

Share Your Feedback on the 3901 N. Fairfax Drive Plaza Final Draft Design (27 Submissions)

What elements of the final draft design are you most looking forward to?

I'm looking forward to the increased planting area, the shade structure, the variety of seating and the patterned paving.

Green space, shade, an inviting space during the hot summers.

Trees and pollinator plants. NOTHING ELSE.

This is a very poor plan for a public open space in an urban area that has far too much pavement and impermeable surfaces.

Proposed Concept A in the initial design stated that hardscape would occupy 75% of the total area, while landscape would occupy 25% total area. Your presentation states that the public responses to the initial design showed a preference for "Natural elements such as trees and plantings for relief from the surrounding built environment" and "More planted areas versus paving".

Despite these public comments, the final design shows that hardscape will occupy 77% of the total area and landscape will occupy only 23% of the total area.

You have therefore adopted the average coverages of Concept A and Concept B, thus decreasing the landscaped area from the 25% in Concept A to 23%. You have disregarded public preferences and apparently adopted your own predetermined conclusion.

The design of this open space contradicts adopted County policies to make Arlington into a "Biophilic City". Most of its space is devoted to hardscape, rather than to landscape. This is very poor planning.

YOU HAVE MADE THIS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS INTO A FARCE. I WILL NOT VISIT THIS PUBLIC SPACE, WHICH HAS LITTLE THAT ATTRACTS ME.

Openness to a few additional ideas that are within the public preferences of the

September engagement.

I am most looking forward to the tree canopy. I think this is the key element for many reasons, far more important than games for example.

I am most looking forward to the lush landscaping. The scale of the plaza feels really comfortable and it will offer opportunities for gathering, and enjoying the outdoors either alone or with friends/family/colleagues. I think this will be a nice addition to Arlington, not only for residents but also for employees and visitors of the neighborhood.

Tree cover; tall plants that enrich the habitat, and create a pseudo-natural space; movable and artistic seating

1) green space

2) plants

3) quiet

4) minimal pavers, minimal hard services

5) passive non-interactive water feature

Use of native plants and pollinator/beneficial insect friendly plants and trees (actually, I could not read fine print on plant list in video but I think natives are pictured).

Trees and natural seating benches.

Shade structures. (Although they should be removable or openable during the cooler months to let the sun and warmth in.) The hardscape materials and benches look high quality too.

The shade and peaceful nature of the site. Like how the restaurant seating is integrated into the plaza. Will help enliven the space and make it more attractive to frequent.

While I like the open space and low profile of the design, I worry about the addition of people to an already crowded corridor and the extent to which it will exacerbate already too crowded local services and public resources like the

park, trails, etc.

Big Chessboard. Comfy seating outside library. Place to eat outside. Bike repair stand.

Berm designs, increased plantings, heavily influenced native plantings.

The plantings, seating options, and a nice, friendly "park" to spend some outdoor time on my lunch break.

art benches library book to reference back to library across the street

Shade, varied seating and the berms that help create separate but still visible public spaces.

Lots of seating areas with lots of shade, with some seating being movable. I really like the idea of the seasonally changing plants, though I don't know what kind of cost that adds. Also love the idea of a fountain

The trees and landscaping.

The yoga and Tai chi area and the landscaping.

Outdoor seating

Casual public seating that promotes chatting like round tables where you can sit with a friend and enjoy a coffee and company.

What, if any, opportunities do you see for improving the final draft design of this public plaza?

I believe we should continue to explore adding a sculptural water feature as noted in the first sets of options. A sculpture feature would add interest when the feature was waterless either due to the season or disrepair. While I appreciate the budget issue - in Dec. 2017 the County Manager formally declined the community benefit of the Black Box theatre in this project. In Oct. 2017 during the CM report at the 10/24/17 board meeting he stated there would be about \$1.5 million to be given to the County for community benefit in lieu of theatre. He said allocation of that money would come "closer to construction." The BVSCA may have thoughts about using the \$ for the arts component at Latitude - but perhaps some could go to including a water feature here. Given Skanska's new ownership I believe we're at a point where

the discussion of the allocation of the approx. \$1.5 million could be had.

Your presentation states that public comments showed that “There is interest in adding pollinator plants.” However, you have not added to your original planting list any species of plants that support pollinator insects . Further, you have not increased the space available for plantings of species that support pollinator insects.

The list of plantings in your final draft design presentation (08 Oct 2020, slide 15) is identical to the lists in your original concept plans. Again, you have disregarded public comments.

Therefore, change your proposed plantings, which slide 15, dated 08 Oct 2020, lists.

Your plantings need to include Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), which is not on your list.

Increase the size of the areas that contain pollinator plants. To accomplish this remove all grasses from your list of plantings.

Grasses support few insect species and no pollinators. Public space plans should not include plantings of grasses.

Some grasses are aggressive. They will displace the pollinator plants within a few years. They are very undesirable.

In 2016, the County Board adopted a "Monarch Pledge" in an attempt to restore the monarch butterfly, honeybee and other pollinator insect populations that the County's urban development has largely destroyed (see <http://countyboard.arlingtonva.us/monarch-pledge-day/>). Despite this, your planting list does not contain any milkweeds, which are the only plants that monarch caterpillars eat.

Your list of perennial plants must therefore include Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*). This is the only plant that supports monarch butterfly reproduction and that survives well in Arlington.

Remove all perennials from the list that are not excellent pollinator plants.

Consult with Alonzo Abugattas, who is the Natural Resources Manager for the Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation, to determine the best species of pollinator plants to use in each area of the open space. Follow his recommendations regarding the best pollinator plants for the Arlington area, which he has described at <http://midatlanticgardener.com/alonso-abugattas-native-plant-wildlife/>.

Mr. Abugattas' recommendations include the following perennials:

Goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.);

Asters (*Stymphyotrichum* spp.);

Milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.);

Sunflowers (*Helianthus* spp.);

Mr. Abugattas recommendations also include the following shrub:

Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*).

Your planting list contains none of the species that Mr. Abugattas recommends.

Also plant the following perennials:

Bee Balm (*Monarda*);

Joe Pye Weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*);

Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*);

Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)

Pollinator insects prefer each of the above plant species, all of which survive well in Arlington. Your planting list contains only Black-Eyed Susan.

Your planting list will do little to help pollinators. Some species of plants on your list attract few or no pollinators. Others will not survive for very long. Very few of your plants will help Arlington County achieve the goals of its "Monarch Pledge".

A natural water feature is possible, affordable, all-season, and would complete the plaza concept.

Creative lighting that does not include any up-lighting, and is below 4000K, is best for this natural space.

Permeable pavers preferable in open areas where other needs (maze and inside the arc) are not critical.

Ensuring movement of people within the space without having to be in each other's physical space. Lesson learned from the pandemic, which we don't know when it will end and have no idea about future pandemics.

Generally, I like mazes for children, but I am not sure that it is the right element for an elegant plaza and one of this size. I have seen mazes used in larger public spaces where kids have ample room to run around. I am not sure how much it will actually get used.

1) provide a buffer from Fairfax Drive: row of hedges/plants/trees

2) LESS PAVEMENT. You already ruined the Mosaic Park by paving over 50% of it. Arlington Orange Line corridor is severely lacking in green space.

3) no "artsy" benches. Nothing that will look dated in 5 years.

4) no space for homeless people to sleep, please.

5) no music,

6) NO DOGS: no dog barking, no dog pee on hard services, no dog pee ruining plants. No dog ----.

7) no skateboards

8) MORE GRASS, PLANTS, FOLIAGE. Shade.

Reduce impervious surfaces, changing to permeable wherever possible such as in walkways.

Use rain gardens and other plantings to control and limit water draining off property

Please prioritize the fountain. This is more useful than a small pergola for keeping the area cool and attracting birds, in addition to adding a focus and calming atmosphere. The fountain may not be in service during the coldest months, but then the pergola won't be needed at that time either. With water, this area could be a certified wildlife habitat. The fountain is more important than custom benches or other unusual, expensive features.

It feels like the layout of the dedicated outdoor dining area constrains the space in an awkward way. (Makes it feel too long and skinny.) Also, the outdoor dining seating at the back of the site (nearest the library) feels disconnected from the restaurant, and so will be less desirable for most customers. You may want to consider eliminating those tables and either reducing the dedicated outdoor area, or reconfiguring its shape to make it work better with the plaza. This is particularly important for when the times of the day when the restaurant isn't busy but the plaza is.

Also, the bike racks should not be tucked away on the NW corner of the block. I know they're physically not far from where the action is. But people on bikes think and behave more like pedestrians in urban settings, and they will do whatever is most convenient for them or feels safest. Most people on bikes will be coming up and down Fairfax Drive, so the bike racks should be on the Fairfax Drive frontage, or within say 20 ft. of it. Otherwise these racks will be unused and people will start chaining their bikes to trees.

Overall focus on maintenance issues. As noted when discussing a water feature, maintenance and the associated costs are important to consider. This is no different with plantings, seating, lighting and hardscape. The more

minimalistic the design is, the better. It will last longer and with lower costs.

Lose the cornhole. It doesn't fit in this plaza. No one wants to be eating and have a bean bag come flying by their head.

Timed lightening on in evening, but off at night. Light pollution.

I would like to point 2 design deficiencies that should be considered before starting the installation. First, the pergola design, in today's COVID spacing restricts the number of groups that may use it. Given that even after COVID passes, we'll continue to have existing fears of proximity, consider moving away from a central pergola to something that provides better isolation. As it pertains to this design, I have noticed that Oakland Park singular covered space / art display is limited to just one group at a time right now.

Additionally, I applaud the native plant designs, but notice a lack of extended bloom times on the species chosen (maybe the pcynanthemum is going to be the continual bloomer?). While it's a good step, and is certainly lower maintenance, an opportunity is missed for public engagement. People notice pollinators and subsequently notice the plants. Consider changes that would support more pollinators throughout the months when the space is used. S

I'd like to see a larger tie-in with the library across the street. Also, an entry and crosswalk from the Plaza to the 10th Street entrance of the library. Many people would take the path of least resistance and cross there, instead of walking to Quincy Street.

Also, more pollinator plants & flowers. The library has a small garden, but it would be great to see it extended to the other side of the street.

If you're going to have a maze, it ought to have "walls" of some 2 foot high hedge or other plant that doesn't grow much higher than that.

is there a drinking water fountain?

Bike racks? Might be there and I missed it.

Classical-esque benches instead of the uninviting slabs.

I believe some sort of a water feature, even if it's small, would add serenity to the space. Something similar to what was in concept A, even in a small scale.

Please include outdoor seating

There is no human touch! The design is totally corporate and devoid of culture.

I'm a Richmond transplant and this would never be accepted there without adding art, architectural focal points, or community gathering space. Get rid of the maze (not interesting at all) and maybe commission an interesting piece of art to take its place.

What, if any, additional thoughts do you have regarding the final draft design of this public plaza?

Please see comments on adding water feature from funds that would have gone to the Black Box theatre. This corner is a very important node in BVSCA and indeed the whole R/B Corridor. It is the only civic node in the Ballston/VA Sq neighborhood as this proposed open space leads to the Central Library and Quincy Park and all its public amenities. This green space should be as fulsome as possible and the inclusion of a water feature had been desired but the applicant presentation noted the budget wouldn't allow for both a water feature and shade structure. Community Benefit monies from the black box theater could remedy this and create a gateway to civic uses.

In the original two plaza designs there were steps. I am very concerned that the final design/build is exemplary for inclusive design, that we design once, building only one path of travel to be used by all. I could not see any steps in this current design, can you assure me that there will be no steps in the final plaza design?

Warm Regards.

Change the species of trees on your planting list. Do not plant *Ulmus americana*, Jefferson (American elm), which is on your planting list. Jefferson has not yet demonstrated any long-term resistance to Dutch Elm Disease.

Plant the following trees, which produce excellent fall foliage:

Scarlet Oak (*Quercus coccinea*)

Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*);

Nyssa sylvatica (already on your list);

Cultivars of red maple (*Acer rubrum*) that produce brilliant fall foliage .

Add to the tree list:

Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*) and native plum (*Prunus*), which produce both flowers and edible fruits;

Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) and black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), which host the caterpillars of swallowtail butterflies and many other insects.

Recognizing that this is an additional and distinct step from the main project approval, a natural plaza calls for bird-friendly glass on the exterior of the adjacent building. If that is not part of the already-approved design, it should be retrofitted voluntarily by the developer. At a minimum, glass that meets LEED requirements for bird-safe should be installed on the first 4 floors of the building facade on the plaza side.

Try not to have too much concrete. Trees are great, but won't have as much cooling effect it concrete gets hot. Make sure sidewalks are more than wide enough and improve the surrounding bike infrastructure (this development borders two streets with bike unprotected bike lanes.

I like the lighting elements. They will draw people to use the plaza, and they feel more elaborate/detailed than other public spaces I have been to.

There is too much space reserved for restaurant customer tables, which reduces public space. One row of tables along the wall of the building is enough.

Arlington County spends far too much of our hard-earned money on unnecessary & expensive projects, including this one. I'm tired of paying high taxes to fund high-end beautification and convenience, when what we have is good enough and already superior to what so many people around the county have in their neighborhoods. Please stop trying to impress us and win national awards. Spend our money treating us like adults who don't need to be pampered.

Please don't re-do the disastrous Mosaic Park here.

Are movable chairs a problem? Who will maintain these? Might they be stolen ? Maybe a few umbrellas could create shade and keep the seating from being moved to far away. Very tall grasses could be a safety issue.

This new design is a huge improvement over the original 2012 plan! (Wow, has it been that long?) The only other thing I could say is to make sure that visibility into and out from the interior of the plaza is not obscured by ground or mid-level plantings. Similarly, make sure the lighting doesn't leave any dark shadowy areas. But it should not be harsh either. Ambient light and bounced lighting feels good to most people. And pathway lighting looks nice in renderings, but is often not sufficient for most people to feel comfortable walking through the space. Particularly at times when it feels mostly empty.

I appreciate Diane's leadership on this. I know that she and others will keep in mind that when the public weighs in, different people want "things" that essentially are nice, but really are vanities. This is a small space and would best serve the overall public by being assessable, providing shade in the summer, sun in cooler months (deciduous trees/shrubs), and not trying to check every box. My bet is that it will get the most use by being the least complicated. Oh, and no cornhole. Thank you.

Glad to see the water feature disappear. It isn't very useful for 7 months of the year and could be a suck on public funds to maintain.

If pollinator area, some educational signage or activity.

Whatever happened to the black box design? How was that part of the site agreement resolved? I feel like developers can just keep resubmitting plans until the hard-to-implement items are eventually shed.

I like the design and think it'll be a nice addition to the concrete jungle that Ballston is becoming. I worry about the lack of lighting in the center of the plaza, especially at night. There is a large homeless population in Quincy Park, and I am sure they'll migrate over to the Plaza. Any public space with benches is fair game.

more library theme incorporation of educational elements

Concerned about "trendiness" of the concrete patterns or maze, and therefore it looking super out of date eventually. Also concerned about runoff/drainage, but it's already a parking lot so probably wouldn't be much change. However if there's deep puddles all over or bad mosquitos living in the plants then I wouldn't ever want to go

I think it is a wonderful project for that area!!

A quiet zone, for reading or meditation, would complement the Library and be very appropriate.

See notes on adding culture and mitigating the soulless corporate design that there is already enough of here.