



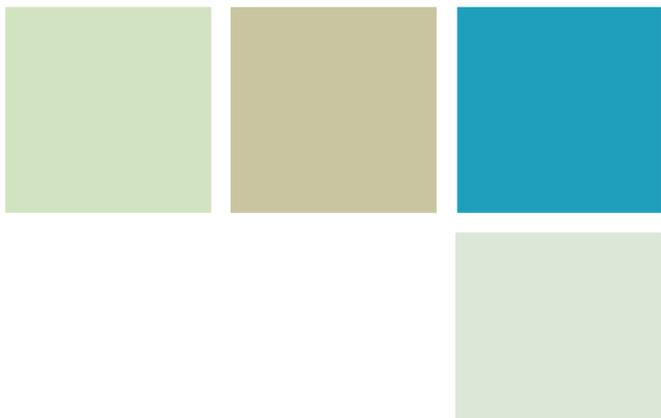
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY PUBLIC PLAZA

Public Workshop Summary

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

AUGUST 21, 2007

PREPARED BY



George Mason University Public Plaza
Public Workshop Summary
Arlington, Virginia



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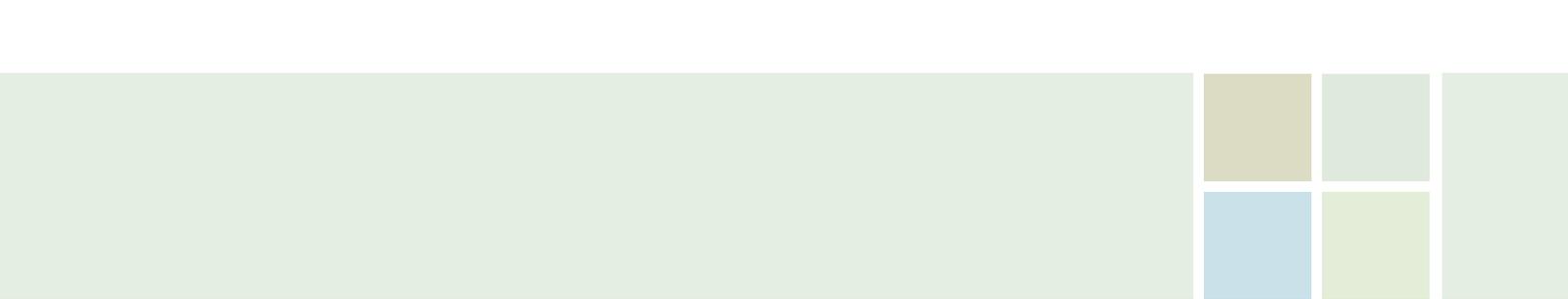
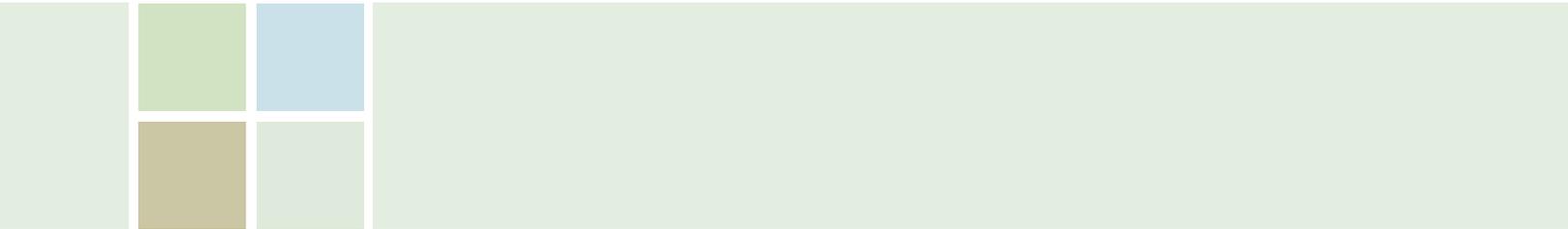
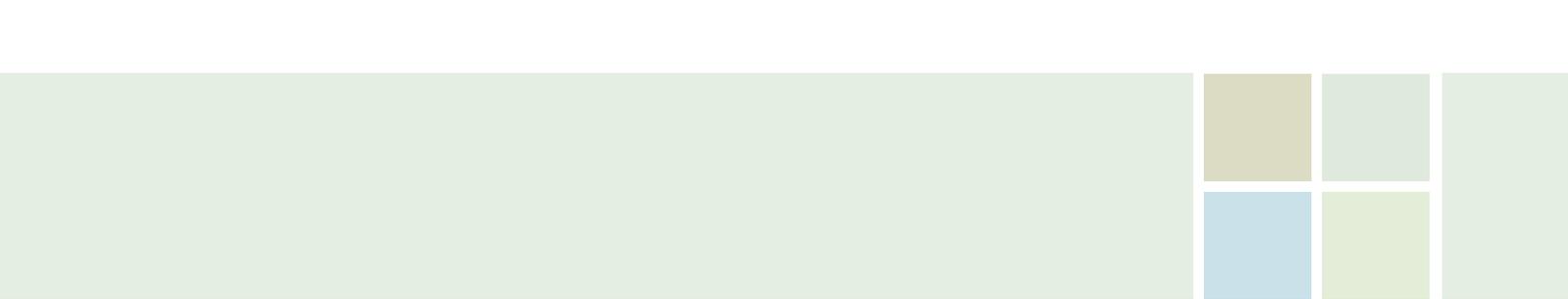


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PURPOSE AND GOALS

Faculty, staff and students, community members, civic organizations, and county representatives came together to envision the future of the public plaza—a gathering place that will build community within the Arlington campus and the Virginia Square community as a whole.

George Mason University (Mason) is undergoing a major expansion of their Arlington County campus located on North Fairfax Drive. Building onto the completed law school, Phase 2 will involve the construction of a new school building, which will also include facilities that will be accessible to the broader community, including an auditorium, multipurpose room, and an approximately 20,000 square foot plaza. This plaza will be the focal point not just of the campus but also of the growing Virginia Square community around it.

Arlington County and George Mason University asked Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (PPS) to help inform the design, program of uses, and management for this future plaza. In June of 2007, PPS facilitated a meeting among key players from the community, county, and university to review the design of the plaza, for which construction documents have been prepared. Building on this initial work, PPS was asked to meet with other stakeholder groups and facilitate a public workshop on August 21, 2007 to help the plaza’s anticipated stakeholders develop a vision for the plaza and a program of desired uses. University faculty, staff and students, community members, civic organizations, and county representatives came together to envision the future of the public plaza—a gathering place that will build community within the Arlington campus and the Virginia Square community as a whole.

What Makes a Great Place?

Public places are a stage for our public lives. They are the parks where celebrations are held, where marathons end, and where cultures mix. They are the streets and sidewalks in front of homes and businesses where friends run into each

other and where exchanges, both social and economic, take place. They are the “front porches” of our public institutions where we interact with each other and with government. When cities and neighborhoods have thriving public spaces, residents have a strong sense of community; conversely, when they are lacking, they may feel less connected to each other.

PPS has identified four qualities that Make Places Great. These qualities need to be incorporated into the planning and design of the new plaza:

- **Activities & Uses.** Having something to do gives people a reason to come to a place—and to return again and again. When there is nothing to do, a space will remain empty, which can lead to other problems. In planning for uses and activities, it is important to consider a wide range of activities for: men and women, people of different ages, different times of day, week and year, and for people alone as well as in groups.
- **Comfort & Image.** Whether a space is comfortable and has a good image and identity is key to its success. Comfort includes perceptions about safety, cleanliness, and the availability of places to sit—the importance of giving people the choice to sit where they want is generally underestimated. Creating a positive image can require keeping a place clean and well-maintained, as well as fostering a sense of identity.
- **Access & Linkages.** A successful public space is easy to get to and get through; it is visible both from a distance and up close. The edges of a space are important as well; for instance, a row of shops along a street is more

interesting and generally safer to walk by than a blank wall or empty lot. Accessible spaces have high parking turnover and, ideally, are convenient to public transit and support walking and biking. Since George Mason University is located in a central area of Arlington, access and linkages to the surrounding areas should be strongly considered.

- Sociability.** When people see friends, meet and greet their neighbors, and feel comfortable interacting with strangers, they tend to feel a stronger sense of place and attachment to their community—and to the place that fosters these types of social activities. Therefore, planning for people and thinking about sociability first helps to keep in mind that this will be a place for people; then, everything else should be designed to support that.

Qualities of Successful Public Spaces: Where “Town Meets Gown”

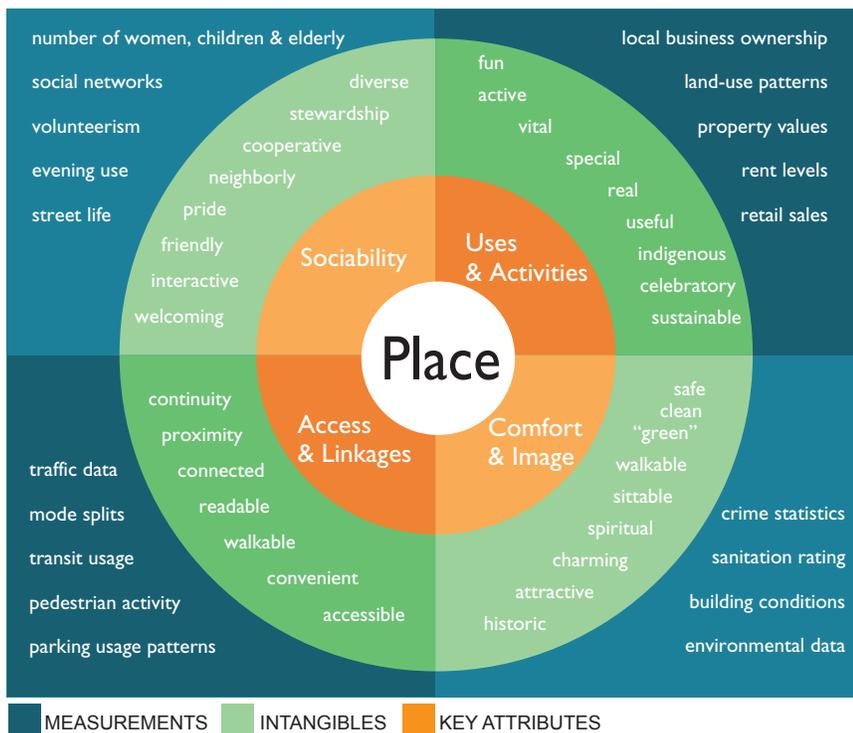
As presented by PPS in a recent bulletin about successful campus planning, there are six functions that successful campuses serve:

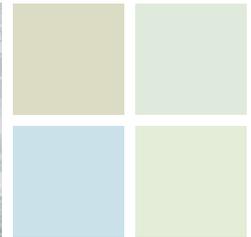
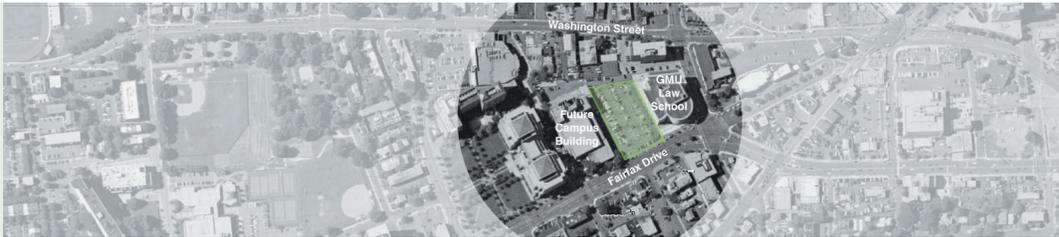
1. THEY BRING PEOPLE AND IDEAS TOGETHER

Too often, faculty and students retreat into their own disciplines, each hidden away in its own separate building. Students need to interact with faculty and in turn the entire university needs to interact with the broader community.

2. THEY ARE PLACES, NOT JUST FACILITIES

The key to making campuses more than the sum of their parts is an important idea that PPS calls triangulation. This simply means clustering activities together to create a busy, dynamic place for many different types of people at different times of day. For example, a terrace cafeteria at the student union could “triangulate” with a nearby garden and rotating exhibits from the campus art collection. Combining these elements that would normally be scattered creates a far busier and more exciting place than any one of those uses by itself.





Existing Campus Building Project Site Existing GMU Law School

3. SUCCESSFUL CAMPUSES BALANCE CONCERNS ABOUT FLEXIBILITY VS. CONTROL

Sensible management of public uses can allow colleges to address security and control issues, while still encouraging public access and enjoyment of campus public spaces.

4. SUCCESSFUL CAMPUSES IMPROVE THE TOWN/GOWN RELATIONSHIP

A university and the surrounding community boost each other when they cooperate on a wide range of matters. The happy result is often a strong local economy with a highly skilled workforce and cutting edge businesses spun off through the presence of entrepreneurial professors and graduate students.

5. CAMPUSES CAN SOW THE SEEDS OF SUSTAINABILITY

As incubators of innovative ideas, universities are poised to pioneer sustainable building practices for the future. Being green is not just about the facility itself but about how the building relates to the rest of the campus. A true green building, for instance, would be sited in such a way that people would typically walk there rather than drive.

6. WELL DESIGNED CAMPUSES CAN SOLVE TRAFFIC AND PARKING WOES

Too much accommodating the automobile often results in campuses becoming drab, uninspiring places sealed off from the life of the community around it. Promoting walking, biking and transit, on the other hand, connects the life of the campus to the life of the community.

Background

In 1994, George Mason University signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Arlington County, which noted that a public plaza would be built as part of the Phase 2 Arlington campus facilities expansion. The agreement stated that the design of the plaza would be developed as a shared University and community facility, and a process of public involvement would guide the plaza's design.

The process of actively engaging stakeholders in the planning of the plaza began with a design workshop facilitated by PPS in June, 2007. This forum brought together representatives from the general public, Arlington County government and George Mason University to discuss how the plaza will function, who will use it, and how it could be used both by students the general public. From this dialogue emerged general agreement that for this plaza to be successful it must be:

- A flexible space
- A welcoming space
- A place to meet

The recommendation to enhance the connection between the other proposed Phase 2 facilities (Auditorium, Multi-Purpose Room, Coffee Shop and Bookstore) and the plaza also emerged as a common theme. Additional ideas from the design workshop are available in a separate "Design Workshop Summary" report, plus many are also reflected in the findings of this report.

Following this initial workshop, Arlington County and George Mason University determined that a second workshop would



be beneficial as it would engage a broad range of stakeholders—students, faculty and community members—in the design process. It was agreed that only by engaging these parties will the plaza truly become an asset for the University and Virginia Square communities.

Mason Arlington Campus Today

The primary buildings of George Mason University's Arlington Campus are bordered by Washington Boulevard and North Fairfax Drive to the north and south, Kirkwood Road to the east, and the FDIC building to the west. The buildings on this site currently surround a below-grade open parking lot.

This campus houses the University's Law School in Hazel Hall, the Graduate School of Public Policy (Master's degree programs) in the Original Building, and the Institute for Conflict Analysis & Resolution rents space in the Truland Building. Additional parking is provided in the George Mason University Foundation Building and in the Truland Building, which also includes private office space. The campus is within walking distance of both the Clarendon and Virginia Square Metro stations.

One of the findings of the workshops and discussions has been the impact of the current layout of the campus on campus life and the linkages between academic departments. Currently, there is no central gathering place for the University and, due in part to the divisive nature of the central parking lot, there is also very little interaction between students and staff from the different academic programs.

Despite potentially shared interests among the campus' three academic disciplines, there are currently few campus-wide events that seek to mix schools and unite the campus. Additionally, aside from patronizing several local businesses, students and faculty generally claim to have minimal interaction with local residents and civic groups. If designed with the end users mind, the plaza can be a catalyst for generating a sense of community, both internal and external to Mason.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

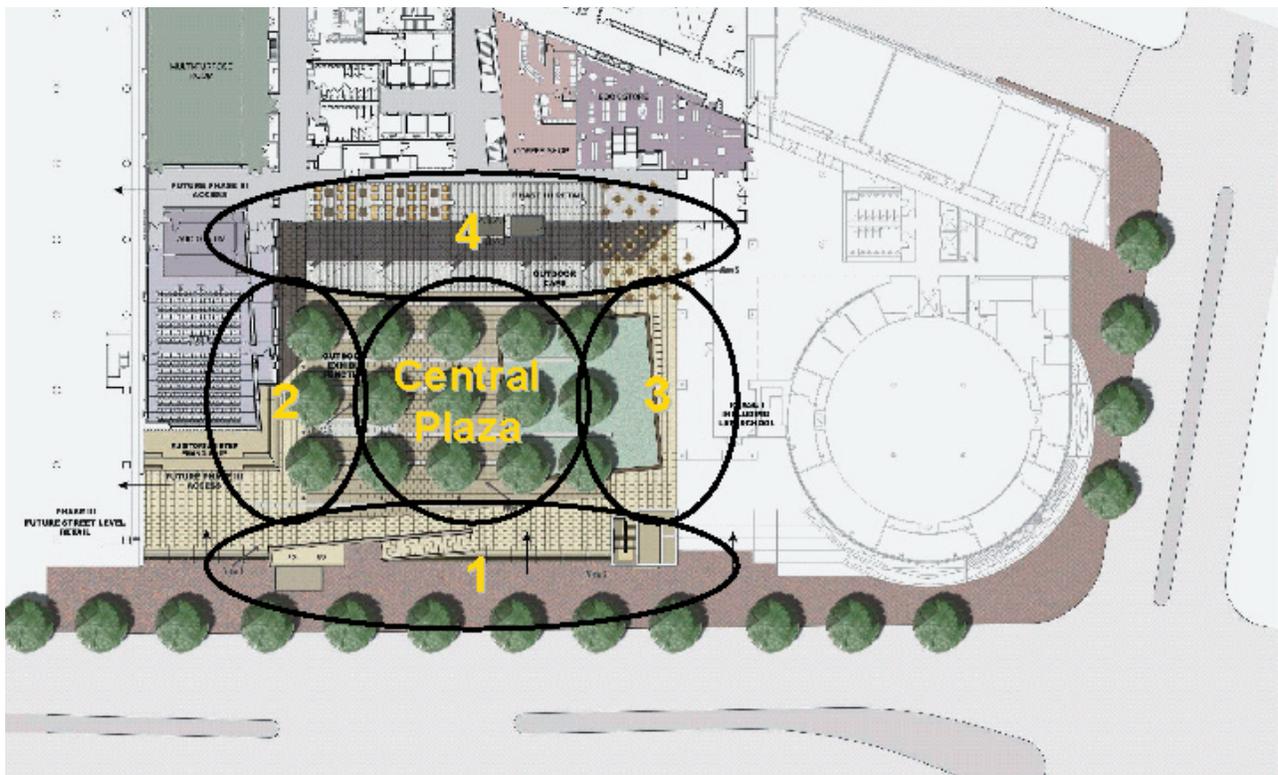
Approximately 65 people met on Tuesday, August 21, 2007 to discuss their ideas for making the George Mason University Public Plaza a great destination for the Arlington campus. Attendees included University faculty, staff and students, community members, civic organizations, and Arlington County representatives.

In order to set the context for the workshop, Walter Tejada, Vice-Chair of the Arlington County Board, Lawrence Czarda, Vice-President of Regional Campuses for George Mason University, and Terry Holzheimer, Director of Arlington Economic Development, provided welcoming remarks and stressed the importance of community engagement in making the plaza a valuable and vibrant public space.

Jennifer Smith of the Arlington County Planning Division gave a brief overview of the local community and other planning

projects in the vicinity, including background information on the future residential development planned across Fairfax Drive and a proposed public market and farmers market just east of the campus. Robert Nashed, Project Architect from SmithGroup, then introduced the workshop attendees to the University's most current design for the plaza and Phase 2 buildings.

Once the context and status of the project had been laid out, PPS then presented a PowerPoint show entitled "Creating a Great Public Plaza at George Mason University," drawing on PPS's 32 years of experience in helping to create and sustain public places that build communities. The PowerPoint presentation showcased notable public places around the world, including both plazas and campus spaces, and described the character, amenities and programming that make them successful.



Place Game

Following the presentation about successful public spaces, the audience was divided into small groups that were charged with providing ideas for a program of uses and activities that will shape the future use and role of the plaza. Each of these groups imagined the possibilities for the central activity area of the plaza, as well as one of four different edges (see attached map).

Zone 1 includes the steps and transition from the sidewalk and street to the plaza. Zone 2 focuses on the exterior of the Auditorium and its relation to the plaza and Fairfax Drive. Zone 3 is the edge of the plaza that borders the Law School arcade. Finally, Zone 4 consists of the rear arcade and the adjacent interior lobby spaces, including the bookstore and coffee shop. Each zone is discussed below.

Each group was given the following set of questions for consideration and discussion:

USES & ACTIVITIES

- What kinds of things would you like to be able to do here?

ACCESS & LINKAGES

- What would make it easier for people to get here (better or more conveniently located transit, better crosswalks, improved walking environment, path system, etc.)?
- How could this place be related to adjacent places?

COMFORT & IMAGE

- What kinds of amenities/features would you like to see here that would add to the character of the place and make it comfortable for you?



SOCIABILITY

- What would compel you and a group of friends to come here?

IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES

- What role could this plaza play in the life of the Virginia Square community?
- What role could this plaza play for George Mason University?
- What different activities could take place during the day? at night? on weekends? in the summer? in the winter?
- What local partnerships or local talent can you identify that could help implement this program for the plaza? What specific student groups and community organizations could be involved?

WORKSHOP FINDINGS

As a part of the visioning process, the workshop participants identified the various roles that the public plaza could play—in general, for George Mason University, and for the Virginia Square community. These visions will become reality if the design and program of the space matches the needs and interests of its targeted users.

Opportunities for the Plaza

In general, the plaza was viewed as a place that could:

- Create a sense of place and identity for both Mason and the surrounding community;
- Integrate the Mason campus with the community;
- Serve as a gateway into the Mason urban campus;
- Create a cultural and educational center linked to Mason activities and programs;
- Serve as a stopping-off point and a congregation place (not noisy or expensive like local restaurants or bars) – an outdoor “living room” for the campus;
- Recapture the history of Virginia Square – the name of a long gone historic shopping center.

Opportunities for Mason

Specifically for Mason, the plaza will:

- Become a gathering spot that fosters interaction between academic departments and schools;
- Brand the Mason campus and increase its visibility in the community;

- Promote University research, programs and staff to the community, helping to build new community partnerships;
- Provide a new venue for University events and activities.

Opportunities for Virginia Square Community

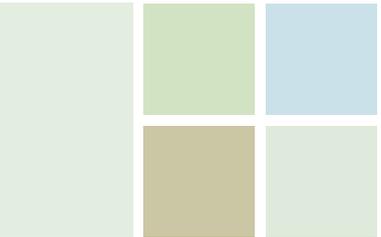
For the surrounding community, the plaza, and the adjacent indoor facilities such as the Auditorium, will:

- Provide a venue for educational and cultural activities, entertainment and art displays, as well as places to socialize when space is not being used by the university;
- Help people learn about and potentially participate in university programs and events, through specific elements like signage and bulletin boards.

Key Concerns about the Current Plaza Design

At the workshop, a number of key concerns about the current plaza design were discussed along with the brainstorming of ideas for activities and uses that could take place in the plaza. Generally, there was excitement about the potential of the space but also concern about a number of design features that people felt needed to be addressed.

- There was consensus that the plaza needs to be as flexible as possible to accommodate the greatest number of uses. While recognizing the importance for shade, the grid of trees in the current design was generally viewed as precluding many uses of the space that were identified during the workshop.
- It was also agreed that the plaza needs to connect to the



buildings and the street and that adjacent uses need to spill into the plaza. However, the Auditorium, as designed with its blank facades, does not contribute to or benefit from the adjacent public plaza, and the front stairs into the plaza create a visual and physical barrier between the plaza and the community.

- Finally, the plaza needs to incorporate both quiet and lively spaces. This includes areas that are passive and quiet for studying and reading, as well as space(s) that can accommodate programmed activities and their logistical requirements. Additional elements and features should be added to support these types of uses.

Plaza Opportunities

At the workshop, specific groups identified opportunities for their assigned area of the plaza, and all groups addressed the central spaces. This section summarizes the results of all the groups (See appendices for breakdown of ideas and issues, by group).

ENTRANCE AND ARRIVAL ZONE

The following recommendations were suggested in order to make the arrival zone of the plaza more inviting and comfortable. These include design changes to the elevation of the plaza, as well as amenities.

- Redesign the plaza to eliminate grade changes between the sidewalk and the plaza, creating clear lines of sight (1) into the plaza from the street and (2) from the plaza to the street in order to make the plaza more inviting;
- Incorporate the sidewalk into the plaza;
- Create a drop-off area on Fairfax Drive by removing on-street parking spaces and provide seating and lighting for those waiting to be picked up;

- Provide benches along Fairfax Drive and in front of the parking garage stairs;
- Create areas to congregate at the plaza entrance by designing more playful steps that curve along the front of the plaza or by deepening and flattening the front steps to serve as seating and invite in the community (e.g., Spanish steps). Curvilinear steps also will soften views into the plaza from the street;
- Install bicycle racks.

PLAZA ACTIVITY ZONES

The workshop revealed an overwhelming desire for places to eat and quiet areas to read and study outdoors, as well as strong interest in using the spaces for programmed events and activities. These activities need to be accommodated in different zones of the plaza or scheduled so that they do not conflict.

The Plaza as a Place to Relax

These activities should be accommodated on a permanent basis in the plaza, separate from the spaces that would be programmed for more active events. Suggested activities included the following.

- Create an outdoor reading room and study area. This could also serve as an outdoor classroom for smaller classes, possibly in the Law School arcade;
- Create an outdoor labyrinth that serves as a meditation, yoga or Tai Chi area away from the plaza's other uses;
- A "living room" with couches, outlets, and coffee tables on the west side of café lobby/arcade would create a close, cozy space for gathering;
- Eating area and chess tables on east side of café lobby

and in Law School arcade (open to plaza with garage doors or folding glass doors).

The Plaza as a Place for Programmed Activities

These activities fall into the following categories:

Staged Events

There was nearly consensual interest in holding staged events for both the University and the community in the outdoor plaza. These activities all require similar set-ups, and a space for this type of use should be included in the plaza design.

- Lectures and presentations that relate to Mason curricula;
- Student and faculty performances;
- Concerts (e.g., Music al Fresco);
- Commencement and ceremonies;
- Poetry readings;
- Outdoor movie screenings and discussion;
- Receptions and Parties;
- Outdoor receptions;
- Welcome receptions and orientations;
- Outdoor BBQs.

Exhibits, Fairs and Special Events

Other temporary events that could take place in the outdoor plaza were also identified by all of the workshop groups. They generally include different types of fairs and celebrations, which could include staged events as well.

- Book markets, fairs, and signings;
- Art shows;
- Rotating exhibits;
- Cultural events, diversity day, neighborhood day, and student celebrations;
- Ice skating.

AUDITORIUM DESIGN

The proposed 300-seat Auditorium will be a valuable asset to the Mason campus and the community. To enhance the events programmed there and to improve the building's relationship with the surrounding outdoor spaces, the following opportunities were identified.

- Open up the Auditorium events to the outdoor plaza. The side doors could open out onto the plaza or a raised terrace, and an entrance could be added to the wall facing Fairfax Drive. Windows also could be used to improve the connection between indoors and out;
- Activate the dead space between the Auditorium, the plaza and Fairfax Drive, where the 'hang out' stairs were seen as too exposed and not in a good location for this use. Several ideas were put forth for this space, including:
 - o Public art, such as a mosaic or mural, based on a student/community design competition,
 - o More playful stairs,
 - o More shade and greenery,
 - o Larger windows;

- Create a gallery, in partnership with Arlington Art Center, to feature temporary and permanent exhibits (wrap around Auditorium).

AMENITIES

A number of supporting features were identified that would make the plaza more comfortable and allow for use during different times of the day and in various weather conditions. These amenities support the activities that will take place in the plaza and should be considered in the design phase.

- Comfortable seating for studying;
- Sitting or kneeling walls;
- A water fountain or wall to help dampen the noise of the outdoor space, enliven the plaza, and attract people into the space. An eye-catching and iconic feature, such as landscaping, an archway or public art, also could help people remember the plaza and give them an image to associate it with;
- Canopies, umbrellas, a gazebo, pergolas, or tensile structures to provide protection from rain and sun;
- Food kiosks/vending carts, newspaper stand and ticket booth;
- Game boards and equipment (e.g., giant chess);
- Carefully consider plaza lighting, so it is not offensive to neighbors and enhances nighttime safety;
- Provide electrical outlets and Wi-Fi access;
- Outdoor heating;
- Public restrooms;
- Podium that portrays the plaza as a place for intellectual exchange;

- Water system for landscape irrigation;
- In-ground anchors for tent poles;
- Amenities that also provide places for children to play;
- Rock Climbing.

LANDSCAPING

Various landscape treatments were recommended during the workshop that would help make the plaza a beautiful place. Plantings can also be functional by providing shade and defining space.

- The tree grid and the raised grass area, as designed, impedes flexible use of space and views through the plaza. The location of the trees should be modified, along with the use of other means of providing shade, so as not to preclude flexible use of the plaza;
- Ensure trees that are planted are mature;
- Use landscaping to provides color, visual interest, and beauty and to create soft edges between different “rooms” of the plaza;
- Include both permanent and seasonal plantings.

ART/AESTHETICS

In addition to landscaping, various forms of art could be used to beautify the space, which in turn would celebrate the extensive artistic talent of George Mason University faculty and students and the community. Consistent with the role of this plaza as a unifying space, art appeals to a very diverse audience.

- Convey the Mason identity through art installations and

banners;

- Add color to the plaza design using awnings, umbrellas, furnishings, lighting and flowers;
- Incorporate rotating and permanent sculpture and public art into the plaza design;
- Consider artistic paving patterns and mosaics of different colors to define spaces.

SIGNAGE AND INFORMATION

- Provide banners and signs to convey Mason identity;
- Announce events on pedestrian-scale electronic signage or an announcement board out in the plaza. A community bulletin board could also be provided for listing announcements such as housing opportunities and off-campus events;
- Advertise bookstore and lobby café to let people know they are there and to invite customers in from the community;
- Staff an information desk and provide a bulletin board inside the café lobby that is geared more towards internal University announcements and communication;
- Use signs, art, and graphics to improve aesthetics and wayfinding in the parking garage.

PLAZA ACCESS OPPORTUNITIES

Access and linkages to and from the plaza are essential to its success. Being an urban campus, it is important to maximize the ease of travel and comfort of pedestrians, bicyclist, and transit riders. The following were identified as plaza design improvements that would do just that.

- Make the utility alley an active and walkable space;
- Locate the elevators and stairs to the parking garage in an accessible and convenient location;
- Install crosswalks to planned residential development and Kenmore Street across Fairfax Drive;
- Plaza should be accessible by wheelchairs and people walking their bicycles. Therefore, the plaza should be designed at-grade or ramps should be provided near all entrances;
- Provide showers and locker rooms for cyclists.

OPERATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The following recommendations were raised for the benefit of Campus Operations, and all other entities responsible for managing this public space. These operational activities and services are essential to supporting the programmed and spontaneous uses of the plaza.

- Provide tent structures to rent for private events;
- Maintain a security presence;
- Consider longer food service hours (nights and weekends) and retail uses that the community and students may need, such as shoe repair;
- Provide opportunities for child care to accommodate campus' older students;
- Provide a pet-permissive space and provide dog-friendly amenities, such as water and bags for waste.

OFF-CAMPUS ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Although not directly under the control or purview of this



planning project, the following would make the plaza more accessible, attractive and connected. Arlington County, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and George Mason University could work together to make these improvements.

Pedestrian Environment:

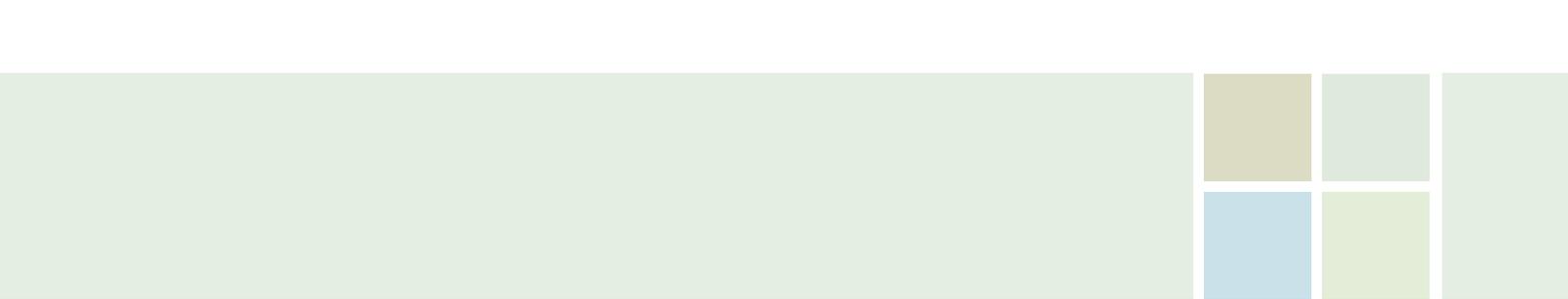
- Enhance wayfinding signage in the neighborhood to help the community find the plaza;
- Elevate the importance of pedestrian safety by lengthening pedestrian crossing times at nearby intersections (e.g., N. Jackson to Fairfax only provides 12 seconds!).

Transit Enhancements:

- Encourage students to use public transit, by including monthly transit passes in the Student Activity Fee; improving the pedestrian experience from the Clarendon Metro station; and creating a new Metro entrance/exit closer to campus on the east side of the Virginia Square station;
- Locate existing and future bus stops around the plaza. The workshop participants could not identify any existing stops in the vicinity;
- Provide a bus connection to the Fairfax campus to help unite the “Mason Nation;”
- Provide a shuttle bus along Fairfax Drive to connect to the Roslyn Metro station (blue line).

Bicycle Amenities:

- Install bicycle racks and lockers at the Virginia Square Metro station.



NEXT STEPS

Project for Public Spaces was brought into the plaza design process by Arlington County and George Mason University to solicit information from project stakeholders that would help ensure the creation of a successful new space—heavily used by the university and the community. Now that PPS has engaged the intended users and managers of the plaza and understands what they would like to see and do in the plaza, PPS can begin to incorporate this stakeholder input into an updated plaza design.

Over the next few weeks, PPS will map out the desired uses and activities that were identified in the workshops and stakeholder meetings. There will naturally be some areas permanently designed for more passive and quiet pursuits. Other areas will be identified for actively programmed staged events, fairs, and celebrations. This space will require flexibility and the amenities to support each individual event. With respect to these former plaza spaces and the current plaza design, PPS will also begin to think about how art and landscaping should be used throughout the plaza.

PPS will then collaborate with the architects for George Mason University to discuss the design changes that are necessary for the plaza to meet the needs of project stakeholders and become a worthy investment of public funds. The recommendations that PPS makes will draw from the workshop findings and best practices for designing and managing public plazas. For the benefit of the burgeoning university

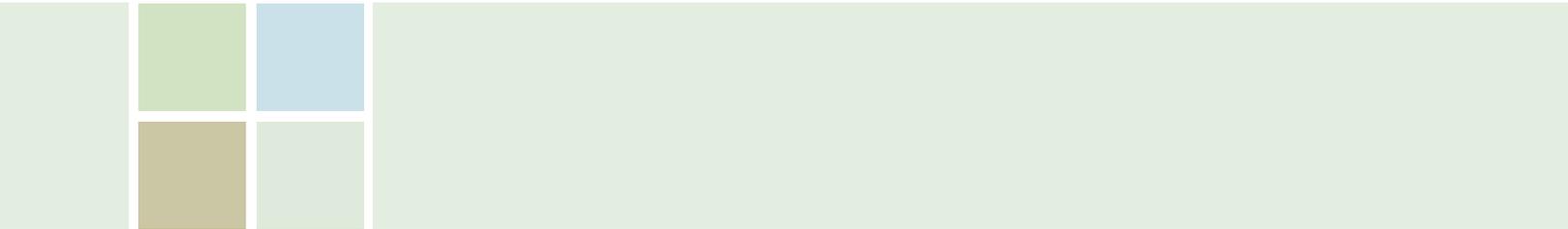
that will surround this new plaza, and the host community of Virginia Square, this final design must reflect the challenges and opportunities recognized by the participants of this public workshop.

This workshop summary will be sent to all registered workshop attendees via email. Additionally, George Mason University may host an Information Center in November to show the final plan to university and community stakeholders.



APPENDIX A: WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

Julia Abrahams
Gabriela Acurio, *Arlington County Manager's Office*
Angela Anderson Adams, *Arlington County PRCR Cultural Affairs - Public Art*
Tarikua Alemayehu, *ECDC - Enterprise Development Group*
Dan Barrett
Richard A. Barton, *Retired*
Valdete Berisha, *International Food Policy Research Institute*
Tom Calhoun, *George Mason University*
Josh Cantor, *George Mason University*
Jennifer L. Capone, *Arlington County*
Rita K. Chow, *National Council on Aging*
Rosemary Ciotti, *Accessible Living, Inc.*
Lori D. Cohen, *George Mason University*
Cynthia A. Connolly, *Ellipse Arts Center/Arlington Cultural Affairs*
David Cook, *Virginia Square Condominium*
Sherry Cook, *Virginia Square Condominium*
Benn Crandall, *George Mason University*
Ronald Crueker, *St. George's Church*
Lawrence D. Czarda, *George Mason University*
Stephen Davies, *Project for Public Spaces*
Michael Derenzo, *George Mason University - School of Public Policy Student Association*
Rich Dooley, *Arlington County - Planning Division*
Renee Espiau, *Project for Public Spaces*
Peter Charles Fallon, *Arlington County Planning Commission*
Barbara Favola, *Arlington County Board*
Jay Fiset, *Arlington County Board*
John Dashiell French, *Department of Defense*
Robert A. Gibson, *Arlington County Department of Environmental Services*
Christine Gill
David J. Goodman, *Arlington County Department of Environmental Services - Transportation Planning*
Torrey Hairston, *Arlington Economic Development*
Alan Hantman, *Project for Public Spaces*
Mary Hashemi, *Resident*
Francesca Benedette Holzheimer, *George Mason University - School of Public Policy Alumni Chapter*
Terry Holzheimer, *Arlington Economic Development*
Mary H. Hynes, *Lyon Village Resident; Executive Director of Bowen McCauley Dance*
Jennifer Ives, *Arlington Economic Development*
Jennifer Jenkins, *The Alma Mater*
Renee Jennings, *George Mason University - Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution*
Norma Kaplan, *Arlington Cultural Affairs*
Leroy Lafleur, *George Mason University*
Tom Lauria, *Hyde Park Condominium*
Daniela Matarazzo, *George Mason University*
Scott McGeary, *George Mason University*
Judy Meade, *George Mason University*
Thomas H. Miller, *Arlington County*
Jim Miller, *George Mason University*
Robert Nashed, *SmithGroup Architects*
Karen Newman, *George Mason University - School of Law*
Cynthia Nikitin, *Project for Public Spaces*
Silva Pecini, *George Mason University*
Carol Ann Perovshek, *Arlington County Department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources*
Karen Pirhalla, *George Mason University - Campus Operations*
Albert Rivers, *Resident*
Jack Royer, *Arlington Learning in Retirement Institute*
Carol Silverberg, *Virginia Square Condominium*
Jennifer Smith, *Arlington County - Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development*
Pamela Spofford, *Resident*
John Sprott, *Arlington Learning in Retirement Institute*
Stanley E. Taylor, *George Mason University*
Walter Tejada, *Arlington County Board*
Nancy Toney, *Citizen*
Karen Vasquez, *Arlington Economic Development*
Sindy Yeh, *Arlington Economic Development*
Chris Zimmerman, *Arlington County Board*



APPENDIX B: WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Group 1 (Arrival Zone)

USES/ACTIVITIES FOR ARRIVAL ZONE:

- Provide seating at the plaza entrance, possibly through the use of stairs
- Create a drop-off area on Fairfax Drive where cars are currently parked on the street
- Provide lighting for those waiting to be picked up
- Install bicycle racks
- Create clear lines of sight (1) into the plaza from the street and (2) from the plaza to the street
- Install functional art
- Create areas to congregate at plaza entrance
- Provide area for orators
- Provide electrical outlets and Wi-Fi access

USES/ACTIVITIES FOR CENTRAL PLAZA:

- Lectures
- Concerts (e.g., Music al Fresco)
- Book sales and signings
- Rotating exhibits
- Outdoor reading room
- Commencement/ceremonies
- Markets

ACCESS/LINKAGES:

- Plaza should be lowered to eliminate barriers
- Provide all entrances at sidewalk level
- Design the plaza at-grade in order to be inviting
- Don't design features that divide the plaza
- Build sitting or kneeling walls
- Build a ramp connection between Hazel Hall and the Plaza
- Provide convenient parking garage access
- Connect plaza to Washington Boulevard and other parts of Virginia Square
- Improve pedestrian crossing of Fairfax Drive

COMFORT/IMAGE:

- Provide movable seating
- Convey the Mason identity through art installations and banners
- Design covered shelters in the plaza to protect from sun and rain
- Carefully consider plaza lighting
- Plant inviting landscaping
- Maintain a security presence
- Widen sidewalk to become part of the at-grade plaza and be inviting to the community

SOCIABILITY:

- Create gathering place for students and community with seating and shade
- Include fountains in plaza design
- Include close, cozy spaces for gathering
- Provide food kiosks
- Allow visitors to play games (e.g., giant chess)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR VIRGINIA SQUARE COMMUNITY:

- Offer classes and classroom space in surrounding buildings and/or plaza
- Provide educational opportunities
- Provide entertainment
- Publicly advertise events with bulletin boards
- Plaza has potential to "link" the Virginia Square Community

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GMU:

- Plaza should become a gathering spot that fosters interaction between academic departments and schools
- Provide better GMU exposure to the community

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS:

- Ballston-Virginia Square Partnership

- BP
- Arlington Art Center
- GMU Arts Department (Fairfax Campus)
- Arlington Green Home Choice Program – LEED consultation on recycled materials, solar, sustainable landscaping, etc.
- Nature Conservancy
- Pilot Club of Arlington

Group 2 (Central Plaza/Auditorium)

USES/ACTIVITIES:

- Program lectures and presentations that relate to Mason curricula
- Host executive educational events and conferences
- Provide amenities for relaxing between meetings and classes
- Provide food kiosks, newspaper stand, and ticket booth
- Enliven the space with a water feature
- Allow for games
- Provide electrical outlets and Wi-Fi access
- Design a space that is functional both during the day and at night
- Open up Auditorium events to the outdoor plaza
- Schedule weekend markets
- Provide space for student and faculty performances
- Use the Auditorium as a TV studio
- Program concerts, but not late at night
- Schedule outdoor movies

ACCESS/LINKAGES:

- Connect the plaza to the buildings and allow building uses to spill into the plaza
- Use windows to improve the connection between indoors and out
- Redesign the dead space between the Auditorium, the plaza and Fairfax Drive

- Provide at-grade access to the plaza from Fairfax Drive
- Install crosswalks to planned residential development and Kenmore Street across Fairfax Drive
- Create a new Metro entrance/exit closer to campus on the east side of the Virginia Square station
- Provide benches along Fairfax Drive and in front of the parking garage stairs
- Design more playful steps that curve along the front of the plaza
- Deepen front steps so they can also serve as seating (e.g., Spanish steps)

COMFORT/IMAGE:

- Install statues, possibly of George Mason
- Put up cloth Mason banners
- Announce events through pedestrian-scale electronic signage or an announcement board
- Add color to the plaza design using umbrellas, lighting and flowers
- Hold a student design competition for ideas to improve the aesthetics of the south wall of the Auditorium and invite in the community, possibly with a mosaic like that at Reagan National Airport (could temporarily use a banner)
- Install diffused lighting that is not offensive to community neighbors
- Provide shade and greenery for hot days, especially on south side of Auditorium rather than near the Law School
- Build a podium that portrays the plaza as a place for intellectual exchange
- Brand the plaza in a way that relates to the three academic programs on campus

Maintain a security presence at night

SOCIABILITY:

- Program activities to attract people and create a vibrant plaza
- Provide for uses that include the community at-large
- Invite in people to patronize the businesses and attend

lectures and performances

- Advertise book store and café to neighbors across Fairfax Drive
- Soften views and spaces (concave, curvilinear steps in front)
- Provide places to sit
- Provide security for safety but not to discourage visitors
- Too much Mason signage may make the plaza less inviting to community members

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ROLE OF THE PLAZA:

- Become the Mason Quad for the three academic programs
- Provide green space
- Serve as a stopping-off point
- Cultural and educational center linked to Mason activities and programs
- Congregation place (not noisy or expensive like local restaurants or bars)
- Outdoor “living room”

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS:

- Ballston-Virginia Square Partnership
- Ballston-Virginia Square Civic Association
- Clarendon Alliance
- Arlington Art Center
- GMU Office of University Life & Academic Services
- GMU Campus Operations
- Arlington County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources
- Arlington Learning in Retirement Institute
- Arlington Sister City Association
- Washington Lee High School
- FDIC
- St. Charles Catholic School and Church
- Condominium Associations
- YMCA

Group 3 (Central Plaza/Law School)

USES/ACTIVITIES:

- Create both quiet and lively spaces
- Provide places to sit, people watch, eat lunch and meet friends
- Create an outdoor reading room and study area
- Create an outdoor labyrinth that serves as a meditation, yoga or Tai Chi area away from the plaza’s other uses
- Set up a Legal Aid day in the plaza and invite the community
- Schedule periodic outdoor events, including art and antique shows
- Provide a festival space for cultural events, diversity day, neighborhood day, and student celebrations
- Allow for an outdoor classroom, possibly in the Law School arcade that considers acoustics and can accommodate smaller classes
- Tree grid, as designed, impedes flexible use of space and views through the plaza
- Space needs to be as flexible as possible to accommodate greatest number of uses
- Activity in buildings should spill out into the plaza
- Hold ceremonies and small receptions
- Allow vending carts that sell ethnic foods and other out-of-the-ordinary offerings
- Institute a vending award for entrepreneurship
- Include retail uses that the community needs, such as shoe repair
- Provide opportunities for child care to accommodate campus’ older students
- Provide Wi-Fi access
- Use space for summer camp for children and seniors

ACCESS/LINKAGES:

- Plaza should be accessible by wheelchairs and people walking their bicycles
- Include hand rails for elderly and disabled

- Provide a public access linkage to Washington Boulevard through the plaza
- Make the utility alley an active and walkable space
- Improve the pedestrian experience from the Clarendon Metro station
- Enhance wayfinding signage in the neighborhood to help community find the plaza
- Encourage students to use public transit, possibly by including monthly transit passes as a part of the Student Activity Fee
- Plan existing and future bus stops around the plaza
- Provide a bus connection to the Fairfax campus
- Provide shuttle bus along Fairfax Drive to connect to Rosslyn Metro station (blue line)
- Install bicycle racks and lockers at the Virginia Square Metro station
- Provide showers and locker room for cyclists
- Protect sightlines into center of plaza

COMFORT/IMAGE:

- Plaza is an opportunity to provide an identity for GMU in Arlington
- Use banners to brand University buildings
- Design seating to be comfortable
- Infuse the plaza with color (via flowers and furnishings) to add visual interest
- Include both permanent and seasonal plantings
- Ensure trees are mature
- Design for warmth in winter season
- Install a water fountain or wall to help dampen the noise of the outdoor space and bring people together
- Deepen and flatten front steps to be more inviting
- Invite people into the space with an eye-catching and iconic feature, such as landscaping, an archway, a water feature or public art, that people will remember and associate with the plaza
- Provide protection from rain and sun with canopies, umbrellas, a gazebo, or pergolas
- Make the Law School the focal point of the plaza—Circle in

the Square

- Provide public restrooms

SOCIABILITY:

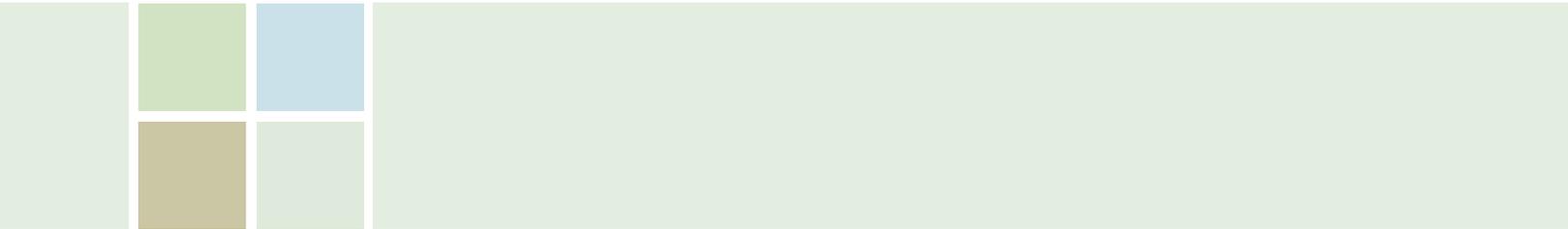
- Plaza serves as the University’s “front door,” so it should invite people in and allow for seamless interaction between students and community users
- Advertise bookstore and café in lobby to invite people in from the sidewalk and street
- Design movable and circular seating to encourage group communication
- Program activities that will draw people
- Integrate the plaza with the community
- Include the plaza in a local cultural history walking book (along with Judson’s Shoe Repair shop in Clarendon who used to be very close to the plaza site)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ROLE OF THE PLAZA:

- Elevate the history of Virginia Square – historic shopping center name, previous location of Kahn Department Store
- Serve as a gateway into the Mason urban campus
- Create a sense of place and identity for both Mason and surrounding community

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS:

- Student Groups
- Clarendon Alliance
- FDIC
- Arlington County Government
- Civic Groups
- Condo Associations
- Local Theatrical Groups
- Movie vendor (Eric Sommer) who does the “Hang ‘Em High” movie nights – his number is available from the Clarendon Alliance (703-812-8881), Rosslyn Renaissance, or Crystal City BID



Group 4 (Arcade/Lobby Zone)

USES/ACTIVITIES FOR ARCADE/LOBBY:

- Integrating space for children playing and parents to shop and have coffee (coffee shop open all day, not just in evening)
- Create a “living room” with couches, outlets, coffee tables on west side of café lobby/arcade
- Eating area (healthy food) and chess tables on east side of café lobby and in Law School arcade (open to plaza with garage doors or folding glass doors)
- Provide adaptable seating and tables for study groups and class discussions
- Maintain an information desk and University bulletin board inside the café lobby
- Provide Wi-Fi access

USES/ACTIVITIES FOR CENTRAL PLAZA:

- Lower grass area to allow for temporary activities (ice rink in winter, carousel)
- Eliminate trees to provide a more flexible space
- Create a gallery, in partnership with a new University curator and Arlington Art Center, to feature temporary and permanent exhibits (possibly wrap around Auditorium)
- Bring food carts (e.g., ice cream and pretzels) out into plaza
- Build a rock climbing wall
- Hold outdoor BBQs
- Program lectures, educational events and press events in the plaza
- Set up welcome receptions and orientations in central plaza and invite the community
- Weekend craft and farmers markets
- Bring retail uses out into the plaza
- Provide for impromptu music performances and musical concerts
- “Movie Nights” with movie showings and discussion
- Host Arlington Restaurant Fairs – “Taste of Arlington”

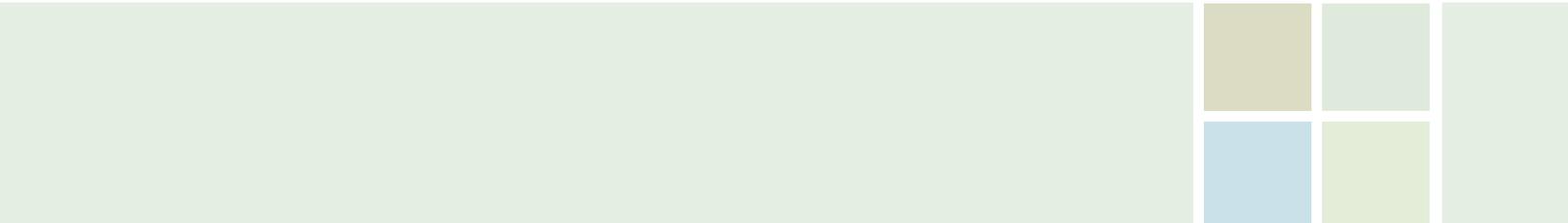
- Organize poetry readings
- Create a semi-private space on the Law School edge (Happy Hours)

ACCESS/LINKAGES:

- Install a crosswalk across Fairfax Drive at N. Kenmore St. to invite people into plaza
- Lengthen pedestrian crossing times (e.g., N. Jackson to Fairfax only provides 12 seconds!)
- Improve access into the Auditorium (not near stage)
- Provide a public access linkage to Washington Boulevard through the plaza
- Widen front stairs and possibly put tables on them
- Create soft edges between uses using landscaping

COMFORT/IMAGE:

- Provide shade
- Use plantings to create natural “rooms in the plaza”
- Use paving art and mosaics of different colors to define spaces
- Project art work or paint a mural on southern Auditorium wall
- Showcase public art inside café lobby
- Install art in the underground parking lot
- Incorporate sculpture into plaza design
- Use awnings to add color to the plaza
- Design sensitive lighting that ensures security and pedestrian safety
- Install a water feature
- Provide outdoor heating (heat lamps)
- Rent tent structures for enclosed events
- Provide comfortable seats for studying
- As designed, the south wall of the Auditorium would be an uncomfortably hot place to hang out during the summer
- Design a dog-friendly space
- Make the plaza “green”



SOCIABILITY:

- Offer longer food service hours (nights and weekends)
- Design adaptable spaces that allow for different uses and evolve over time
- Provide lots of tables and chairs
- Create a grassy area
- Is the entire plaza non-smoking? Are there smoking areas?
- Weekday events should be quiet, and weekend activities can be more active and include children
- Create a balance between spontaneous and programmed events
- Program events to connect students in various departments
- Maintain a community bulletin board (housing, events) out in plaza

OPPORTUNITIES FOR VIRGINIA SQUARE COMMUNITY:

- Place for community to socialize
- Place for vendors to sell products
- Venue for dialogue of interest to community
- Extend new Fairfax Drive Farmers Market to new plaza (physically and programmatically)
- Schedule Community events from Thursday night through Sunday night

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GMU:

- Brand the GMU campus and increase its visibility in the community (advertising, banners)
- Integrate GMU campus and community
- Promote University research, programs and staff to community
- Build community partnerships
- Schedule University events during the week

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS:

- GMU Alumni Association

- Ballston-Virginia Square Partnership
- Clarendon Alliance
- St. Charles Catholic School and Church
- Arlington Learning in Retirement Institute
- Ellipse Art Center
- Poet Sylvana Straw (Washington, DC)
- Artist Brece Honeycutt (Washington, DC)
- GMU Small Business Development Center
- Community Groups
- Student Organizations
- GMU Art Department (Fairfax Campus)
- Fair Organizers



APPENDIX C: PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- Arlington Art Center
- Arlington County
- Arlington County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources
- Arlington Green Home Choice Program – LEED consultation on recycled materials, solar, sustainable landscaping, etc.
- Arlington Learning in Retirement Institute
- Arlington Sister City Association
- Ballston-Virginia Square Civic Association
- Ballston-Virginia Square Partnership
- Brece Honeycutt (Artist - Washington, DC)
- Clarendon Alliance
- Condominium Associations
- Ellipse Art Center
- Eric Sommer (movie vendor) who does the “Hang ‘Em High” movie nights
- Fair Organizers
- Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)
- Mason Alumni Associations
- Mason Arts Department (Fairfax Campus)
- Mason Campus Operations
- Mason Office of University Life & Academic Services
- Mason Small Business Development Center
- Mason Student Organizations
- Nature Conservancy
- Pilot Club of Arlington
- St. Charles Catholic School and Church
- Sylvana Straw (Poet - Washington, DC)
- Theatrical Groups
- Washington Lee High School
- YMCA