

Burtonsville
PLACEMAKING

AFTER-ACTION REPORT



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BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

As they say, when you fall in love, fall asleep, and evidently, manage Better Block projects, things happen slowly and then all at once. The moment I realized that the Burtonsville project, which I had worried about and worked on for months had, in a split second, grown legs and had walked off without me, was stunning. It was a wonderful lesson on the power behind a determined Burtonsville community and on letting go enough for things to beautifully unfold.

For me, the most memorable moments from the festival centered around the passion and community involvement that drove the project, making this an incredible first Better Block project for me, and representing a powerful symbol of things to come for the community. I was honored to help project manage the second Montgomery County placemaking event, the first of its kind in the town of Burtonsville, Maryland.



From left to right: Block Captains Sara Jensen, Sebastian Smoot, Angelica Gonzalez

Community support was overwhelming. From the donation of time and resources, to participation in our volunteer workshops, to the incredible turnout at the event itself, it is clear that Burtonsville residents all agree on their desire for “place.” Place to belong, to relax, to play, to celebrate, and to grow closer. For one weekend, 3,500 locals were able to come together, cherish the new space, and speak clearly about their desire for change to the developer, to the local government, and to each other. I’m thankful to have met so many inspiring people willing to carry the torch forward in transforming their space and mobilizing their community.

*-Kristin Leiber
Better Block Project Manager*

BLOCK CAPTAIN: SARA JENSEN

In my final semester of landscape architecture at the University of Maryland, I worked with the nonprofit Neighborhood Design Center (NDC). I had the opportunity to provide pro-bono landscape and façade designs for other nonprofits, municipalities, and small businesses in Prince George's County, Maryland. NDC's program director Jan Townshend enlisted my help for a Better Block project, one of the first, which was hosted by the City of Mount Rainier and NDC. Having the chance to watch a deteriorated main street transform into a vibrant, colorful community center left an indelible imprint on me. I remembered how powerful that experience was and tucked it away until I moved to Burtonsville, MD in 2009.

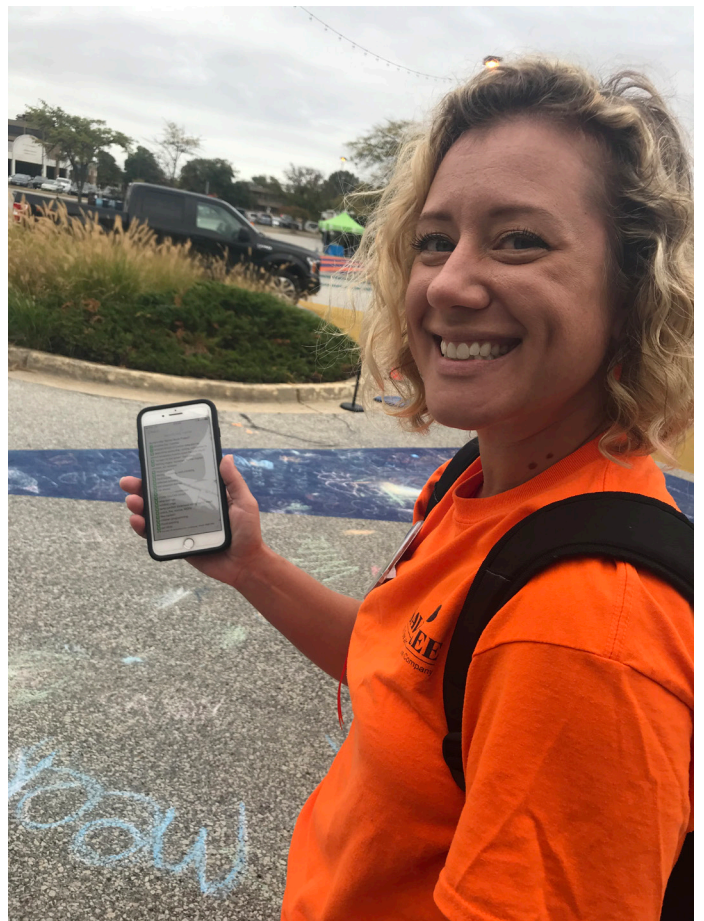
Late at night in March of 2015, I hatched my own blueprint to host a Burtonsville Better Block Project. I reached out to the property owners and at the time, received a lukewarm response. I was just a community member, not a business owner, elected official, or part of a larger community group. I didn't gain much traction at the time.

Then, in September of 2018, I connected with the Better Burtonsville community group for an event and jumped in with both feet. I found a group of like-minded individuals which, like me, wanted to see our Burtonsville community improve and thrive.

By November of 2018, we attracted the attention of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to host a Burtonsville Better Block Placemaking event. The Better Burtonsville group was organized and ready to take it on. With the assistance of Angelica Gonzalez and her entire team at M-NCPPC, which included some of my former colleagues from my previous time there, we hosted 3,500 people across two days of our Burtonsville Placemaking event that we proudly hosted in early October 2019. We had over 60 vendors, 10 performers, multiple food trucks (which sold out

of food the first day!), a beer garden, fire pits, a rock climbing wall, skate park, basketball court, face painters, and more! My vision that I laid out one late night in 2015 was realized thanks to the assistance of my Better Block team, M-NCPPC, and the Better Block Foundation. I'm eternally grateful to my team, the Burtonsville community that supported us, and for the opportunity to make a positive impact.

Sincerely,
Sara Jensen



BLOCK CAPTAIN: SEBASTIAN SMOOT

My Story

I have lived in Montgomery County most of my life, and I have great memories as a child making friends in the neighborhood and participating in community events with my family. In middle school, I remember the feeling of independence walking or taking the bus to the local library, grocery store, swimming pool, ice cream shop, or local park with my friends. I remember taking public transit to and from high school with my classmates, and sometimes we would take a detour through activity centers such as Washington, D.C., Bethesda, or Silver Spring. Access to safe and wholesome options for recreation and leisure—and an affordable and reliable means of getting there—were instrumental for us to build character, gain confidence, and explore the world.

A lot of children don't have these opportunities. Maybe they live in neighborhoods where it is not safe to go out at night, or maybe there aren't enough organized youth-focused activities in their community, or maybe they live in a subdivision that doesn't have an attractive public gathering space, or maybe the nearest transit service to their home is infrequent, unreliable, or non-existent. An important aspect of placemaking is creating a space that caters to all demographics, and I think it is safe to say that teenagers are the most challenging demographic to cater to.

I don't have teenage children at the moment, but I will in the next 10 years. I want Burtonsville and all the neighboring communities around the area (Cloverly, Spencerville, Briggs Chaney, Fairland, Colesville, etc.) to not only be great places to raise kids, but also be great places to be a kid. Right now I'm not sure we quite have that. There are many fantastic private and nonprofit organizations that do fabulous work, and we have some world-class public facilities operated by our local government—schools, libraries, nature centers, playgrounds,

parks, theaters, recreation centers—but it's all somewhat disconnected. I found that many people had a strong sense of connection to their church, school, or a local restaurant, but not a connection to the greater Burtonsville area. And moreover, due to a lack of sidewalks, bike paths, and reliable transit options in the area, many of these attractions, services, amenities, and retail are out-of-reach for people without access to a car.

Building a Better Burtonsville

Since moving to the Burtonsville area 10 years ago, I've always thought that there was a lot of untapped potential to build a sense of community. I thought it was strange that a 20+ acre shopping center could sit nearly vacant for so long. Several other community-minded folks and I agreed that if we could find a way to promote the redevelopment of the underutilized Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center, we could create a place where people could gather, meet, and celebrate. We wanted to create a place that attracted people from other communities throughout Maryland. For a long time, we didn't know how to do it, so we started the Better Burtonsville Association and reached out to our local elected officials for help.

When we heard that Montgomery County had approved funding to host a Placemaking Festival in Burtonsville, we were thrilled. Along with Angelica Gonzalez, the project manager from the Planning Department, and my co-captain Sara Jensen, we worked extremely hard over three months to organize what we consider the greatest festival in the 200-year history of Burtonsville. In the weeks leading up to the festival, there were challenges and a lot of pressure. Fortunately though, the community was rooting for us and with the help of over 100 volunteers, we were able to pull it off.

BLOCK CAPTAIN: SEBASTIAN SMOOT

For one magical weekend, we saw what it would be like to bring our neighborhood shopping center back to life. Based on the results of a follow-up survey, overwhelmingly, the favorite aspect of the festival for most attendees was the sense of community. I think this is a testament to the outstanding collaboration between the block captains, the Better Block Foundation, the property owner, and all the local organizations and businesses that participated or contributed, especially the Montgomery County Planning Department, Parks Department, and Recreation Department, Meadows Farms Nurseries, and Chapala Restaurant & Blue Beetle Bar.

What Happens Next?

I believe the festival has changed the way we think about our public spaces and generated new ideas for ways to transform them. Along with my colleagues in the Better Burtonsville Association, I want to continue to make those ideas a reality. A lot of the attractions at the festival were based on ideas raised at the community meeting over a year ago, such as:

- The community asked for more local retail options, so we brought over 20 local vendors, entrepreneurs, and artists to sell and showcase their work.
- The community wanted a place to have celebrations, so we built a performance stage with a turf pad for dancing and a picnic table/beer garden area.
- The community longed for places for children to play, so we provided a traffic garden, ball courts, and games like mini-golf, connect four, and Jenga.
- The community wanted cozy spaces for neighbors to connect with each other, so we set up fire pits surrounded by trees.
- The community was eager for more opportunities for exercise and athleticism, so

we had the Parks and Rec Departments lend us their climbing wall and bike track.

- The community craved more dining options, so we invited over a dozen local/family-owned food trucks and alcohol vendors to participate.

We want to continue build on this work and promote more initiatives to build the sense of community.

At the moment, the Better Burtonsville Association is an informal group of local residents, but we are planning to incorporate as a registered nonprofit. Becoming an official organization would allow us to fundraise, solicit grants and sponsorships, and lease the Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center for future events. And hopefully over the long term, we hope to continue to collaborate with the property owner to encourage the redevelopment of our town center.

Sincerely,
Sebastian Smoot



BLOCK CAPTAIN: ANGELICA GONZALEZ

How It Started

Following the success of the Montgomery County Planning Department's first placemaking event in White Flint in October of 2018, the department committed to hosting several similar events in each of the three planning areas of the county. Area 3, which encompasses roughly 75% of Montgomery County along the northern suburban/rural crescent of the county and includes the communities of Potomac, Darnestown, Damascus, Germantown, Clarksburg, Olney, and Burtonsville, held several meetings to come up with placemaking ideas in a number of locations. At a presentation by Better Block's Jason Roberts, Planning staff met Sara Jensen, one of the leaders of the local Build a Better Burtonsville organization; Sara highlighted the group's efforts in improving the town center, particularly an empty shopping center, and expressed the group's interest in hosting a placemaking event in Burtonsville. This was a defining moment where our team quickly realized how much interest and excitement there was in the Burtonsville community for a placemaking event, and by happenstance, the department had the funding and ability to help make it happen. Placemaking is a community-led effort. Through our meetings with the Build a Better Burtonsville members, we were convinced that Burtonsville had the essential ingredient – community leadership – that made it a natural fit for an event. Knowing that we had a community organization by our side that was passionate and thrilled about a placemaking event; Burtonsville was ultimately selected.

What Does This Mean for Burtonsville, and What Was the Impact

Our core team consisted of Block Captains, Sara Jensen and Sebastian Smoot, with support from Build a Better Burtonsville members, the Better Block Foundation, Planning Department staff, and local volunteers. Following community input at our summer kick-off meeting, the team selected the currently vacant Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center to host the event. The team spent five months brainstorming and preparing for the highly anticipated event to transform the empty shopping center into a lively public space. In the immediate run-up, team leaders and volunteers from the Build a Better Burtonsville community organization, Montgomery County's parks and planning

departments, students from local elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as college students from Montgomery College and the University of Maryland came together to reimagine the space with a band shell stage, a skate park, seating and tables, fire pits, a basketball court, kiddie bike track, and a 300-foot ground mural. The transformation was unbelievable and the response from the community was beyond our expectations.

With approximately 3,500 visitors who attended the two-day event, the typically desolate parking lot had come to life; it was four acres of a thriving community gathering space filled with joy, excitement, music, happiness, and appreciation for what the community believed reflected what makes and defines Burtonsville. The pop-up space was an important event for the Burtonsville community to showcase the best of what Burtonsville can be when the community comes together. With the continued growth of the region and the near arrival of the county's first bus rapid transit (BRT) line, the event proves that Burtonsville is a vibrant community, a place to do business, and a worthwhile investment for new development.

What's Next

Build a Better Burtonsville is working with the property owner of the Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center to organize future events there as well as other areas in the greater Burtonsville community where residents and community members can gather in a community-oriented public space. The Planning Department will continue to work with the community to help Burtonsville thrive.

Sincerely,
Angelica P. Gonzalez

Montgomery County Planning Department
Gwen Wright, Director
Robert Kronenberg, Deputy Director
Tanya Stern, Deputy Director
Project Team:
Richard Weaver, Chief
Fred Boyd, Supervisor
Angelica Gonzalez, Project Manager
Chris Van Alstyne, Planner Coordinator
Kendra Hyson, Senior Planner
Christopher Ramirez, Intern

Beginning a Better Block



Background of Burtonsville



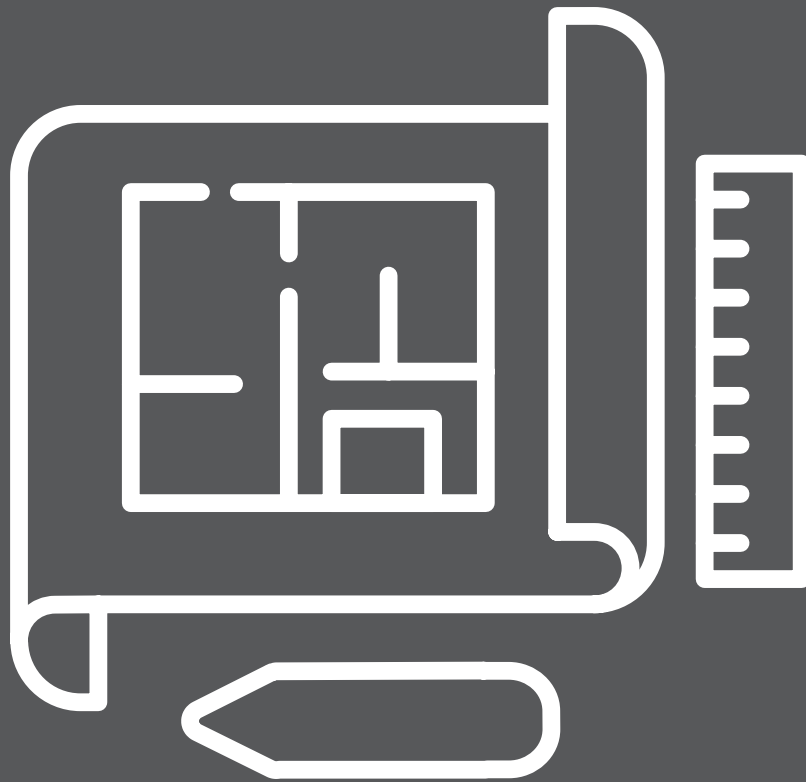
Burtonsville Crossing prior to Better Block

Burtonsville is a small, unincorporated town in Montgomery County, Maryland about halfway between Baltimore and Washington, D.C. There are large numbers of families with children, and many people who live here commute and spend a significant amount of time traveling by car.

The site that was chosen for the Burtonsville Placemaking Festival was the older, mostly vacant Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center off of Old Columbia Pike . Formerly a bustling strip mall in the center of town, Burtonsville Crossing was home to the Giant grocery store, several popular eateries, and even a large party store at one point. For nearly a decade, Burtonsville Crossing has suffered from disinvestment and attrition of commercial tenants to the newer shopping center across the street. It is a place with a lot of history in the hearts and stories of older residents, however to the younger generations and newcomers to town, it's known as a parking lot good for burnouts and car donuts smack dab in the center of town.

What the center lacks in activity these days, it makes up for in space, potential, and location. With that in mind, the local development group EDENS, the Montgomery County Planning Department, and leaders in the community united with a common goal: to create a vision for the space to bring the community together, just as it did back in the heydays of bustling burger joints and vibrant weekend Amish farmers' markets.

This area was chosen due to its proximity to the center of town and its large size serving as an opportunity to reenvision the area as a community space. The site was approximately four acres of parking lot with some landscaping, a small grade, and a continuous building arcade beneath the vacant storefronts. The three remaining businesses, all restaurants, cater to customers who come and go in their cars quickly and do not spend any time in the area.



THE PROJECT

THE PARTNERS

The Burtonsville Placemaking Festival was led by a dedicated local team who made it all possible.

Debra Adkins



Debra Adkins is a retired Montgomery County English teacher. She continues to devote her time to the Burtonsville community by substituting at Paint Branch High School and volunteering in several roles throughout the county. She lives in the area, went to Blair High School, and got her undergrad at the University of Maryland, College Park. She is devoted to the idea of revitalizing the old Burtonsville Shopping Center.

Brian Anleu



Brian Anleu is a career public servant and community advocate. Brian currently serves as senior advisor to the Montgomery County Planning Board Chair. He is a member of the Burtonsville Day Committee and the Better Burtonsville Association, and previously served on the board of the Friends of Maydale and Montgomery County Council of PTAs.

Angelica Gonzalez



Angelica Gonzalez is a Planner Coordinator with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) in the Montgomery County Planning Department. She is responsible for development review of commercial, mixed use, and residential development and also focuses on placemaking efforts. Angelica has practiced urban planning and urban design for more than 8 years in the public sector in the DC Metro area and in the San Francisco Bay area. Prior to working with M-NCPPC, she also practiced urban planning in development review in northern Virginia with Fairfax County including mixed-use, transit-oriented development projects in Reston. Prior to her experience in regulatory review, she worked on SFpark as a pilot project with the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA).

Angelica holds a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a bachelor's degree in urban studies and planning from the University of California, San Diego. She also studied abroad in Costa Rica and in Rome for sustainable development and urban design. Angelica was born in the Philippines and at a young age moved to California. She now lives in Maryland and has three kids. She enjoys traveling, playing volleyball, hiking, painting, and baking in her spare time.

Carmen Jenkins



Carmen Jenkins is a lifelong resident of east Montgomery County. She leads Business Development for a IBSS, a woman-owned small business in Silver Spring. Carmen is passionate about driving positive change in the community.

Sara Jensen



Sara graduated with a bachelors degree in landscape architecture from University of Maryland in December 2004. She then served 10 months with AmeriCorps *NCCC, a team-based national service program. Her national service experience included building 32 Habitat for Humanity homes in Detroit and assisting in Red Cross shelter operations for Hurricane Katrina evacuees in the summer of 2005 in Colorado. Her professional experience over the last 20 years includes public, private, and nonprofit work. Sara's career began in landscape architecture designing for primarily large-scale commercial and residential developments. She then spent time with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) as a community planner developing community-driven plans to help guide thoughtful development throughout Prince George's County, Maryland. In 2010 while at M-NCPPC, Sara obtained her International Society of Arboriculture license. She joined SavATree in 2012 as a residential arborist and has enjoyed assisting clients in how to manage the trees on their properties. Sara and her Doberman Pinscher Hemingway enjoy road trips to Key West and living life to its fullest potential.

Sebastian Smoot



Sebastian has been a community advocate in the Burtonsville area since 2013. In December 2016, he started the "Fix 198 Now" campaign to put a stop to the State Highway Administration's plans to widen the main road through Burtonsville into a highway. In March 2018, Sebastian also led a successful effort to convince the Montgomery County Council to fund the long-awaited Burtonsville Access Road. He advocates for more investments and greater activism in the eastern part of the county through his blog, Growing East County.

THE SURVEYS

As in all Better Block projects, community engagement and input is central to the placemaking process. To help determine the direction and design, we survey the community to identify the neighborhood's issues, potential solutions, and the vision that residents have for the area.

From the survey results, the primary concerns for Burtonsville are the desire for more central, walkable destinations that incorporate activity and community.

Two major themes were reflected in the community's desires for change:

- 1) Create a walkable, attractive town center with activities, events, markets, and unique destinations.
- 2) Reduce speed, increase pedestrian connections, and create solutions for traffic on Old Columbia Pike.



THE DESIGN

Utilizing community input, we began designing a layout for the Burtonsville Placemaking Festival. The main goal of the festival was to rally the community together around a common space for people of all ages, so we focused immediately on transforming asphalt and parking spots into comfortable spaces for people and bringing as many local vendors, performers, and neighbors into the design process as possible.

The importance of sight lines dictated the layout for the space as a linear park. We used Superkilen in Copenhagen as a point of reference, creating a pathway and edges for pedestrians as they make their way through the festival. To create the perception of a pathway and edges to carry attendees through the space, we painted a large, geometric ground mural on the asphalt, creating nooks framed by pine and spruce evergreens and made cozy with adirondacks and fire pits for seating and conversation. In order to create points of interest along the pathway, we placed clusters of vendor tents and booths from local makers and tradespeople and provided points of reference with giant, candy-colored Hollywood letters marking out various activities as options for festival-goers.

We then anchored the linear park with tried-and-true placemaking featuring a stage for live music, food and drink vendors nearby, and a cozy beer garden for neighbors to gather together and take it all in. Due to the high number of children and families in the area, we focused on creating space that was welcoming and relaxing for adults while also having areas within eyesight for play and adventure.



Protected Space for Activities

To ease concerns about increasing public space for activities while also creating protection from cars, we created a pedestrian gateway and established physical barriers to create a large, car-free space for bicycles, scooters, skateboards, and pedestrians. Local carpenters built a skate park, Ultrabase installed a futsal turf court, volunteers painted a basketball court, and Montgomery County provided a bike track, climbing wall, oversized games, and other equipment. We were able to strike a balance between spaces focused on kids and adults, relaxation and activity, and play and shopping.

Market Space

To create a market reminiscent of the Amish Farmers' Market that previously occupied the space, we worked to showcase local vendors and small business. The event featured over 40 Montgomery County residents sharing their creations with the community, from candles and soaps to homemade toys, plants, and art. In addition, pop-up vendors provided food and beverage options that changed each day, providing choice and variety from the offerings of established businesses in the area.

Linear Park, Vendors, Activities, and Performance





Creating Spaces For Activity



THE FABRICATION

With help from the community, Better Block incorporated several custom-build elements in the site design.



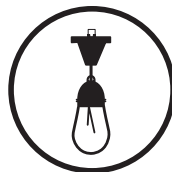
THE BUILD AND WORKSHOPS



Build Metrics



93 gallons of paint



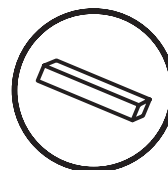
720 feet of string light



184 volunteers



33 sheets of plywood



208 pieces of lumber

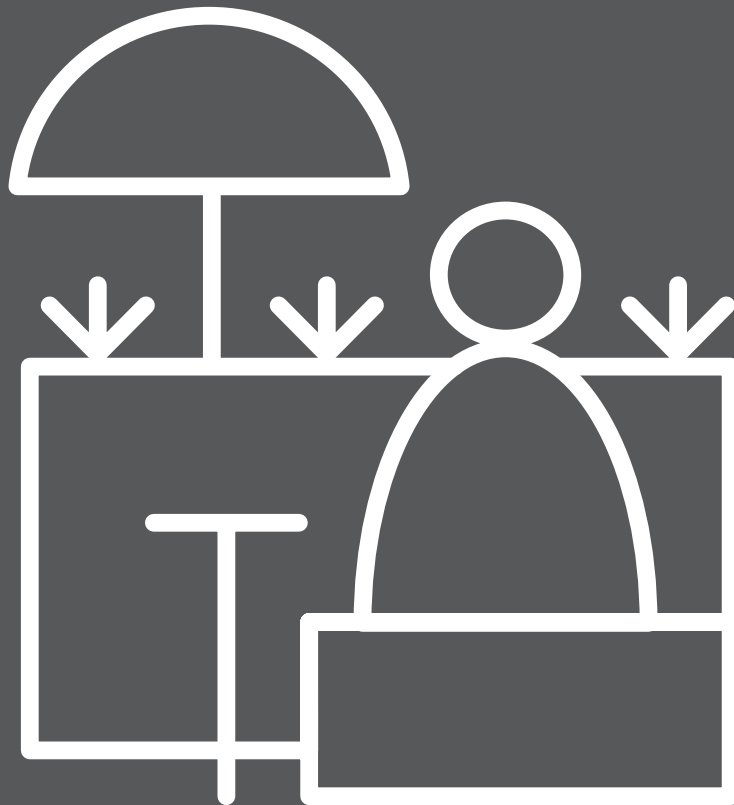
Volunteer Schedule

October 3, 2019	9:00 - 12:00	Workshop 1: Ground Mural and Band Shell
	4:00 - 7:00	Workshop 2: Ground Mural, Skate Park, Futsal Court Assembly
October 4, 2019	9:00 - 12:00	Workshop 3: Basketball Court, Entry Facade
	4:00 - 7:00	Workshop 4: String Lighting, Tree Placement
October 5, 2019	10:00 - 2:00	Workshop 5: Market layout, Tent and lighting set up, Games set up
	2:00	Vendor load in
	4:00	Start of Event, Data Collection
	9:00	End of Event
	9:00 - 10:00	Clean up
October 6, 2019	10:00	Start of Event
	3:00	End of Event
	3:30 - 6:00	Tear down and clean up



Creating a Linear Park





THE BETTER BLOCK

PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE

One of the defining features of the event was the involvement of many members of the local community and small businesses. The programming schedule consisted of diverse local talent, students, and community members.

Live Performances

Barry Louis Polisar
D. Stradler
Debbie Annen Uke
Elena Rhiannon Stark
Esther Whitlock
Kieran Lally
Paint Branch High School Step Team
The Smooth Jazz of the Glasers
Steve Haug
V. Vahalla

Food and Beverage Vendors

Bandera Chicken
Bangin' BBQ
Corned Beef King
Denizens
Flash Crabcake Co.
IC Dream
Mardi Gras Time
Olney Winery
RB Grill
Simple Pleasures Ice
Stony Man Coffee
Trippy Tacos
True Respite
Twin Valley Distilleries



Emcees

Regie Cabico
2Deep Carter

Vendors

Angel Face by Noya
The Beauty Startup
Blingthings
Caricatures by Kerry
Chapala
The Compound
Cultural Language Services
Dawit Habte
DMV Smylez
Drinkable Arts
Fidos For Freedom
Global Premium Trading
The Hack Ground
Infinity Hearts Gifts
Latos Pottery
Luscents Products
LZC Style
Mary Kay
Meadows Farms
Missy Bloom's Soapery
Mobile Brake Repair
Mosaic Arts USA
Onesies / Thirty One
Pampered Chef
Proverbial Jewelry
Sagelight Wellness
Sonia Vee's Cupcakes
Treasures by Ty
Ultrabase

Community Connections

Abundant Grace Church
Arts on the Block
Bryanna's Love
Burtonsville FD
Burtonsville Storm
Census Office of Community Partnerships
Cub Scouts Pack 602
MCPD K-9 Unit
MCPD Planning Department
Montgomery College
Mounted Park Police
Trout Unlimited

Games for All Ages



Live Performance by a local martial arts studio



The Event



The Burtonsville Placemaking Festival was an unequivocal success from the minute we opened the gates. In the first hour alone, we counted 562 attendees at a single point of entry. Neighbors congregated under the string lights and sunset, gathering around the fire pits, enjoying happy hour and watching their kids play to their heart's content at the activities around the perimeter of the beer garden. Burtonsville had turned out in droves to celebrate each other and to demonstrate the desire for cozy, busy, and active public space in the center of town.

Community was a defining feature of the event in more than one way, and we leaned heavily on the gifts and resources at our disposal from Montgomery County. Among many other things, we were able to borrow basketball equipment from Recreation, signage for a kid's traffic garden from Transportation, oversized games and mini-golf from Planning, and picnic tables from Parks. Volunteer members built a skate park, which ended up fluctuating between an actual skate park and a makeshift slide for adventurous students. Ultrabase, a vendor for the newly popular futsal, came out to demonstrate his ability to transform parking lots into low-impact turf fields. Meadows Nursery donated plants, hay, and decorative fall mums to the entryway, while also providing a small pumpkin patch and vendor booth to the festival

attendees.

In addition to the measurable support received by the festival, we were also supported in immeasurable ways by the creativity of so many members of Montgomery County. Specifically, the traffic garden designed by our block captain, Sebastian Smoot, was a hit, teaching kids about crosswalks, yield signs, and traffic circles, while also being a fun way for them to fly around the track on their bikes on a design-focused loop. We enjoyed a full, diverse lineup of local songwriters, performers, and talent thanks to the organizational power and connection of our programming coordinator, Debra Adkins. Angelica Gonzalez was instrumental in fostering connection by inviting local K-9 units, mounted police, and even the vintage fire engine and his spotted Dalmatian mascot to come join, and Sara Jensen was the first person to take the lighting design of the festival to the next level, literally.

Nearly every person we spoke with asked a version of the question, "What's next for Burtonsville?" Although the festival lasted a weekend, and the ground mural washed away with the first rain, it is clear that Burtonsville residents all agree on their desire for "place." A place to belong, to relax, to play, to celebrate, and to grow closer. For one weekend, 3,500 locals were able to come together, cherish the new space, and speak clearly their desire for change to the developer, to the local

Live Performance by a Local Artist





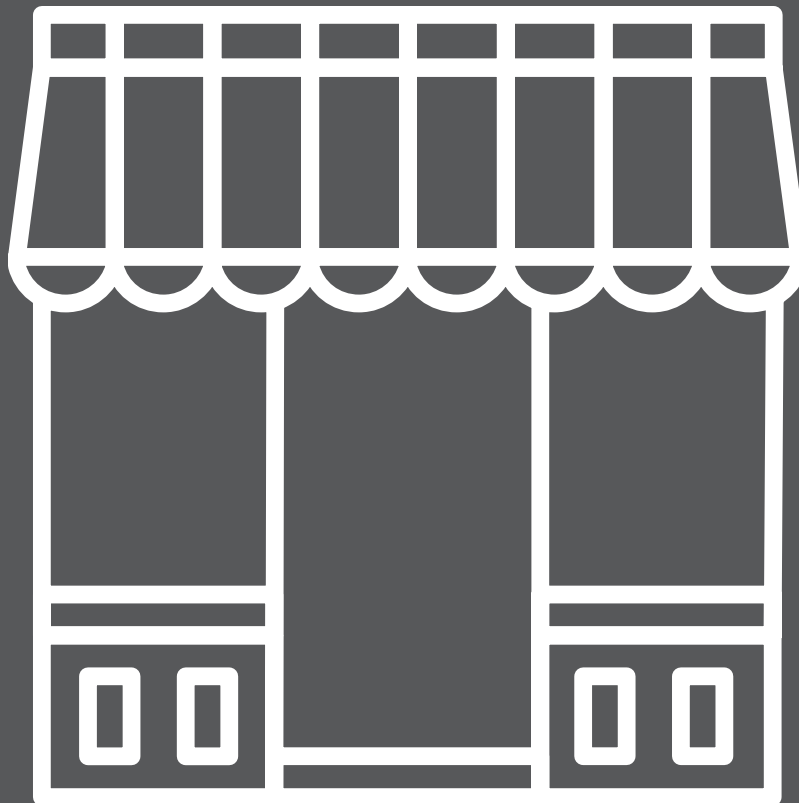


Climbing Wall



Cozy Spots for the Community





PROGRESS + STEPS

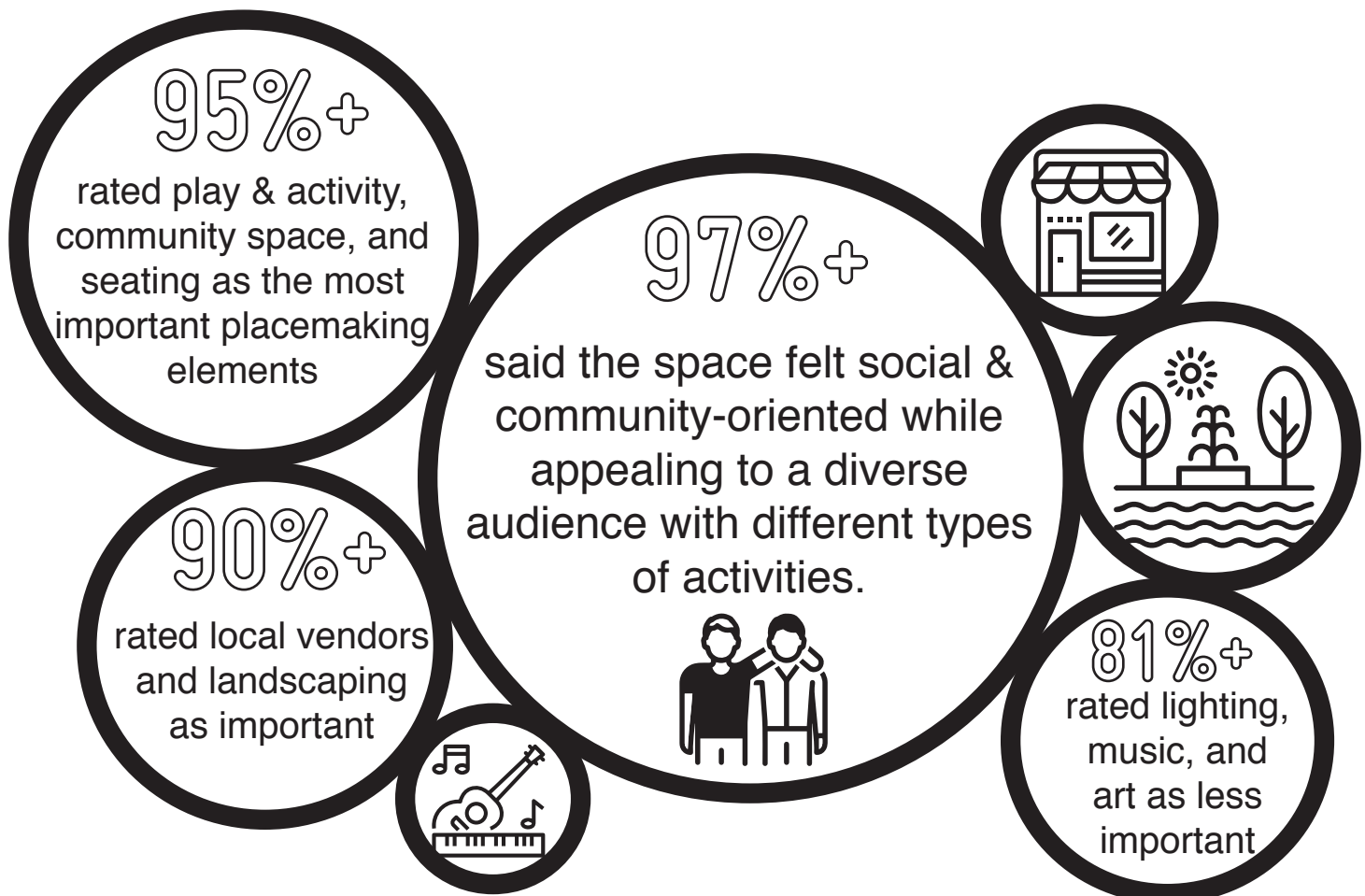
FEEDBACK & SURVEY RESULTS

"I cannot imagine the event could have gone much better. It was well-attended and the people there seemed excited and happy to be there. I thought the setup for the event was outstanding. Plenty for the kids and adults to do. The vendors seemed well-engaged and it looked like it would be worthwhile for those who displayed, as it was for us. Not only did we sell material, but we engaged with many of our customers who seemed truly appreciative of the fact we were there. We have watched that space go unused in a productive manner for so many years, it was nice to see it used for such a great event.

I saw so many attendees connecting with neighbors, family and friends. It was truly a "local" event. There was excitement over these engagements and people were so excited to see one another; they would give enthusiastic greetings and hugs. You could tell some of these engagements were long overdue. Most importantly, while standing by one of the firepits, I overheard some people talking about "what the mall should be used for" and how it "should be used for something," which I believe was the main point of the festival.

It is so great when a "great idea" gets matched up with an enthusiastic organizer that pulls everything off so well. I attend a lot of these types of events and this one comes to the very top of my list of "successful events." The area and county are very fortunate to have realized the benefits of the efforts you and your staff made. Congratulations!"

*-Bobby Lewis, Vice President
Meadows Farms Nurseries & Landscape*



STEPS FOR THE FUTURE

The Burtonsville Placemaking Festival demonstrated to the community, developer, and the county that there is a need for a people-focused space in the heart of Burtonsville. The Better Block process helped gather the community to identify next steps needed.

Design for People

Montgomery County needs multi-use public spaces for people of all ages to come together. Places designed for the convenience of cars are not conducive to vibrant public life. The presence of wonderful parks alone do not accomplish the desire for cross-functional space for all ages and interests. The community made it clear that while strip malls are functionally adequate for day-to-day errands, they desire an active, central space designed with neighbors in mind that can serve as an area for congregating, eating, shopping, and playing.

Staying Power

Burtonsville Placemaking was a strong kick-off event. Now, let's keep the momentum going. Tap into the core group of community members who supported the festival, and provide them the tools and resources to continue events like this in the future. Trust neighbors to make decisions and plan parts of future projects. Help citizens cut through red tape in securing the partnership of EDENS for the festival site. Plan regular, recurring events that will create and maintain a sense of community throughout the year.

Leverage What You Have

From a community that showed its overwhelming support with volunteerism, participation in the market, and the equipment at the county's disposal, you have the resources at your fingertips to create amazing community events as frequently as desired. The Burtonsville community has the capacity and the skills to make significant improvements themselves. This was proven during the Better Block event when the community stepped in to help build the skate park entirely from what plans and materials were onsite, and when the arborist stopped by with his bucket truck to help hang lights. Do not be afraid to lean on the community for volunteer time or donations or borrowing of necessary materials. Events hosted by the community for the community will lead to the biggest impact. Hosting volunteer days prior to cross-functional events with performance, activity, and food options will bring the community closer together while also making physical improvements to the area.



Experiment

Not everything will work, but give it a try. If you invest a bit of time and resources testing something out, people will let you know if it's working or not. If it's not, adjust and try again. Don't be afraid to put an idea out there.

Come to the Table

The Burtonsville Placemaking Festival was a fantastic trial run for bringing multiple interest groups to the table to discuss the future of central Burtonsville. You were able to bring government, private businesses, and citizens to the table. This open, clear method of welcoming all opinions and helping everyone take ownership in their community is vital to the development of a place where people want to live and work with a high quality of life. Continue to work with EDENS to activate their key space in central Burtonsville. If that is not an option, consider relocating to another underutilized parcel of land near the town center.

Consider a Road Diet

As Jason recommended upon first visiting the site for our kick-off, Burtonsville has an abundance of roads without enough traffic to support the infrastructure on the bypass. We once again recommend considering a road diet for Old Columbia Pike. Given the overwhelming positive response to large spaces for activity and the desire for more green space for all ages, we recommend condensing traffic onto one side of the highway and turning the other side into a linear park complete with landscaping, trails, performance stages, and community space. Parkside real estate has been proven to increase real estate values in an area, so the adjustment would benefit the entire community.

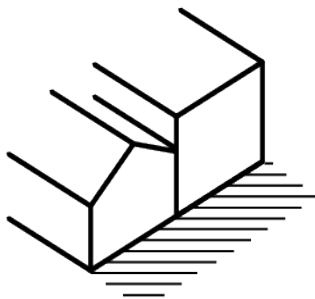


Community Engagement



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS





BETTER BLOCK