Courthouse Square Planning and Urban Design Study

Context Area

Courthouse Metro Station Area
1. Circulation

2. Open Space

3. Buildings

4. Cultural Resources

5. Sustainability
1. 1,000 Residents and Businesses
   3 workshops, 2 surveys, 30 interviews

2. 17 Working Group meetings

3. 25 Advisory Group presentations

4. 100+ Interdepartmental meetings

5. Cooper Robertson + Partners, NYC
   Planning & Urban Design Consultants
Courthouse Square – Concept Plan ‘Big Ideas’

1. 21st Century Civic Square
The future Courthouse Square will be a network of interconnected open spaces that can support a wide variety of existing and future events. The Square will be the heart of Arlington and serve as a primary gathering space and activity center for the community. A new parking garage below the new Square will accommodate parking needs for existing and future uses in Courthouse Square and the current surface parking lot will be replaced with community-serving open space.

2. Central Metro Access
Multi-modal transit accessibility is a major theme for the concept plan. A new, centrally-located Metro access point will provide a welcoming entrance and serve as a highly visible landmark for residents, workers and visitors.
Courthouse Square – Concept Plan ‘Big Ideas’

3. Shared Streets
The Square will be surrounded by diverse, walkable streetscapes that are the fundamental elements of lively placemaking. Shared streets within Courthouse Square will help connect open spaces to the buildings and pedestrian activities in the area. 15th Street North and 14th Street North are envisioned as shared streets that are uniquely designed to accommodate vehicles and transit, while providing priority to pedestrians and promoting safety.

4. Courthouse Square Promenade
The extension of a key pedestrian connection between Wilson Boulevard and 14th Street North will create a vibrant promenade and connect the Square both physically and visually to activities on Wilson and Clarendon Boulevards, Metro, quality open spaces, County facilities, local businesses and surrounding neighborhoods. The promenade, which will be predominantly hardscape and tree-lined, will serve as an extension of the open spaces and is an ideal location for strolling, browsing farmers’ market stalls and participating in community events.
Courthouse Square – Concept Plan ‘Big Ideas’

5. Symbolic Civic Building - South Square
The South Square is in a prominent location that will both visually and physically define the south edge of Courthouse Square and contribute to overall placemaking through both architectural design and the introduction of County, civic, cultural and/or market uses. The potential for a future prominent County government facility in this location could serve as a focal point, either as a facility that is solely devoted to highly-accessible community functions or integrated with other compatible civic and cultural activities.

6. Verizon Plaza Redevelopment
The existing Verizon Plaza has seen little use in the last several years due to its design, shadows and location. This plan realizes the plaza site as a new development that will contribute to and further the goals of Courthouse Square and help activate 14th Street North and the Square with potential cultural, residential or office uses.
Courthouse Square – Concept Plan ‘Big Ideas’

7. County Administration Building
A key charge for the Study was to examine the future location and building massing for a County administration building. The location of the County administration building adjacent to the promenade and 14th Street North, and on axis with the Judicial Center, provides a prominent location with entrances located on the Square. This building will support the symbolic civic building located on the South Square.

8. Enhanced Pedestrian Connection at North Veitch Street and 14th Street North
An improved connection to Courthouse Plaza from the south will ease and enrich the pedestrian experience in an area with topographical challenges. This connection will be accessible to all and include elevator access, stairs and/or escalators. The arrival point will connect with the Veitch Street terrace, a proposed element in the open space network.
9. Cultural and Civic Facilities
Cultural and civic facilities have the ability enliven and enrich the Courthouse Square experience and create a destination. A number of locations within Courthouse Square could accommodate cultural uses ranging from a museum to a performing arts venue.

10. Sustainability
Sustainable elements are critical to Courthouse Square and the future 21st century civic square. Creative and responsible sustainability solutions are embraced in every aspect of design and planning for the area and serve as a model for development throughout Arlington.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Implementation Actions</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Implementing Agency</th>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Funding Sources</th>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Adopt the 2015 Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum.</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>CPHD</td>
<td>County Board Action</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Amend the General Land Use Plan amendments.</td>
<td>ST - Post adoption</td>
<td>CPHD</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Develop a comprehensive phasing plan for the redevelopment of Courthouse Square, including County facilities, other buildings, open spaces and streets.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>CPHD, DPR, AED, DES</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Facilitate the development of committed affordable housing units through bonus density.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>CPHD</td>
<td>Special Exception</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Ensure residential development is consistent with the goals, objectives and policies in the Arlington County Affordable Housing Master plan (Adopted XX, 2015).</td>
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<td>CPHD</td>
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<td>Ensure that proposed projects meet the County’s goals and targets for affordable housing.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>CPHD</td>
<td>Special Exception</td>
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<td>Use affordable housing financing tools.</td>
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<td>Encourage construction and occupation of accessible units.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>CPHD</td>
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<td>Initiate a study of certain context area sites, including the Four Courts and Colonial Place blocks, Courthouse Plaza and the Judicial Center Plaza.</td>
<td>ST</td>
<td>CPHD</td>
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Courthouse Square – Next Steps

May
5 – Working Group #17
19 – Clarendon Courthouse Civic Association

June
4 – Additional Civic Associations
17 – Community Open House

July – September
Request to Advertise, Transportation Commission, Planning Commission, County Board
Question + Answer
Courthouse Square Recommendations – Circulation
Circulation – Key Recommendations

1.1 Metro Entrance
Visibility and access to and from the Metro system should be improved. A more prominent and central access into the Court House Metro station should be constructed adjacent to the existing elevator on the Square.

1.2 15th Street North
The character of 15th Street North should be changed to prioritize pedestrians, bicycles and pedestrians. 15th Street North should be reconstructed between North Veitch Street and North Courthouse Road to be a low-speed street that prioritizes pedestrians and allows for safe sharing of the space amongst the many users.
Circulation – Key Recommendations

1.3 North Courthouse Road
North Courthouse Road should be reconfigured to provide bicycle lanes that connect Wilson and Clarendon Boulevard bicycle facilities to the Arlington Boulevard Trail.

1.4 14th Street North
The character of 14th Street North should be reconstructed between North Veitch Street and North Courthouse Road to be a low-speed street that prioritizes pedestrians and allows for safe sharing of the space amongst the users of the street.

1.5 Clarendon & Wilson Boulevards
The boulevards should be reconstructed to expand sidewalks and outdoor dining areas, improve bicycle lanes and maintain adequate travel and parking lanes for vehicles.

1.6 The Promenade – between Clarendon Boulevard & 15th Street North
North Uhle Street should be reconstructed to be a curbless pedestrian promenade with distinctive paving materials, lighting and landscaping.

1.7 The Promenade – between 15th Street North & 14th Street North
A curbless pedestrian promenade with distinctive paving materials, lighting and landscaping should be constructed.
Circulation – Key Recommendations

1.8 Transit
Transit stops and bus layover areas on Wilson Boulevard, Clarendon Boulevard and 15th Street North should be expanded and raised to enable easier bus boarding and alighting, and new passenger shelters and amenities should be installed.

1.9 Parking
A new below-grade parking garage should be designed and built in close collaboration with the future open space, access to the nearby County buildings, a potential district energy system, and historic trees.

1.10 Pedestrian
Conditions for pedestrian connectivity, safety and accessibility should be improved as part of all street and building projects. Particular attention should be given to providing sidewalks that are of adequate clear width and free of uneven surfaces or other obstructions to pedestrian travel.

1.11 Bicycle
Bicycling through the Courthouse Square area should be made safer and more convenient through appropriate marking of on-street bicycle lanes on primary streets including Wilson and Clarendon Boulevards, North Courthouse Road and North Veitch Street. Existing bicycle amenities and pathways should be enhanced.

1.12 Curbside Uses
Curbside space should be prioritized and managed to accommodate transit transfers, carshare parking, bikeshare parking, deliveries, taxis and allow for passenger pickup and drop-off.

1.13 Transportation Demand Management
Transportation Demand Management (TDM) practices should be optimized, and should include, but not be limited to: increasing transit service and quality, provision of a full-time Commuter Store or kiosk, additional transportation information displays, financial services for non-motorized travel and appropriate parking pricing, encouraging and enabling greater use of all the transportation options that exist in the Courthouse Square area while moderating the use of private automobiles and associated vehicular parking.
1.14 Metro Entrance
A new entrance to the Metro station at the northwest corner of the Square adjacent to the existing Plaza elevator should be constructed.

1.15 15th Street North
A below-grade, vehicular connection under 15th Street North, at either the G-1 or G-2 levels, that links the Landmark Block parking garage to the County’s parking garage below the Square should be constructed.

1.16 North Courthouse Road
A vehicular access point to the north end of the County’s parking garage via an entrance from North Courthouse Road should be provided.

1.17 14th Street North
A connection between the existing Verizon Plaza parking garage to the new Courthouse Square parking garage via a vehicular or pedestrian passage under 14th Street North should be evaluated.

1.18 Clarendon and Wilson Boulevards
The existing Metro station pedestrian connections under Wilson Boulevard at Colonial Place should be enhanced. Signage and other features should be added to achieve greater visibility and accessibility.

1.19 North Uhle Street between Clarendon Boulevard and 15th Street North
The existing Metrorail station entrance under the Strayer Block should be maintained and enhanced.

1.20 North Uhle Street between 15th Street North & 14th Street North
Vehicular and pedestrian circulation through the new County parking garage that parallels North Uhle Street and connects to Metro access and the Square should be provided as part of the garage design.

1.21 Transit
The new Metro station entrance should be designed and constructed in a manner that enables direct pedestrian connections between the Metro station, adjacent bus stops and the new County parking garage.
Courthouse Square Recommendations – Open Space
Open Space – Key Recommendations

2.1 The Central Square
The elimination of the current parking lot, by the relocation of the parking to an underground structure, will allow for full redevelopment of the parking lot into Arlington’s premier public open space. The Central Square, which is approximately 2 acres in size, should be designed to accommodate a variety of recreational activities, public events and gatherings and will be comprised of the following two distinct areas.

2.1a The Memorial Grove
The character of the Memorial Grove should provide for a diverse landscape and pedestrian experience and include garden paths with sitting areas, and a grove of new trees planted around the existing Memorial Trees.

2.1b The Lawn
This area is envisioned as the “front lawn” of Courthouse Square and the community. A central lawn area that extends between the Memorial Grove and the South Square civic building will allow for a central gathering place that can accommodate a range of active and passive uses.
Open Space – Key Recommendations

2.2 The South Square
The South Square is in a prominent location that will both visually and physically define the south edge of the civic square and contribute to Courthouse Square’s overall placemaking through both architectural design and the introduction of County, civic, cultural and/or market uses. Open space at the front (north side) of the building should be integrated with the North Square open space so that events and activities can overflow into both spaces. The topography and drainage of Courthouse Square slopes south towards 14th Street North, creating a unique opportunity to incorporate sustainable design and stormwater management into the South Square.
Open Space – Key Recommendations

2.3 The Promenade
The promenade is primarily a pedestrian space that excludes vehicular access with an exception for special events, loading or emergencies. It is envisioned to serve as an extension of the open space and provide flexibility for both programmed and unprogrammed activities.
Open Space – Key Recommendations

2.4 Metro Plaza
Metro Plaza will be an active open space that serves a variety of functions. Located at the terminal vista for Clarendon Boulevard, North Veitch Street and 15th Street North, the Plaza is envisioned to have a focal point element or design feature that is a landmark for identifying and attracting people to Courthouse Square. The Plaza design should provide the infrastructure to support a café, information kiosk, and/or public art that will anchor the space and create a visual identity for Courthouse.
Open Space – Key Recommendations

2.5 Veitch Terrace
The Veitch Terrace is planned as an elevated public terrace above North Veitch Street immediately north of 14th Street North. The Terrace will act as an extension of the Courthouse Square open space and accommodate pedestrian circulation into the Square from the south. The design should take advantage of the topography and incorporate a series of stairs, an elevator, and/or escalators to create a strong physical and visual connection to the Terrace. Landscaping and/or water features should be integrated with the stairs and terraces to encourage more use, and to improve the overall pedestrian experience.
Courthouse Square Recommendations – Building Recs
Buildings – Key Use Recommendations

3.1 Landmark Block
Residential, including affordable housing, office and/or hotel development.

3.2 Strayer Block
Residential, including affordable housing, office and/or hotel development.

3.3 Verizon Plaza
Civic, residential, including affordable housing, and/or office development.

3.4 Theater Site
Office, civic, entertainment and/or cultural uses. Underground levels may accommodate additional entertainment uses.

3.5 Court Square West
Civic and/or Cultural

3.6 South Square
County, civic, cultural and/or market uses that can take the form of a building or structure
Section 3, Buildings, contains building elements and recommendations related to building use, height, and special considerations for six potential development sites.

Reference to the County’s Affordable Housing Policy and Goals, including a brief discussion of the Affordable Housing Master Plan, is included in Section 3.

Residential uses, including affordable housing, are envisioned for three of the six development sites.

An additional section with implementation recommendations contains five draft implementation actions that relate to Housing:

- Facilitate the development of committed affordable housing units through bonus density.
- Ensure residential development is consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies in the Arlington County Affordable Housing Master Plan (Adopted XX, 2015).
- Ensure that proposed projects meet the County’s goals and targets for affordable housing.
- Use affordable housing financing tools.
- Encourage construction and occupation of accessible units.
Cultural Resources – Key Recommendations

4.1 Public Art
Arlington’s vision is that public art should be a force for placemaking — for creating strong, meaningful connections between people and places that are important to community and civic life. The County’s public art master plan, Public Art Public Spaces, calls for art projects in this area that could highlight Arlington’s civic traditions, particularly as they relate to its history and its emerging global context. In addition to permanent displays, temporary art installations, including interactive engagements with visitors to the site, integration with wayfinding and environmental sustainability strategies should be considered. Interactive artworks can encourage physical activity and play, as well as human connection. Installations and programming could include user-generated and participatory content.

This plan identifies seven major areas for the integration of public art, both permanent and temporary, including performances and educational and sustainable works.

4.2 Memorial Trees
It is recommended that the Mother’s and Soldier’s trees, which help to tell the history of this area and provide shade, habitat and a canopy, be preserved by limiting above and below grade soil disturbance and by incorporating them into a memorial grove. This area of the Square is the best suited for such a grove, as it is one of the sunniest corners of the Square and a grove in this location will screen views of and from the detention center.

4.3 The Farmers’ Market
The Courthouse Square farmers’ market has been in operation for 30 years and is the best attended regular event in the Courthouse area. It is recommended that the existing market be strengthened and enhanced. Physical improvements are just one part of the process of strengthening and enhancing the market. One potential option is to construct a flexible use market structure along the southern end of the Square to enhance the existing pop-up farmers’ market.
4.5 Views
One goal of this plan is preserve and enhance views to the Washington Monument, which is visible from the upper stories of many buildings surrounding the Square and from one location in the Square itself. In 1982, the County Board adopted a Resolution of Concern Regarding Building Heights Related to the National Capital Mall Axis to address the concerns of the National Capital Planning Commission over the height to structures in the area identified as the Mall Axis, including portions of Rosslyn, Clarendon, Virginia Square and Courthouse. The Arlington skyline is the backdrop for the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. Through meetings with the National Capital Planning Commission, staff has determined that a maximum building height of approximately 210 feet will not significantly impact the views from the National Mall.

4.6 Cultural/Civic Facility
The 1993 Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum called for the creation of a cultural facility in Courthouse and the 1995 Public Spaces Master Plan also identified the Courthouse Plaza area as the preferred site for a “multi-use centralized cultural center.” At this time, however, it has not been determined whether a cultural facility of any form or use is needed in this area. Consequently, this sector plan addendum update provides flexibility for the siting of a cultural facility or other cultural or civic resource in Courthouse Square, pending the outcome of a future cultural needs analysis. Possible uses which could be accommodated include the performing arts, a museum, a living heritage center and/or an expanded library. Staff has identified four likely locations, including the Verizon Plaza site, Court Square West, the theater site and the South Square, should a cultural facility ultimately be pursued in this area.
Courthouse Square Recommendations – Sustainability
Sustainability Elements

**Circulation**
Pedestrian Connections, bicycle friendly, transit friendly

**Open Space**
More trees, green and stormwater management

**Buildings**
LEED, energy standards, green roofs

**Cultural Resources**
Enhanced farmers’ market, preserved memorial trees

**Sustainability**
Energy, Stormwater Management