Prioritize placemaking. Fairfax County Leadership can reinforce with staff its continued interest in and commitment to placemaking in urban areas. While placemaking is one of six key themes described in the Countywide Strategic Plan;¹⁰ linkages to other County documents, guidelines, and standards to promote placemaking goals should be established.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Explore the full range of public funding and resource options, including reprioritizations, that may, over time, be invested in a networked public realm. A networked public realm that physically connects places requires strategic interventions

⁹ Case Studies in Retrofitting Suburbia: Urban Design Strategies for Urgent Challenges 1st Edition. E. Dunham-Jones and J. Williamson

¹⁰ Countywide Strategic Plan, Updated June 2024. Page 9.

https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan/sites/strategicplan/files/Revised%20CSP_July%202024.pdf

as reflected in the workshop test fit sites. The County recently made a \$100 million commitment to promote sidewalk connectivity. Consider prioritizing additional capital improvement resources to further fill gaps between development projects and to ultimately form a districtwide network of streets and open spaces that can also contribute to placemaking, as described in the Comprehensive Plan.

RECOMMENDATION #5

Inspire communities to embrace placemaking initiatives to enhance their overall quality of life. Change and adaptation can be difficult for community members. Traditional community engagement is often project driven. In order to build support for placemaking initiatives, create a positive campaign to help Fairfax communities love their “Place” in advance of projects to relieve conflict and confusion and build a placemaking “civic infrastructure.”

RECOMMENDATION #6

Support private sector investments in streets and open spaces as a key priority in entitlements. Private sector investment plays a key role in developing streets and open spaces in the public realm. Again, as noted in Recommendation #4, public sector investment can potentially fill the gaps when and where private development is not occurring or otherwise not successfully realizing the placemaking vision of urban areas. Additionally, consistent with the County’s One Fairfax Policy, public investment can be prioritized in “high need” urban areas to support equitable community outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION #7

Create a framework for collaboration between Fairfax County and private property owners and/or businesses to implement small-scale or low-cost interventions that capitalize and engage with existing assets for placemaking initiatives. Such collaborations can contribute to urban areas that are not benefiting from large, private development which can contribute to improving streets and open spaces. This is particularly important as a component of equity to elevate places without significant new investment.

RECOMMENDATION #8

Learn from the County’s experience implementing an agreement that establishes a different working relationship with VDOT regarding Tysons street design standards that might present placemaking and economic development opportunities in other urban areas. Given the barriers highlighted by participants during the workshop, street ownership enables the county to exert greater control over street design, including roadway engineering standards and determining where capital investments are being made. The *Countywide Strategic Plan*¹¹ recommends that Fairfax explore the transfer of street ownership and maintenance from VDOT to county responsibility if there is a corresponding transfer of revenue to pay for on-going maintenance. Past analyses indicate that the transfer of even limited responsibility would be financially disadvantageous for the County. This analysis would benefit a pilot project where the County obtains ownership of a few key streets within an urban activity center based on certain criteria such as economic development potential, pedestrian safety, and mitigation of past inequitable practices.

¹¹ Mobility and Transportation Proposed Strategies. Page 49.

https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan/sites/strategicplan/files/Revised%20CSP_July%202024.pdf



ATTENDEE LIST

Special thanks to our attendees who shared their time and talents to inform this workshop.

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Josh White	LCOR	Vice President, LCOR Inc.
Hillary Zahm	Macerich	Vice President, Macerich
Brian Goggin	APAH	Policy & Project Manager, Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing
Jeremy Hancock	Planning Commissioner	Providence District
Walter Clarke	Planning Commissioner	Mount Vernon District
Elizabeth Hagg	Fairfax County DPD	AICP, Section Director, Community Revitalization
Adam Wynn	Fairfax County Park Authority	RLA, LEED AP, Senior Project Manager, FCPA
Jai Cole	Fairfax County Park Authority	Executive Director, FCPA
Chris Landgraf	Planning Commissioner	Franconia District
Katie Quinn	Fairfax County DPD	Senior Planner, Zoning Evaluation Division, DPD
Carly Aubrey	Fairfax County DPD	AICP, Senior Planner, Planning Division, DPD
Lily Yegazu	Fairfax County DPD	Senior Planner, Zoning Administration Division, DPD
Mina Rezapour	LandDesign	Intern

CLOSING

This workshop demonstrates the reality of synergy... the sum of the whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts. We are endowed with tremendous talent inside the County, within the local, regional, and state interagency, and in partnership with the development community. The product of our two-day effort reflects this talent... and much more. The Planning Commission, and ultimately we hope the Board of Supervisors, will benefit from the roadmap generated collectively by this impressive body of experts.

Phillip Niedzielski-Eichner,
Chair, Fairfax County Planning
Commission