



Falls Church Arts & Cultural District

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Executive Summary

With the designation as an Arts and Cultural District, the City of Falls Church has the potential to shape its existing community character into a destination for visitors. At the same time, the arts and cultural heritage of a place can be used as a vehicle to strengthen local civic pride through active engagement in the public realm. Public engagement with the arts is one of many strategies that can provide for a deeper awareness and sense of place as part of the city's larger redevelopment efforts. Therefore, using the arts and cultural assets of the city will provide for more continuity in the urban landscape by linking public art with the built environment. There is a strong body of evidence linking investment in the arts and cultural assets of a city with positive spill-over effects on the surrounding community. These include enhanced cultural awareness, pride and identity, more lively streets, business investments, community revitalization and increased cultural capital. The goal of this report is to expand upon these themes and offer recommendations to the City of Falls Church in how to best maximize the potential of the Arts and Cultural District.

A vibrant Arts and Cultural District should seek to integrate the varied interest of artisans, visitors, and community residents alike. Accommodating the needs of all user groups provides for a multifaceted experience and broader economic development strategy. The challenge for Falls Church is to build the creative infrastructure necessary to sustain a vibrant Arts and Cultural District as a tool for making sense of place. Specific investment mechanisms and tax incentives to attract artisans such as artisan in-residence programs, startup grants and business license exemptions need to be explored. Another proposal is to use the local business community as a catalyst for the arts. Businesses could promote the arts by making donations to art groups, and sponsoring public art or other activities in the district. Many other incentives to encourage the arts and cultural district in Falls Church exist, and both formal and informal mechanisms are explored in further detail throughout this report.

The general focus area of this report is centered on using the Arts and Cultural District and expanding its scope to include entertainment, recreation, and other themes such as education for shaping the district. One focus zone explores the area along South Washington Street and the western end of Broad Street for creating a vibrant, mixed-use corridor near the Tinner Hill site. An overarching theme is the lack of pedestrian scale and unity of the built environment. Integrating greater streetscape design and traffic calming measures at the urban scale can create the linkages needed for a vibrant commercial area. In this respect, the Tinner Hill community should serve as a gateway into the district as well as an organizational theme for preserving the historic and cultural resource of the city. Improved connectivity with the City's landmarks and historically significant sites are the central elements to a successful

cultural district. The larger question is how best to present the cultural resources of the city to meet the needs of the community. Discussion of this topic is further studied at length in the report.

Our research illustrates different paths that places have taken to advance the arts and cultural resources of a place and provides several ways for local planners and policymakers to integrate these devices and suggestions into their redevelopment efforts for the City of Falls Church. Using the arts as a vehicle for community growth and change presents challenges, but this report offers suggestions on how to overcome these difficulties. The adoption of some or all of these recommendations would help transform Falls Church into a destination city.

Section 1: Current and Future Zoning and Comprehensive Planning within Falls Church, VA

The Arts and Cultural District has become a very enticing option for redevelopment and cultural exploration within the City of Falls Church. The City has adapted to future changes through the development of its Comprehensive Plan and parts of its current Zoning Ordinance. What needs to be addressed first before a heritage trail or overall plan can be comprised is to distinguish how current planning and future planning are integrated within Falls Church.

I. Focal Points, Current Planning and Zoning

Falls Church has several land-use designations and zoning categories that expand upon the City's desire to grow in a smart, economically responsible manner. The City has recognized its goal of celebrating its various activities and history as part of the City's overall unique character. Activities such as the Cherry Hill concerts, the Farmer's market, and the Tinner Hill Blues Festival all play an integral part in the City's community and economic development for the present and future. Various landmarks within the City need to be identified for the creation and expansion of a heritage trail. Some examples of prominent sites mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan include the City Hall building, the Mary Riley Styles Public Library, the community center, and Cherry Hill Park.

Another element of site integration is to have a well incorporated and planned pedestrian and bicycle network. The City has the makings for a potentially viable pedestrian and bicycle network. The W&OD trail passes through the City offering an alternative to congested street avenues and access ways for pedestrians and bicyclists alike.¹ The trail is located near the West Broad Street area and areas abutting Interstate 66. Other techniques that can overcome pedestrian and bicycle neglect is by instituting traffic calming measures that would regulate speed and volume.

Specific techniques involve designing plans and constructing buildings that are at a pedestrian scale. Areas that have already integrated these ideas include the traditionally important convergence areas within the City, like City Hall, Cherry Hill Park and the Community Center with their pedestrian friendly layout and landscaping.² These components greatly enhance the success of the Arts and Cultural District within the City.

New development within this area needs to be cohesive and inviting to all people and their varied needs. The City has integrated within its Comprehensive Plan a revitalization mechanism for many of its commercial strip areas. As was the trend in the late 1960s and 1970s, development

was undeniably centered towards automobile oriented design and growth. These areas include the focal points for this Heritage Trail initiative, the South Washington Street Corridors and the western end of Broad Street.³ The fact is current planning and Zoning would allow for many changes to occur within these economically viable business areas.

A. West End of Broad Street

The Comprehensive Plan currently designates this area as potentially developable for a mixture of “medium-scale integrated commercial and residential uses”. Within the City’s current land use map these uses would include Mixed Use, Multi-Family Apartment/Condo Residences, and Individual Retail/Service uses.⁴ For a vibrant Arts and Cultural District as well as a well integrated Heritage Trail, this mix of uses is vital. A sense of place can be created by mixing uses and integrating, shopping, cultural activities, and dining. Designating these potentially vibrant commercial/business areas to one single use would not be in the best interests of the City.

As Peter Brink’s article, *Heritage Tourism in the U.S.A.: Grassroots Efforts to Combine Preservation and Tourism* describes, “communities are almost always looking for new sources of revenue, and preservationists are almost always searching for new ways to sustain the historic places they treasure. There is thus a natural confluence of interests, as well as significant risks in how these interests are balanced”⁵ This very statement describes the original and insightful efforts put forth by Falls Church City Planning with their creation of an Official Design (O-D) and Creative Development (C-D) Zoning districts. The elements of these two districts, which will be explained in greater detail later, expand upon the compatibility and integration of separate uses within vibrant community spaces. The City Center’s plans for example emphasize office, retail, restaurant, and entertainment uses should be placed at street level with large display windows facilitating activity in those areas (see Figure 1 for example). As the Comprehensive Plan explains, future construction and remodeling, can integrate subsequent floors of many



Figure 1 Mixed Use Structures Across from Tinner Hill Area

Source: Pictures taken by Marco Rivero.

buildings for creative uses.⁶ Upper stories, underground levels, and locations at the rear of buildings could easily be used for artistic/cultural and commercial activity. The West Broad Street area, given its centrality, can expand upon these uses and integrate recreation, entertainment, and artistic uses within these spaces.

The City should explore greater opportunities for artistic and cultural expansion within its already developed West Broad Street area. However, another area of Falls Church, mainly the South Washington Street area, near the Tinner Hill site is currently in need of more expansive, land use planning decisions.

B. South Washington Street

This area extends primarily along the intersection of Broad and South Washington Streets to the border of Falls Church and Fairfax County. This area is characterized primarily by the prevalence of older buildings, low intensity and mismanaged development, poorly designed sites and parking areas, as well as a lack of pedestrian connectivity and attractive landscaping.⁷ These are the challenges that the Arts and Cultural District can examine. The district can further create new outlets for artisans and entrepreneurs alike when trying to reinvest within the area.

The current challenges within this area include the dominance of single uses within the entire corridor. The current land use plan designates this area as primarily “Individual Retail/Service” uses, “Light Industry/Auto” uses, and a few areas for office uses.⁸ They are not integrated in a smart, cohesive pattern and seem to be out of scale with pedestrian activity that occurs around the site. Development decisions within this area are also regulated by its location bordering Fairfax County. The pattern of development within the South Washington Street area is greatly influenced and shaped by outlying decisions for land use development within Fairfax County.⁹ There is no cohesive plan integrating both the City’s and the County’s interests within this primarily commercial area, which can create greater land use problems in the future if not addressed.

The South Washington Street Area is in great need for a more focused pedestrian oriented planning. Currently, the area lacks curb cuts, sidewalks, medians, crosswalks, crossing signals/ countdown pedestrian signals, and other elements that would greatly reinforce pedestrian activity within the area. The area primarily serves residents and visitors who rely on automobile transport (see Figure 2). This area is not very attractive in part because of its lack of streetscape and landscaping appeal. South Washington Street is the general area for historic importance



Figure 2. Streetscape Near Tinner Hill
Source: Pictures taken by Marco Rivero.

with respect to Falls Church’s African American community who established homes and business along this area, primarily within Tinner Hill.

The City of Falls Church envisions South Washington Street as a potentially responsive and fruitful commercial/ business area, with new developmental practices leading the way for progress. There is great potential for larger densities and a more united appearance from the City’s downtown area. These goals can be achieved by integrating greater streetscape and traffic calming measures so pedestrians and motorists

can use the space harmoniously. The Comprehensive Plan specifically details the importance of store front and building façade improvements. These elements and other pedestrian and bicycle friendly measures would increase the possibility of having a vibrant heritage trail area, in addition to promoting needed linkages between businesses within the South Washington Street corridor.

Another important component within any heritage trail plan and the City's Arts and Cultural District is the preservation and use of open spaces. For example, the Comprehensive Plan for Falls Church addresses the need for more open space projects and community gathering areas within the South Washington Street area. The plan states that larger, taller buildings that are stepped back from the street with architectural features similar to downtown should be developed there. This also means developing sidewalks and minimum side yard setbacks so there is cohesion throughout the site.¹⁰

Also, by precluding parking from the front of these buildings, greater opportunities are created for courtyard, plaza, fountain, and park spaces. The Plan also states that creating medians between busy streets and intersections can improve the ability of pedestrians to cross wide streets and provide an aesthetically pleasing break from the existing road pavement.¹¹ These measures can greatly link the existing pedestrian and cycling trails for the City as well as create new paths for pedestrian foot traffic. The network created along these potentially vibrant commercial areas will create new landmarks and nodes for entertainment and gathering, which is an essential element for a successful Arts and Cultural District.

The 1991 Hyett-Palma Study entitled *Building the Vision – The Washington Street Corridor* also reflects upon the potential business and landscaping improvements that exists near the automotive service use areas that are concentrated primarily near the Tinner Hill area. The study suggested these services should be clustered together and have upgraded maintenance which may include installing new awnings to buildings, painting older structures, and improved landscaping within these areas.¹² It is true that these businesses should be preserved and expanded within each other, but it also means they need to be sustainably integrated within the larger pedestrian friendly scheme for this area. The Tinner Hill area contains many historically important homes that are not noticeable to the average traveler, simply because they are not currently integrated to a pedestrian/bicycle friendly network. They can become part of the overall City Center network and still maintain their unique qualities as separate neighborhoods.

II. Arts and Cultural District Elements – Future Zoning, Parks and Open Space, and Historic Preservation

A vibrant Arts and Cultural District integrates the interests of artists, visitors, and community members alike. Integrating community spaces, green spaces, and historic sites/buildings within the character of its jurisdiction is a challenge. The City of Falls Church has identified these possibilities within its current Zoning efforts and conservation plans. One of these areas includes the South Washington Street Area, where Tinner Hill and the Henderson House are located (within Figure 4-11, known as Area 6 and part of Area 5 in the Falls Church 2005

Comprehensive Plan for “Planning Opportunity Areas”).¹³

A. Future Zoning and Land Use

The South Washington Street Area is currently underdeveloped, which is because of the limited allowances given under the current Zoning Ordinance. Currently, zoning in this area is mainly B-2, Central Business, and B-3, General Business with the exception of the Virginia Village apartments, near South Maple Avenue. Some of the businesses within this area include restaurants, automobile service, and warehouses.¹⁴ As mentioned earlier, future zoning and land use decisions would need to concentrate on mixing uses and bringing greater pedestrian appeal to the area.

A rezoning of the area would be required so this development can occur. Under the Current and Future Land Use Plans for Falls Church, the South Washington Street area and adjoining areas are slated for business and mixed use development. By integrating the proposed changes, a compelling case could be made to the City Council for integrating more mixed-use activity within this area. According to the Comprehensive Plan, an amendment can be made if it meets one of three criteria. In the case of South Washington Street, significant changes have occurred in the area with regards to recent business and residential patterns.¹⁵ Future zoning changes would benefit the overall growth and the goals of the Falls Church Comprehensive Plan.

Integrate greater mixed-use development within the South Washington Street area can also be achieved by instituting an overlay zoning designation. This is done through an additional “Mixed-Use Redevelopment” or MUR zoning overlay designation, which would allow for and protect various housing types and sizes within the area. This would have to be done through a special exemption from the City Council.¹⁶ The proposed changes to the future land use plan and current zoning would be compatible with the City’s design guidelines which emphasize among other things: higher densities; promoting redevelopment that eliminates stand alone automobile storage facilities; creating a consistent design with regards to building heights and facades; preserving the historic resources of the Tinner Hill area; and creating a “gateway” of responsible development for the City.¹⁷ All of these elements are essential for promoting developmental unity.

B. Open Space and Historic Preservation

Open spaces and historic preservation of prominent buildings and sites are vital with the creation of any Arts and Cultural District or heritage area. For example, greenways provide the interconnections between residential communities and commercial areas along with the natural resource value of habitat protection and pedestrian/bicycle travel. Expanding upon the W&OD Trail which currently serves as a single loop around the City would be fundamental for greater bicycle and pedestrian travel, creating new sidewalks and paths for recreational purposes and commuting.¹⁸ The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the need to preserve “sensitive buffer areas” within stream corridors. Linking the City’s major parks and open space areas to these greenways and bike paths, would create that buffer but also provide a more nurturing and vibrant pedestrian atmosphere.

Another component to a successful Arts and Cultural district and heritage trail would be its historically relevant components. The City contains a zoning tool that provides this designation under the Historic and Cultural Conservation (HCC) Overlay District which is used to “preserve and protect the architectural, cultural, and historical heritage of the City and encourage and assist in the preservation of historically, architecturally, and culturally significant sites and structures”.¹⁹ For the purpose of an Arts and Cultural District, related to the Tinner Hill site, this would be an important layer for sound economic development and greater cultural appreciation for the site. The Historic and Cultural Conservation District can be used as a way to celebrate African American history in Falls Church by providing educational opportunities and business related opportunities to people who would want to invest in the site.

Establishing a local district can raise property values, create greater opportunities for tourism and investment, as well as generate general interest in the City. Donovan D. Rypkema’s *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leadership Guide* explains how historic preservation can create viable business districts. The Washington State Special Valuation for Improvements to Historic Property stated that, “Economic benefits occur when revitalized neighborhoods begin to experience increased personal wealth. As buildings are being rehabilitated and public facilities improved, the area attracts businesses, jobs are created, personal incomes increase, property values grow, and businesses profit...revitalized economic viable neighborhood emerge.”²⁰

The creation of a heritage trail and cultural district would enhance Tinner Hill’s presence in Falls Church. It was the home of Edwin B. Henderson and Joseph Tinner, founders of the first rural chapter of the NAACP.²¹ The Henderson House stands as landmark to the rich African American cultural and business history within the City. The established Tinner Hill Blues Festival expands the possibilities for a vibrant Arts and Cultural District. The use of traditional educational tools, on-site tours with well planned and integrated trails, and connectivity between the City’s landmarks are the central elements to a successful cultural district. The challenge will be to devise a plan to integrate artists, business owners, community members, and tourists alike to the site. The Comprehensive Plan and the Falls Church Zoning Ordinance provide the tools and flexibility for these developments.

III. Implementation of Heritage Tourism in the United States

Heritage tourism and implementation of trails, sites, and activities are started and developed by organizations (local and state government, citizens, developers) who focus on preserving and expanding upon the cultural and natural resources of a community. Grassroots activity is vital for the development of a historical or cultural district. For example, Annapolis, Maryland has made it their goals to preserve quality of life for its residents in the National Historic Landmark District, while still promoting heritage tourism across the city.²² The city experienced an incredible influx of tourists in the past several years that it has pursued designation as a State of Maryland heritage area. This would balance the opportunities for tourists to visit certain sites with increased protection for historic properties in the area. The designation of a historical district creates an overlay for protection, while still promoting the culturally and historically relevant activities and sites that exist within a community.

In the mid-1990s, there was a surge of state tourism agencies focusing on heritage tourism which still continues today. For most pilot communities, including those in Virginia, five principles were identified for successful heritage tourism development within the United States:

1. Focus on authenticity and quality.
2. Preserve and protect resources.
3. Make site come alive.
4. Find the fit between community life and tourism.
5. Collaborate (between all relevant stakeholders).²³

These five principles demonstrate the importance of resource protection, but also stress the opportunities that can be gained from continuous, community support. Statewide non-profit organizations and local governments are learning more about the economic impacts historic and cultural preservation efforts can have on community and site development.

A study focusing on the impact of historic and cultural preservation efforts in Virginia established that visitors to these sites stay longer, spend almost two and a half times more, on average, in Virginia than do other visitors. For example, Colonial Williamsburg benefits from over a half a billion dollars in revenue annually that comes from visitors exploring the many historic sites and trails within the community.²⁴ These effects can also be seen in a smaller form within historic trails along the Adams Morgan corridor and U Street neighborhoods, both in the District of Columbia. Historic African American neighborhoods display and educate the public about their communities through walking tours, oral history tours, virtual tours, and other educational mechanisms that bring these communities alive to many outsiders.

There are those who have concern about negative externalities that may rise from increased tourism and development. Many of these concerns are founded upon the congestion, automobile traffic and pedestrian, as well as the greater potential for trash and debris that can be created from these visitors. For example, in Oak Park, Illinois, tourists who visit the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed homes are being unwelcomed by community members through signs stating their disapproval for their visits. In Annapolis, Maryland, many community members have moved out of historic downtown because of the traffic and noise pollution created by the local bars and restaurants.²⁵ Even though these places generate great revenue to the city, some community members who live near these landmarks are not pleased with the effects of development.

Despite these challenges, there exists more positive feedback from community members in regards to developing historically significant arts and cultural districts throughout the nation. Much of this support comes in the form of heritage trails and tours. Along Adams Morgan in Washington D.C., the Adams Morgan Heritage Trail details the history of significant buildings, sites, and events. Some of the buildings and events include Mary Foote Henderson's economic and social influence on the corridor, mainly within the 16th St and Florida St NW area. Her influence is especially detailed along the Meridian Park area, with its details of Gothic and Victorian inspired architecture along hotels, embassies and private residences along the corridor.²⁶ The trail serves as a history lesson about an influential figure in politics and social life within a particular area of Adams Morgan and the District at large.

The Adams Morgan Heritage Trail also recognizes and educates about the importance of certain events that occurred within the area. For example, before Adams Morgan was conceived with the name “Adams Morgan” it was simply known as the neighborhood on “18th and Columbia” (18th Street and Columbia Road NW). In 1922, the roof of Crandalls’ Knickerbocker Theater collapsed on the southwest corner of the building. The weight of nearly 2 ½ feet of snow collapsed the roof killing 98 people and injuring many more.²⁷ As a result, the City passed new building codes that exercised more stringency on building and structural development of certain buildings. Crandall’s Theater was redeveloped and built again along with other nearby structures that would now conform to the new building codes. A new business district arose and much commercial development occurs within that area to this day. Therefore, as a result of these tragic events, the Adams Morgan Heritage Trail also recognizes the effects these events had on the surrounding community.

IV. Concluding Thoughts

A historic trail or arts and cultural district should tell the story of its structures, community members, and events. Many community advocates, business owners, and local agencies, want the “procedural history” told about the community, such as the case within Adams Morgan. Falls Church has the structural tools to implement many of these ideas through the use and proposed modifications of their Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan. Many social political, and economic opportunities exist within any potential heritage site, the question is how to best present it for the particular needs of a community.

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8 Figure 4-2. "Existing Land Use Map." 2007. City Base Data Layers, Land Use Database. City of Falls Church, Virginia.

9 City of Falls Church – Development Services Department. 2005. Community Character, Appearance, and Design. *City of Falls Church, Virginia: Comprehensive Plan 3*: 22.

10 Ibid.

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22 Brink, Peter H. 1998. Heritage tourism in the U.S.A.: Grassroots efforts to combine preservation and tourism. *APT Bulletin 29*, (3/4, Thirtieth-Anniversary Issue): 60, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1504615>.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Brink, Peter H. 1998. Heritage tourism in the U.S.A.: Grassroots efforts to combine preservation and tourism. *APT Bulletin 29*, (3/4, Thirtieth-Anniversary Issue): 61, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1504615>.

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28 City of Falls Church – Development Services Department. 2005. Historic Preservation. *City of Falls Church, Virginia: Comprehensive Plan 9*: 192-193.

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Section 2: Incentives

I. Introduction

The existence alone of an arts and culture district is not enough to draw artists, developers, investors, and eventually visitors to a city or town. State and local governments need to provide economic incentives to attract artists, developers, and investors whose products will in turn bring in visitors. The law of the Commonwealth of Virginia (15.2-1129.1) that provides for arts and cultural districts in seven cities, including Falls Church, states that these localities “may provide incentives for the support and creation of arts and cultural venues” as well as “grant tax incentives and provide certain regulatory flexibility.”¹ A review of some of the various incentive plans that have been used in other arts and culture districts around the nation has been completed, and from this review recommendations for specific incentives Falls Church are provided.

II. Artist Housing and Workspace

The presence of artists, whether they be painters, sculptors, musicians, or writers is key to the success of any arts and culture district, but the lack of affordable housing and workspace can be a major stumbling block. A number of tools are available to local governments to improve the availability of housing and workspace for artists. Local governments can encourage live-work space by providing density bonuses to developers who include the space in their projects. Cleveland, Ohio has encouraged this by creating a Live-Work Overlay District Zoning. The goal of this zone is to transform old, unused industrial buildings into spaces that can be productively put to use by the arts community².

Local governments can also provide incentives for property owners willing to invest in rehabilitating or upgrading their property in a way that will be beneficial to the arts, including providing space for artists to live or work. The town of Fairfield, Iowa allows for a “Temporary Historic Property Tax Exemption” within its cultural district. Under this incentive, there is a four year freeze on property taxes after a rehabilitation and then increase 25% per year for the next four years. To be eligible for this exemption, the property “must be listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register, contributing to National Register or historic districts, or designated by a county or municipal landmark ordinance”³. The last qualifier gives the Fairfield government a certain amount of leeway in granting this property tax exemption.

While the creation of live-work space is largely up to developers, there are also incentives municipalities can use to make it easier for artists to afford to purchase housing in an arts and culture district. Local governments can either provide grants to artists who purchase homes

in an arts district or work with lenders to help provide loans with more favourable terms. The City of Covington, Kentucky established the Arts District CARD Homeowner Loan Program which provides a cash incentive of up to \$6,000.00 to build or rehabilitate residential or mixed use buildings that serve as the primary residence of the owner. To obtain this loan the recipient must have fee simple title to the property, the property must be in the designated area of the arts district, and the structure must be the principal residence of the borrower for five years⁴. The loan is for 5% of the appraisal up to \$6,000, and will be forgiven on a prorated basis every year after the fifth year of owner occupation⁵.

III. Zoning Incentives

In addition to providing density bonuses to developers willing to provide affordable living or work space to artists, local governments can also provide other zoning incentives. An example of a local government that uses incentive zoning in an arts district is the village of Port Jefferson, New York. The goal of the law is to “provide incentives to property owners to encourage improvements to the lands and buildings contained within the Arts District.”⁶ By providing property owners incentives to make improvements to their land and buildings, the village hopes to encourage artists to live and work within the arts district.

Under the village’s law, for any property within the designated Arts District the Planning Board may

- Change a property’s density requirements
- Change permitted lot coverage
- Change up to 20% in minimum FAR
- Ease requirements for on-site parking
- Allow for studios and galleries that provide arts services and retail uses
- Allow for the second stories of studios and galleries to be rental housing for artists
- Allow art displays and exhibits on the property outside of studios and galleries
- Partially or fully release the property owner from on-site dumpster requirements

Port Jefferson created an overlay zone for their Arts District to provide for these zoning incentives⁷.

To be granted any of these exceptions, the property owner is required to apply to the Planning Board, provide information about what the proposed exception is, the value of the exception, what the benefits to village are, and how specifically the proposed exception will help further the goals of the Arts District⁸. If the Planning Board approves the exception, the property owner is required to pay Port Jefferson a fee of \$500 plus 1% of the cost of the project. All funds that the village earns from these fees are placed in a fund totally dedicated to the Arts District⁹.

IV. Business Incentives

Beyond space for artists to live and work, there are a number of other kinds of businesses necessary to support artists and make for a successful arts and culture district. Painters and sculptors need galleries, art supply stores, and framing shops to help them create their work

and expose it to people interested in purchasing it. Musicians and songwriters need music shops, bars, and restaurants to maintain their instruments and give them a space to perform. Small publishers, print shops, and local bookstores can help writers and poets get their work to the public. These businesses not only supply artists with what is required for their craft, but they also provide potential employment to augment their income. Finally, these businesses not only supply the professional artists in an art district, but they also cater to and serve local citizens for whom art or music is only a hobby.

Covington, Kentucky's Arts & Technology District Small Business Loan Program has the goal of keeping businesses in the arts district, helping businesses in the arts district to expand, or bringing new businesses into the arts district. The loan has an interest rate of 1% and can not exceed \$25,000. The City gives priority to businesses directly related to the arts, as well as those businesses for which the loan is a minor part of the total project cost. The loan must help the recipient create jobs for people of low or moderate incomes. Bars or other adult oriented businesses are unable to receive these loans, as they are seen as restricting public access¹⁰.

While providing loans directly is not always an option for local governments due to funding limitations, there are a number other ways to provide funds and assistance to businesses. A local government can work with their Chamber of Commerce and local financial institutions to provide loans to businesses. Fairfield, Iowa has done this with their Fairfield Revitalization Loan Program. While this program is not limited to the arts district, arts related businesses in the district are encouraged to apply for these loans. In 2006 the loan was for a maximum of \$100,000, with a three year fixed rate of 6.25%. These loans are specifically for retail businesses¹¹.

Rather than providing a local business or cultural organization with funds through a loan, local governments can also help to lower their operating costs. Two examples of this approach come from Cleveland, Ohio. Because benefits like health insurance can be a major cost to a small business or non-profit organization, Cleveland seeks to create a pooled benefits program for arts related small businesses and organizations within its arts and culture district. Cleveland also seeks to match volunteers from the business world to share their expertise and services with small businesses and organizations in the arts and culture district¹².

Other incentives that local governments can provide are certain tax breaks. Harrisonburg, Virginia provides a number of tax breaks to arts related businesses within its arts and culture district. For property owners making improvements that benefit the arts, the assessment remains constant for three years, which keeps the property taxes at the pre-improvement amount. Harrisonburg also provides arts related businesses with either full or partial exemption from business license taxes as well as exemption from admissions taxes¹³.

V. Awards

All businesses and organizations, even those not related to the arts, should be able to

participate in and support the arts district. Businesses that have nothing to do with the arts can be very involved in the arts and culture district through donations or the volunteer assistance described above, and it is important that their involvement be recognized. To recognize businesses and organizations that have contributed to the arts, the Taiwanese Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA) gives out trophies and awards to individuals, businesses, and organizations that are major supports and patrons of the arts. The CCA has a broad view of what it means to be a patron of the arts, including making donations to arts groups, improving arts related facilities, sponsoring public art, and providing other groups such as schools the opportunity to experience culture and arts¹⁴.

VI. State Level Incentives

In addition to the incentives that local government can provide for an arts and culture district, there are a number of incentives, many dealing with income tax, that are really only applicable at the state or national level. ArtServe Michigan has proposed a number of incentives to help support arts and cultural districts in that state. One proposal is to make up to \$25,000 of the income earned by a working artist in a Michigan arts and culture district exempt from state income taxes. This income tax exemption would save artists about \$1,000 in state taxes every year. They also propose that there be no state sales tax on art or art materials sold from certified merchants within an arts and culture district. Another proposal is that individuals and businesses receive a tax credit for donations to non-profit arts and culture organizations located within a culture district, as long as the donation is not also claimed for federal income tax¹⁵. Finally, ArtServe Michigan proposes that property owners within a culture district who rent to artists for housing or work space receive an income tax credit based on personal property taxes paid¹⁶.

- 1 "LIS > Code of Virginia > 15.2-1129.1" from <https://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe ?000+cod+15.2-1129.1>. Accessed April 15, 2009.
- 2 "Arts and Culture" from http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/cwp/art_plicy.php. Accessed April 15, 2009.
- 3 "Tax Incentives – Fairfield Cultural District" from <http://www.fairfieldculturaldistrict.org/tax.htm>. Accessed April 16, 2009.
- 4 "Arts District CARD Homeowner Loan Program" from http://www.covingtonarts.com/pdf /CARD_loan_program_info.pdf. Accessed April 15, 2009. Page 1.
- 5 *Ibid*, Page 2.
- 6 "Arts District Incentive Zoning" from <http://landuse.law.pace.edu/landuse/documents /laws/reg2/PortJeffersonIncntZning.doc>. Access April 15, 2009. Page 1.
- 7 *Ibid*, Page 2.
- 8 *Ibid*, Page 3.
- 9 *Ibid*, Page 4.
- 10 "Arts & Technology District Small Business Loan Program" from http://www.covingtonarts.com/ pdf/ CATZ_loan_program_info.pdf. Accessed April 15, 2009.
- 11 "Tax Incentives – Fairfield Cultural District" from <http://www.fairfieldculturaldistrict.org/tax.htm>. Accessed April 16, 2009.
- 12 "Arts and Culture" from http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/cwp/art_plicy.php. Accessed April 15, 2009.
- 13 "Harrisonburg's Arts and Culture District" from http://valleyarts.org/blog/?page_id=1333. Accessed April 16, 2009.
- 14 "Culture Incentives" from <http://english.cca.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=11963&CtNode=3960>. Accessed April 16, 2009.
- 15 "ArtServe Michigan's Arts & Culture Advocacy Toolkit" from https://www.artservemichigan.org/ get_document.asp?doc=82267686E68D41F1892BD066B696E761. Page 16.
- 16 *Ibid*, Page 15.

Section 3: The Potential of Exhibits within the Arts and Cultural District

I. Introduction

The Arts and Cultural District is meant to incorporate and encourage connections between history, art, residents, and visitors. One of the main ways through which to achieve these goals is to explore the full potential of exhibits. Exhibits can take many forms, and can include traditional physical exhibits, online exhibits, partnerships with schools, community murals, and other artwork in the public realm. The partnership between Falls Church and Tinner Hill can explore the creative use of exhibits to enhance cultural awareness and artistic expression within the community. This portion of the paper looks at the potential of online exhibits, various forms of murals, and partnerships across the community to achieve goals of creative expression and cultural awareness.

II. Online Exhibits

With the increased use of internet resources, online exhibits have the potential to reach a large number of people and introduce residents and visitors to an area's heritage and current resources. Oftentimes, an area's library hosts educational exhibits on their website. However, the library of Falls Church does not currently possess any online exhibits.¹ A great potential exists for Tinner Hill to partner with Falls Church and create an online exhibit pertaining to the history and cultural heritage of Falls Church. The online exhibit could also link to educational opportunities for area schools and to other opportunities created by the Arts and Cultural District. There are many examples of online exhibits from which Falls Church and Tinner Hill can build upon and customize. The scale and scope of online exhibits can vary, and thereby presents a flexible tool for a community. This portion of the paper will briefly describe some examples of the potential for online exhibits.

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, part of the New York Public Library, hosts an impressive array of online exhibits covering topics in black culture. One of the exhibits, "Harlem: 1900-1940", can serve as a prime example of the components and production of an online exhibit. The research for the exhibit was originally published in 1991 by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The original document was written by Nashormeh N. R. Lindo, designed by Kenneth McFarlin and Alice Cheung, and had a small team of assistance and support. The web site was based in part on the publication and was produced in the Fall of 1997 by a 3-person production team and a 3-person initial design team. From September, 1999 to April, 2001, one person provided maintenance and updates to the exhibit.²

The exhibit itself is divided into sections. One section contains a timeline of events and important figures. Another section contains photographs and graphic images. A third section includes links to biographies of significant events, businesses of the time, community landmarks, and activism events. A “For teachers” section outlines program objectives, instructional strategies, and tips for how to interpret photos and conduct oral histories. The final section, “Resources”, lists the bibliography, links to online resources, and a section for “young readers”. The format of this exhibit could easily be copied to an online exhibit about Tinner Hill and Falls Church, and provide a program which local schools could use as part of their curriculum.³

The Harlem exhibit website was developed by the Cultural Heritage Initiative for Community Outreach (CHICO) based at the University of Michigan School of Information and funded by the Kellogg Foundation. Graduate students at the School of Information work with collaborators and partners in schools, art institutions, K-12 schools, lively arts organizations, as well as local, regional, and national museums and public libraries. CHICO partnerships produce projects that “celebrate the arts and cultural expressions within and across communities”. Another example of a CHICO partnership is “Students on Site”, a collaboration between students and teachers at Ann Arbor’s schools and the University of Michigan. The project’s aim is to use local history and geography as a site of teaching and learning. The website’s sections include Archives, Topics, Educators’ Section, and Spotlight. The Archives present historical and contemporary materials such as letters, photographs, and maps (many of the documents borrowed from the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan). The Topics section groups themes such as African-American life or the Great Depression. The Educators’ Section includes connections to local history resources, lesson plans, and a feedback section. Finally, the Spotlight section exhibits samples of student work. Tinner Hill and Falls Church could seek to partner with an organization such as CHICO, or even just



Figure 3 Photo by James Van der Zee, “Harlem: 1900-1940” Exhibit

borrow ideas such as what to include in an online exhibit.⁴

Another potentially useful example of an online exhibit is the “The Storm is Passing Over” exhibit at The Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. The exhibit is both traveling and online, and it uses photographs, memorabilia, and manuscripts to record the lives of Maryland’s African American musicians. The exhibition was organized by the Peabody Institute, which partnered with the Enoch Pratt Library and Coppin State College. The online exhibit was divided into “The Story”, “The Images”, an Exhibition Schedule, a Teacher’s Guide, Acknowledgements, and Related Links. “The Story” simply consists of a series of written stories, or articles. “The Images” is comprised of historical images, and the Teacher’s Guide provides a summary, a list of topics and questions for discussion, activities, online resources, and suggested books for teachers. The website also provides a School Brochure for students.⁵

More local examples of online exhibits include the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington VA, the Alexandria Public Library, and the African American Heritage Program. The Black Heritage Museum of Arlington website contains a section for online exhibits. Most of these are “Coming Soon” and the rest consist of simple written articles at the moment. The exhibits were created by students in “Introduction to Public History”, a class taught at Marymount University in Fall of 2002.⁶ The Alexandria Public Library exhibits are similar and simply contain informative pages with links to photographs and maps.⁷ The African American Heritage Program of Virginia website has an Exhibits section that links to exhibits hosted by other organizations.⁸ Tinner Hill could possibly partner with local organizations or universities to help organize the content of the exhibits, and it could also link to informative online exhibits hosted by other organizations and entities.

III. Murals

Murals can provide a great medium with which to communicate aspects of a community’s cultural heritage, both past and present, and contribute to a sense of community pride and identity. In this sense, murals provide a very visible community “exhibit” in the public realm. Murals have the potential to engage residents, visitors, artists, organizations, and public entities. In addition to creating a greater sense and understanding of a community’s heritage, murals can add a great visual component to the Falls Church Arts and Cultural District. Murals could cover a wide range of topics and could include minority heritage and contemporary celebration of diversity. Many cities and communities have mural programs which range from more “conventional” murals to murals on bus shelters or business grates, and include a variety of partnerships. Tinner Hill and Falls Church could combine aspects of these programs to develop a program that is suitable to the size and scale of the Falls Church community.

One example of a successful mural program is that of the Sprout Fund in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The Sprout Fund is a non-profit organization that employs 8 staff members and has an operating budget of \$1.3 million in 2009. By the end of 2008, the Sprout Public Art program saw five seasons, or rounds, of mural programs and collaborated with artists to develop 45 works of public art, which are located all throughout Pittsburgh in various neighborhoods. The works of art are seen to “enhance the urban landscape and consider

the people of the community, their history and their vision for the future". The community selection strategy at the Sprout Fund is well developed. The selection of the location takes into account "coverage", or the focus of locating murals where none currently exists, "concentrations", or communities that have the potential to grow with subsequent murals, and "corridors", or major traffic arteries that have the potential for many new murals along its route.⁹

The Sprout Fund has developed a successful sequence for the process of completing a community mural. The first step is artist selection, in which artists apply and submit samples of work. The second step is community, or location, selection, which occurs around the same time as the artist selection. Next, the fund matches the artists to the locations and gives the community a chance to state with whom they would prefer to work. The artists then enter preliminary design, in which they have two weeks to prepare a fully painted preliminary design (for which they receive \$100). After this phase, a pre-schedule meeting occurs in which artists are given 15 minutes to present their works to the community and articulate their visions. The community then chooses a final muralist with which to move forward. The artist has a month to finish the design. After the design is finished, the mural is painted (over a 4-8 week period) and then a public dedication ceremony is held.¹⁰

Philadelphia, PA also has a very well developed and successful Mural Arts Program. Similar to the Sprout Fund program, the Mural Arts Program includes the community in every step of the mural-making process, which takes about 3-6 months. The community is involved in selecting a theme, a muralist, contributing critiques and discussion of the design, and



Figure 4 Sprout Fund mural, Pittsburgh PA



Figure 5 Sprout Fund mural, Pittsburgh PA

finally celebrating the completion of the mural. The program partners with block captains, neighborhood associations, public schools, community development corporations, local nonprofits, and city agencies. The Mural Arts Program has found that mural projects can aid in the stabilization and revitalization of community areas.¹¹

The Mural Arts Program also provides an example of innovative ways to incorporate murals with other community programs. The program has restorative justice programs for youth, in which juvenile delinquents and children at risk become part of a mural making process. Themes of forgiveness, crime, its impact on communities, and decision-making are discussed, and students receive basic art instruction and collaborate with others on community murals. While these programs are largely held at juvenile detention centers, any “at-risk” children could benefit from such programs. Regular schools are also involved in mural programs, in which murals are painted on walls within area schools. The applications for murals are reviewed by a panel of School District art administrators and Mural Arts Program artists and administrators. A core group of students from a school works with muralists to learn the process of mural-making, the history of murals as a form of public art, and participates in the murals creation. Tinner Hill and Falls Church could partner with schools to include community heritage murals and involve children in public art.¹²

The Boston Youth Fund Mural Crew provides another example of including youth into a mural program. The Boston Youth Clean-Up Corps headed up a new division, the Mural Crew, in 1991. The program was meant to address a graffiti problem, and began with an employed artist and a group of eight teenagers to cover graffiti-covered security grates with art. The residents voiced support of the program and it subsequently expanded to include murals on walls. Each summer, four crews of young artists, directed by professional mural painters, now

design and paint murals that reflect the business or neighborhood where a wall is located. Since 1991, the Mural Crew has now produced over 60 public art works. The program gives youth a fun and educational experience, and links art and community. Tinner Hill and Falls Church could incorporate selected youth into the process of making each mural in order to provide hands-on experience to area youth.¹³

While most murals are located on area walls, public art can also be incorporated into other aspects of the built environment. Business grates, pulled down over storefronts after closing time, often present a cold and uninviting face to the street. Partnering with local business to cover the grates with community murals has the potential to liven up main thoroughfares in the Arts and Cultural District. In Washington DC, the Greater Washington Creative Community Initiative (CCI), an arts pollination foundation that does not consider unsolicited proposals (though nominations can be made), was involved in one such project. The CCI was launched by The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region in 2005 to engage community residents and spark the creation of new work. The Cultural Development Corporation acts as the lead agency for CCI, and funds come largely from donations.¹⁴ The CCI invited a local artist, Kelly Towles, to submit a proposal and subsequently granted him \$20,000. All grant recipients are required to find sponsorship from a local nonprofit, which oversees the logistics in exchange for a portion of the grant. Towles proposed working with the Transformer Gallery to produce “The Grate Project”, in which he would paint permanent graffiti murals on various alley walls and security shutters in the Shaw neighborhood of DC. The result has been received well, and contributes to a sense of public involvement and lively streets.¹⁵

In Seattle, WA, the local transit agency partnered with the community to include murals on bus shelters. The program was started in 1989 by Metro to involve youth and community in the designing and painting of bus shelter murals. Metro provides the panels and paint, and community member donate their time and talent to create the bus shelter murals. Every



Figure 6 King County Metro Transit bus shelter

year, Metro funds a handful of artist commissions for special bus shelter artworks. Since its initiation, over 700 murals have been installed and the program is viewed as a success. The appearance of the bus shelters has improved, and a sense of community pride has developed around the murals.¹⁶

Tinner Hill and Falls Church could potentially partner with local businesses and transit agencies to incorporate grate and bus shelter artworks into an Arts and Cultural District mural program. The inclusion of public art that enhances a community sense of heritage and diversity both benefits the existing community as well as drawing attention from visitors and neighboring communities. Funding can potentially come from a variety of sources such as partnerships with organizations and agencies, community volunteer work, public revenue, or matching grant programs. One example of a matching grant program is located in Santa Cruz, CA and is located within the Santa Cruz Redevelopment Agency. The Mural Matching Grant Program was initiated in 1994 and has successfully sponsored murals by providing matching grant incentive to business and property owners to paint murals on their buildings. The Program facilitates the development of murals by providing a maximum amount of \$3,000 for each mural (not to exceed 75% of the total mural cost) on a matching basis. The Agency partners with local artists to render and paint the murals.¹⁷

IV. Conclusions

All of the examples of online exhibits and murals in the public sphere listed in this portion of the report have been intended to provide a variety of ways in which Tinner Hill and Falls Church can incorporate informative and enjoyable exhibits into the Arts and Cultural District. Falls Church and Tinner Hill can form partnerships across the community to tailor a program that provides an enhanced sense of heritage and pride and fits the size and scale of Falls Church.

- 1 The Mary Riley Styles Public Library. "Mary Riley Styles Public Library". Accessed April 19, 2009 <<http://www.falls-church.lib.va.us/>>
- 2 "Harlem: 1900-1940". The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture: The New York Public Library. Accessed April 19, 2009 <<http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/Harlem/index.html>>
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Cultural Heritage Initiative for Community Outreach. "CHICO". Accessed April 19, 2009 <<http://www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/>>
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- 7 Alexandria Public Library. "Online Exhibits". Accessed April 19, 2009 <<http://www.alexandria.lib.va.us/lhsc/exhibit.html>>
- 8 African American Heritage Program. Accessed April 19, 2009 <<http://www.aaheritageva.org/teachers/exhibits.php>>
- 9 The Sprout Fund. "About the Sprout Fund". Accessed April 19, 2009 <<http://www.sproutfund.org/about/>>
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- 12 Ibid.
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- 15 Capps, Kriston. "Start Up the Burner". *The Washington City Paper*: Sept. 5, 2007. Accessed April 19, 2009 <<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/display.php?id=2493>>
- 16 King County Metro Transit. "Bus Shelter Mural Program". Accessed April 19, 2009 <http://transit.metrokc.gov/prog/sheltermural/shelter_mural.html>
- 17 Santa Cruz Redevelopment Agency. "Mural Program". Accessed April 19, 2009 <<http://www.ci.santa-cruz.ca.us/ra/MuralProgram.html>>

Section 4: Building a Heritage Trail in Falls Church: Linking the environment with community, history, and ecology

I. Introduction and Background

This section discusses an emerging tool for urban heritage preservation and interpretation, the *heritage trail*. We explore its role as part of a broader strategy for the Arts and Cultural District, along with its possible application to the City of Falls Church. As an Arts and Cultural District, the City of Falls Church has a tremendous opportunity to shape the very narrative of its past, present and future through the built environment. At present however, the cultural resources of the city appear to be incoherent and fragmented by an unsympathetic urban geography. There is presently no ability for a visitor to contextualize the rich heritage and cultural assets of the city into a coherent experience. The City's historic resources and their value are not evident to the general public¹. If Falls Church wants to maximize the potential of their Arts and Cultural District as a vehicle for making 'sense of place' and increasing visitor opportunity, then a new approach is required. We suggest a heritage trail, which can be a great device to help organize the visitor experience while providing for both active and passive engagement with a place.

Heritage trails are seen to be flexible, multi-faceted products with many benefits ranging from social and physical, environmental and cultural, to economic². A heritage trail can not only assist in unifying the Arts and Cultural District by providing for a multi-faceted visitor experience, but also contributes to a deeper sense of place and community pride³. Furthermore, the heritage trail could focus on a distinct theme to bring to life hidden histories preserved in the city's built environment. For example, countless African Americans imprinted their early freedom and larger struggles against second class citizenship in the City of Falls Church. Yet their stories are not evident in the current context of the city in such a way a visitor could collectively experience. Joining these themes physically and interpretively through a heritage trail could mark pivotal events that took place in history and acknowledge the remarkable individuals responsible for their development. The trail could also serve as an educational tool depicting the history of Falls Church while at the same time recognizing individuals who sacrificed so much in the fight for civil rights⁴

In this regard, a heritage trail could highlight historic buildings, sites and events in ways that acknowledge the significance of African Americans in their struggle for civil rights. Themes of social justice, equal education rights and larger civil liberties could all be used to augment the heritage trail and provide a visible record connecting to the experiences and contributions of such figures as E.B. Henderson, Frederick Forest Foote, Joseph and Charles Tinner, and Mary

Ellen Henderson. The heritage trail should also include site specific improvements to link these storylines through the built environment. This would provide for a deeper awareness and sense of place as part of the city's redevelopment efforts. For example, the Tinner Hill Monument (See Figure 1) at the corner of South Washington Street and Tinner Hill Road could include site specific improvements such as pedestrian scaled crosswalks in order to strengthen visitor accessibility to the memorial and surrounding sites of interest. Sidewalks could also provide for more continuity between the memorial site and the E.B. Henderson home located on 307 S. Maple Ave.



Figure 7 Tinner Hill Monument
Source: The Virginia African American Heritage Program



Figure 8 Henderson Home Historical Marker
Source: The Historical Marker Database

Community art projects and cultural events centered on significant themes could be used to highlight segments of the trail and draw visitation⁵. Consequently, the heritage trail could be used to promote visible public art space for artisans that could generate foot traffic while at the same time providing for interpretation of cultural and historical resources of the city. In a way, public art and the heritage trail would be part of the city's cultural infrastructure and broader economic development strategy. Therefore completing the Historic Falls Church trail

as identified in Chapter 9 of the Comprehensive Plan, offers an opportunity for a physical trail to link the characteristic attributes of the Falls Church area (e.g. local food chains, ethnic businesses, and locally significant places) to the general public through an urban heritage trail. The urban heritage trail could be used as a vehicle to strengthen the unity between culturally significant sites by incorporating and linking to planned pedestrian and bicycle routes. Our research illustrates different paths that places have taken to advance this kind of strategy and provides several ways for local planners and policymakers to integrate these devices into their redevelopment plans.

II. Drawing on the past to shape the future of Falls Church



Figure 9 Public art integrated into the Asheville Urban Heritage Trail (Asheville, North Carolina)

With the growing strength of the urban tourism market, heritage trails are particularly popular and are frequently used as a means of interpreting architecture, historic sites, local industry and famous local personalities⁶. The potential for a heritage trail to augment the visitor experience as part of the Arts and Cultural District in Falls Church should be further explored. The heritage trail would seek to capitalize on the local culture of Falls Church by providing for a truly public amenity in contrast to a quasi-public realm shaped by inwardly focused redevelopment efforts. Instead the visitor is encouraged to immerse, and perhaps find, themselves in unique self-tailored experiences that reflect their personality and interest. Many communities use major historic events in a particular geographic area as the organizing theme for a broad-based approach to preservation and revitalization that incorporates land-use conservation and recreation⁷. The focus is not on monuments or architectural meanings but on the fabric of

the street. In this regard, the built environment can serve as a narrative landscape to foster stronger local identity⁸.

One of the goals of a heritage trail is to elucidate past struggles and to indicate insights that can be gained from them for present and future generations. Preserving the physical evidence connected to these struggles and using the urban landscape as a vehicle for their retelling can inspire people in the present and in the future while fostering civic pride⁹. A heritage landscape should contain a host of material elements associated with collective memory, e.g., street signs, historical markers, landmarks, statuary, preserved sites, and parks¹⁰. Projects such as heritage trails can unify a fragmented and contested history with a landscape that heals, connects, empowers and strengthens our collective memory with each other¹¹. As an

example, Birmingham's Civil Rights District used the theme of civil rights and incorporated the larger storyline into the overall design of the district. At the district's core are three sites



Figure 10 Public art integrated into the Asheville Urban Heritage Trail (Asheville, North Carolina)

closely linked by proximity, design, and the history of the 1963 campaign to desegregate the city.

Another example, in the Little Tokyo District of Los Angeles, highlights how Japanese Americans sought to inscribe the ethnic identity of their community onto the abstract space of downtown Los Angeles. Many Japanese Americans were unsettled by the pace and scale of corporate-focused redevelopment efforts in the Little Tokyo District. In contrast, the community sought a space of commemoration, reflection, interpretation and contestation as a unifying element¹². Their strategy was to draw on the past experiences and struggles of Japanese immigrants to shape the community's future redevelopment efforts. By using local cultural assets the Little Tokyo District was able to marry neighborhood revitalization efforts with a grassroots strategy to express collective memory. The Little Tokyo example highlights a break from traditional institutionalized

history to embodied memory at the urban scale. It illustrates the importance of providing communities with physical space to engage in social reproduction¹³. Therefore, focusing on a distinct theme for the Falls Church Arts and Cultural District may provide for a unifying storyline for the heritage trail.

Little Tokyo now allows local Japanese Americans to define the nature of ethnic community and repair and renew the ties that bind them to each other¹⁴. Another significant point from this case study applicable to Falls Church is the use of public art as a means to unify people and build a stronger sense of community. On October 29 2005, nearly 200 members of the local Japanese American community joined City Councilwoman Jan Perry to unveil a sixteen-by forty-foot wide mural at the corner of East First Street and Central Avenue (See Figure 1). The mural, entitled "Home Is Little Tokyo," was designed with ideas collected at public workshops held in 2003. Several hundred people contributed to the mural's completion. The mural recaptures the long history of Japanese American immigrants and is a testament of community teamwork and self-determination¹⁵. Since the City of Falls Church

has expressed a similar desire to use the arts as a vehicle for community growth and change, the example from Little Tokyo illustrates how to use local cultural and integrated it with the built environment. This is one strategy used to capitalize on the local culture and history of a community while at the same time delineating a special place of recognition into the urban fabric of a city.



Figure 11 The mural, Home is Little Tokyo is the culmination of three years of work by almost 500 individuals, groups and organizations.

In the case of South Washington Street and adjoining areas, there is a compelling case for City Council to augment future mixed-use developments with the potential for interpretive learning through the built environment. The trail could not only increase ‘walkability,’ but provide for a more prominent gateway into the central business district. The goal would be to use the urban trail strategy to make central the broader context. Since the W&OD Trail traverses the north end of the city there is the potential to possibly link the trail through an effective urban greenway and bicycle trail system. In addition, the Tinner Hill Road community contains ample open space in which to include linkages to the trail. The city has recognized its parks, recreation, and open space goals and strategies are

to be achieved through a variety of means. Falls Church has stated that its existing trail system and linkages are no complete. These components would greatly enhance the potential for a successful multifaceted heritage trail as part of the Arts and Cultural District.

III. Historical space as narrative medium: Developing a storyline

The very process of remembering grows out of spatial metaphors of connection and topography¹⁶. Therefore, the shaping of space is an important instrument for the shaping of human memory and experience. Consequently, the urban fabric of a city can be used as a metaphorical and physical device for shaping collective memory and shared experiences¹⁷. For instance, the heritage trail in Falls Church could draw attention to the larger struggles of African Americans in the growth and development of the city and the surrounding region. Perhaps local economic development planners and policymakers could create positive outcomes by leveraging these and a host of other undervalued assets (e.g. ethnic businesses). Whereas monuments and historic sites created by civic and economic elites once tended to recount triumphant tales of military heroism and national progress, more recent neighborhood-based initiatives have adopted the analytical categories of class, race, gender, and ethnicity popularized by social historians to expose tales of oppression, injustice, and struggle¹⁸. In their study of African Americans in Richmond, Virginia, Brown

and Kimbell (1995) provide a new cultural history of the city's black community, weaving several separate historical strands into a text of festival behavior, historic memory, and power, class, and gender. Their study argues for treating the city as more than fixed residential and work patterns mapped on linear blocks. To them, city space is an amalgam of fluid space. Their study suggests people attend to the built environment as a means of exploring social, political, and economic ideology.



Figure 12 Adams Morgan Heritage Trail Marker. Cultural Tourism, D.C.

Spatial narratives involve a complex configuration of geographic elements including buildings, markers, memorials, and inscriptions positioned with great care to provide a spatial story-line or to capture the key locational and chronological relations of a historical event¹⁹. Sometimes chronological stories are used to link places which are not ordered in strict sequence²⁰. Perhaps the most common examples of this type of spatial narrative are tours developed around the life and work of famous individuals. In these cases, the chronology of the individual's life provides the basic structure of the spatial narrative, usually punctuated spatially with visits to the sites of important life events²¹. An example of this is Philadelphia's 'Walking in the Steps of Benjamin Franklin.' The route recounts Benjamin Franklin's life, but uses it to also tell the larger story of Philadelphia's history and the American Revolution. Falls Church could employ a similar technique on a smaller scale to highlight the significance of Mary Ellen Henderson and her larger fight for equal education rights for colored school children. A similar idea could use the life of E.B. Henderson and highlight the footsteps of his journey for civil rights with the formation of the first rural branch of the NAACP (1915) in Falls Church. Critical choices of how to arrange the narrative in terms of locations, distances, directions, and movements on the ground at the actual site of the events being recounted would carefully thought out and planned²². The spatial narratives would need to be configured to use spatial, visual and geographical cues to direct visitors along particular routes²³.

IV. Designing Heritage Trails

Heritage trails are pathways designed to increase understanding of a city or a district's natural and cultural heritage. Successful trail designs should be developed to incorporate both educational and entertaining themes and materials which immerse the participant in the story rather than being simply functional products²⁴. Although many heritage trails have a sub-theme, the overall design should avoid incorporating too many sub themes as this is likely to cause confusion for the visitor and undermines the overall experience²⁵.

Trails should aim to provide opportunities for visitor's to actively engage with authentic emotional and spiritual experiences that satisfy across four realms (1) entertainment; (2) educational; (3) esthetic; and (4) escapist²⁶. This provides the visitor with a range of options to reflect their individual interest. The adoption of some or all of these recommendations would help to transform urban trails into memorable worthwhile experiences and enhance visitors' engagement with their destination. The most compelling are those experiences that encompass all aspects of the four realms²⁷. Incorporating these four realms into the design of the Falls Church heritage trail would provide opportunities for increasing absorption and active participation while reducing the risk of alienating a large sector of the market. In addition, the visitor's experience of a place can be enhanced by the linking of formal tourism products (e.g. museums, historic houses and visitor centers) with informal products such as open-air markets, cafes and pubs, which convey a sense of local culture²⁸. Capitalizing on a city's distinctive tastes and preferences can result in important economic development agglomerations²⁹. However, successful heritage corridors need to balance preservation with dynamism that to keep communities relevant³⁰.

Narrative success is dependent upon the following aspects:

- Coherence of the story
- Storytelling genre
- Style and use of language
- Depth
- Credibility
- Sensory elements

Urban trail devices:

- **Language** – trails that invite the visitor to participate are highly effective and this personal style is characteristic of good design practice. Dense text can be off-putting to the visitor exploring on foot as it is often difficult to walk while reading.
- **Visual**– can be used to recreate a sense of the past. There is the possibility to connect existing brochures with the experience on foot.
- **Engagement** –opportunities for enabling the visitor to encourage active engagement with the experience.
- **Personalization** – segmenting visitors and developing distinctive offers to suit different groups.
- **Technology** – websites have the potential to promote trail developers with an effective low-cost platform for promoting the trail.

11 Case studies to consider for Falls Church:

Each of these case studies holds specific issues that are beneficial to the creation of a heritage trail in the City of Falls Church and warrant further investigation.

1. **Asheville Urban Heritage Trail** (Asheville, North Carolina) - The Asheville Urban Trail was conceived through an intensive charette process, as a linear interpretive trail revealing a series of “themes” with associated site-specific amenities. These trail features or “stations” celebrate areas of historic design and cultural significance and provide an interesting and informative experience for Asheville residents and visitors in the downtown area. The trail weaves together divergent areas of the downtown with visual cues and markers to arouse interest. Each station offers information and an opportunity to experience the history and culture of the community by playing roles ranging from passive audience to student to archaeologist.
2. **Auburn Avenue** (Atlanta, Georgia) – historic district where a culturally themed district proposal stretching seven blocks was used to unify the district on distinct themes.
3. **Black Heritage Trail** (Columbus, Georgia) – part of the National Park Service National Recreation Trail System. This is an urban concrete trail connecting 28 African American heritage points.
4. **Farmville** (Virginia – Brown v. Board of education (1957) part of the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail throughout southern Virginia.
5. **Kansas City 18th and Vine Street Jazz District** – highlights the importance of using heritage tourism to provide a roadmap for larger community revitalization.
6. **Overtown Folklife Historic Village** (Miami, FL) – the historic village showcases the literary, visual and performing arts of the Harlem Renaissance, the vibrant nightlife and legacy of Overtown, and the folklife of all people of color in South Florida.
7. **Adams Morgan Heritage Trail ‘Road to Diversity’** (Washington, D.C.) - part of the larger network of African American Heritage Trails (AAHT) highlighting sites that represent important moments in Washington’s black history. Encompasses 200+ sites.
8. **Zora Neale Hurston Dust Tracts Heritage Trail** (Fort Pierce, FL) – commemorates the significance and achievements of Zora Neale Hurston a 20th Century African American woman writer, folklorist and anthropologist. It is also an important example of how cultural arts can revitalize a community and be a catalyst for economic development. Part of Florida’s larger Black Heritage Trails.
9. **Boston African American National Historic Site** (Boston, Massachusetts) – a collection of historic Beacon Hill properties known as the ‘Black Heritage Trail’ encompassing 14 historic sites scattered throughout the Beacon Hill neighborhood in Boston. This trail is operated by the National Park Service and is located in the heart of the neighborhood.

The trail's 14 sites all relate to the history of Boston's nineteenth-century African American community. Free guided tours of the 1.6-mile trail take approximately two hours.

10. Boston Women's Heritage Trail (Boston, Massachusetts) – This trail is important to highlight not only because it depicts women, but also because portions of the trail were actually developed by elementary school students and their teachers as part of a pioneering project.

11. D.C. Neighborhood Heritage Trails (Washington, D.C.) – Great Deanwood Heritage Trail

V. Concluding Thoughts

One of the goals of promoting the urban heritage trail is to use the device as a means to link the Arts and Cultural district into the city's larger redevelopment plan. This would provide for a deeper awareness and sense of place while at the same time providing the city with an educational opportunity to use the trail to highlight the history of Falls Church growth and development. Currently, the rich heritage and cultural resources of the city are fragmented and no unity in the built environment is evident to the visitor. By incorporating the heritage trail proposal into the scope of the Arts and Cultural District, the city would have a way to link public art with outdoor public commemoration space.

In a way, public art and the heritage trail would be part of the city's cultural infrastructure and broader economic development strategy

- 1 Falls Church Comprehensive Plan, Historic Preservation, 9
- 2 Hayes, & MacLeod, N. 2007. Packaging places: Designing heritage trails using an experience economy perspective to maximize visitor engagement. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 13(1): 45.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation
- 5 Lewis. 1995. Connecting memory, self, and the power of place in african american urban history. *Journal of Urban History*, 21(3): 347-371.
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- 8 Azaryahu, & Foote, K. 2008. Historical space as narrative medium: On the configuration of spatial narratives of time at historical sites. *GeoJournal*, 73(3): 179-194.
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- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Azaryahu, & Foote, K. 2008. Historical space as narrative medium: On the configuration of spatial narratives of time at historical sites. *GeoJournal*, 73(3): 179-194.
- 17 Hebbert. 2005. The street as locus of collective memory. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 23: 581-596.
- 18 HURLEY. 2006. Narrating the urban waterfront: The role of public history in community revitalization. *The Public Historian*, 28(4): 19-50.
- 19 Azaryahu, & Foote, K. 2008. Historical space as narrative medium: On the configuration of spatial narratives of time at historical sites. *GeoJournal*, 73(3): 179-194.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Hayes, & MacLeod, N. 2007. Packaging places: Designing heritage trails using an experience economy perspective to maximize visitor engagement. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 13(1): 45.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Carr, & Servon, L.J. 2009. Vernacular culture and urban economic development: Thinking outside the (big) box. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 75(1): 28-40.
- 30 Ibid.

Recommendations

Recommendations from Section 1: Zoning and Comprehensive Planning

With the current focus of the Arts and Cultural District, there needs to be a greater diversity in landmark choices that emphasize the City's various economically and socially diverse communities. It is important to highlight the contributions that ethnic business entrepreneurship make to the City and have them included within a potential Heritage trail. These culturally unique centers include the Tinner Hill site, the Henderson House, the various shopping centers along Washington Street and the State Theater. All of these centers may not be exclusively close to one another, but this also creates opportunities for exploring other transportation and pedestrian friendly options for the City.

Accommodating for the needs of the pedestrian by offering displays, windows, street furniture, and landscaping that is inviting for people of all ages. By linking these features with an expansion in sidewalk coverage, creating street medians with trees and providing street parking for buffering purposes, it can create a more inviting atmosphere for community members and tourists alike.

Other elements of design and orientation that would help the development of the Arts and Cultural District would be by integrating retail and business components not only within the first floor of buildings, but also expand them throughout subsequent floors within multi-level buildings.

Specifically, the plan addresses the need to place parking on the side or rear of these commercial/business buildings, as well as consolidating current, strip shopping centers so their designs can integrate with new development.

The installation of place markers at key intersections and sidewalks (as well as other graphical images) can bring about the history of this community at a pedestrian scale. Encouraging a mix of uses within the Broad Street and South Washington Street areas as well as implementing an expanded pedestrian/bicycle friendly network along key landmarks will promote greater activity along these sites.

Future Zoning should emphasize this by expanding their Official Design, O-D and two Transitional Use, T-1 and T-2, zoning districts to this area. The O-D zone district encourages protecting the character of prominent City buildings, notably City Hall and Falls Church (Episcopal). The two transitional zones can serve as points of incorporation between residential development and beginning commercial expansion, which would create an element of mixed-use growth within the South Washington Street area. A rezoning would

have to occur so these measures can be implemented.

Instituting an overlay zoning designation, such as the Historic and Cultural Conservation (HCC) Overlay District can integrate greater mixed-use development within the South Washington Street area.

The designation of a historical district creates an overlay for protection, while still promoting the culturally and historically relevant activities and sites that exist within a community.

Using the Heritage Trail as an educational tool for social, cultural, and political history for the City. The trail and Arts and Cultural District can complement one another by doing this.

Recommendations from Section 2: Incentives

Due to the high rents in Falls Church, affordable living and working space for artists will be key to the success of the arts and culture district. Making the proposed workforce housing available to artists will be one way to draw them to the city. Making live-work space available by promoting and allowing mixed use development will be another way to encourage artists to come to Falls Church to live and work. Finally, by granting exceptions to developers and property owners wishing to make improvements that provide space for artists to live, work, and display their output the city can help encourage the arts and culture district.

Falls Church should provide or facilitate loans to local businesses supplying and supporting local artists. By encouraging local art supply and music stores, Falls Church can help to keep money within the community, rather than having money spent at national chains, like the Guitar Centre at Seven Corners or the Michael's Arts and Craft Store at Bailey's Crossroads. Locally owned arts related shops have the potential to provide jobs both for artists in Falls Church and for other citizens as well. Partially or fully exempting arts related businesses from business license and admissions taxes will also encourage the growth of local businesses in Falls Church, but the city must first determine how serious of an impact this will have on its annual tax revenues.

In order to help both arts related businesses and other arts organizations, Falls Church should help forge connections both within the arts community and between the arts and business communities. Falls Church can help arts businesses and organizations work to pool benefits to lower operating costs. The city can also help match the arts community with volunteers for business services, or at least preferential rates.

Providing awards and recognition for businesses that support the arts in Falls Church either financially or through their operations is a very inexpensive way for the city to encourage support of the arts. Businesses in this area (especially restaurants) proudly display on their walls almost any type of recognition that they get, whether it be awards, newspaper clippings, or thank you notes from satisfied customers. By recognizing businesses for their support of the arts in Falls Church, further connections between the business and arts community can be

forged.

State level incentives for arts and culture districts such as those proposed for Michigan would be possible, but would require lobbying in Richmond. If Falls Church believes that any of the income tax incentives related to the arts and culture district would be beneficial, they should work with the local governments of the other Virginia cities granted the ability to create arts districts. Other than the time and costs of the lobbying, once these state level incentives are in place they would cost the local governments nothing but would further encourage participation and support for their arts and culture districts.

As can be seen from the sample above, there are a wide variety of incentives to encourage the arts and culture district available to Falls Church. While most will cost the city in some way, when considering the incentives these costs must be balanced against the expected future income to the city that will result from a vibrant and successful culture and arts district.

Recommendations from Section 3: Exhibits

Take advantage of the partnership between Falls Church and Tinner Hill to explore the creative use of exhibits as a method of enhancing cultural awareness and artistic expression within the community. Partnerships can also expand to include all members, organizations, and agencies within a community.

Realize the full potential of the educational aspect of exhibits. Murals are a direct means of communication to residents and visitors, and convey a sense of heritage, art, and pride through their message. Murals also brighten up streets and storefronts. By involving students in the production of murals, students gain a sense of community involvement and also learn about the history of Falls Church.

Online exhibits also provide opportunities for educational engagement. An online exhibit can partner with local schools to provide content for educational programs, as well as allow for students to contribute material to an exhibit. Partnerships with libraries and other educational facilities can distribute maintenance and responsibility.

Call upon local businesses to become active members of the community. Businesses can potentially receive positive attention by volunteering to host a wall or grate mural. An online exhibit could also dedicate a portion of the exhibit to historical businesses within Falls Church, and include links to current local businesses.

For further images of the potential of murals, please see: <http://old.sproutfund.org/publicart/murals/>

Other useful resources are included in the Endnotes and References

Recommendations from Section 4: Heritage Trail

Falls Church should seek to maximize the potential of their Arts and Cultural District as a vehicle for making 'sense of place' while increasing visitor opportunity with the city.

The urban heritage trail could be used as an educational tool to instruct students on local historical themes. This is also an important part of public health to increase activity levels of children to fight early childhood obesity and Type II Diabetes. Educational themes relating to civil rights, equal education, and larger social values could be used as teaching curriculum to engage students with their natural environment.

The trail should seek to create linkages to strengthen the unity of heritage resources by incorporating planned pedestrian and bicycle route such as the W&OD Trail. Site specific improvement and a way-finding system could strengthen visual cues throughout the district.

Falls Church should consider hosting a community workshop to consider the application of a heritage trail in the Arts and Cultural District and the themes the city and citizens would like to present. This will allow for multifaceted public driven outcome which will yield a more widely utilized trail.

Consider using the trail to promote visible public art integrated into the landscape or temporary venues organized around festivals and other significant days of the year. This will provide for more foot traffic and better overall usage.

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