

EDAW INC

Lusby Town Center Village Green Design Workshop Results

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The Village Green is an opportunity to define a sense of place and establish a civic character within the Lusby Town Center. The Green should not be simply a park or a beautiful open space but an outdoor town hall. It should be a place for community gatherings, events, people watching, social interaction, relaxation and passive recreation. A successful village green will encourage people to come for a variety of reasons through a balance of features and a strong relationship with the surrounding architecture. Ideally, a mix of retail commercial, residential and civic uses can be developed around the Green and front on it to create a positive feedback loop of activity. In this relationship, people come to the green for recreation, shopping, dining, leisure and for the experience of being close to all of those activities simultaneously.

Village green activities and features can range in complexity, scale and formality but there are a few common elements which can be found regularly. The most common, and many cases most important, is a multi-purpose lawn which accommodates everything from picnicking to pick-up sports to festivals and concerts. Other typical features include sculpture, commemorative works, playgrounds, ornamental gardens, plazas, shaded seating areas, outdoor dining opportunities and social activities like chess tables and interactive fountains. It is also common to frame the green with slow-speed vehicular circulation to allow convenient access as well as to provide "eyes on the green". If the green is easy to see from passing cars it will deter crime and create a safer place for residents and visitors.

Because of the variety of options available for the Village Green site, it was determined that alternative plans should be studied by Lusby stakeholders to determine desired activities and the best arrangement of village green elements. Three alternative concepts were developed for the Village Green following discussions with Planning Department staff and a visit to the Town Center site. Each concept accommodates village green activities in a different way, including different circulation patterns and features. In some cases some alternatives share common elements; however, they are planned in different locations and or at different sizes. All of the concepts aimed to encourage positive interaction between the Village Green activities and the surrounding development. For descriptive purposes, the north end of the green is adjacent to H.G. Trueman Road and the south end is located adjacent to Lusby Parkway.

Alternative 1 divides the Village Green into three zones of use, an ornamental garden area at the northern end, a multi-purpose lawn at the center and a plaza area at the southern end. The garden area includes a small fountain and quiet seating opportunities. The plaza area is organized around a clock tower-like feature and covered seating area. Two-way vehicular connections cross through

the green south of the garden and north of the plaza. One-way streets and parallel parking frame the lawn area on the east and west allowing short term parking for the Green and the businesses fronting on it.

Alternative 2 organizes the Green into two halves, a shaded garden and playground to the north and the lawn and pavilion area to the south. The playground area includes opportunities for sculpture and fountains while the large pavilion is sized to accommodate events and gatherings like concerts and farmers' market activities. One-way vehicular circulation is imagined all the way round the green with parallel parking along the east and west lengths. One central two-way drive crosses the green connecting the east side to the west. It is anticipated that a crossing like this could be designed as a raised speed-table to ensure a pedestrian friendly environment. This alternative also suggests right-in-right-out, vehicular access to and from both H.G. Trueman and Lusby Parkway at the Village Green.

Alternative 3 suggests one large space that is not divided by vehicular circulation. The circulation surrounds the green in a one-way oval with the Green's activities at the center. The Green is organized around two vertical focal points which terminate key sight lines from Town Center development to the east and the west. The northern focal point is a large interactive fountain, while the southern focal point is a small pavilion and stage area. Both focal points are surrounded by plazas and anchor the ends of a large multipurpose lawn. Similar to Alternative 2, the overall circulation includes right-in-right-out access to and from H.G. Trueman and Lusby Parkway.

By comparison, Alternative 1 includes the largest garden space, Alternative 2 includes the smallest lawn but the most covered space and playground activities, and Alternative 3 includes the largest lawn and strongest focal points. Each organizational approach leads to a different level of emphasis for a given activity. Once the alternatives were presented, members of the public were asked to share their opinions in order to identify priorities and narrow down the list of options to those most desired.

To facilitate this, the attendees were each given adhesive "dot" stickers, three green and one blue. They were asked to place the green dots on the images of their three favorite village green elements/features; the blue dots were to be placed on the circulation pattern that they thought was most appropriate.

Regarding desired activities/elements, the attendees were most enthusiastic about a large multi-purpose lawn, plazas and seating areas, an event pavilion and a substantial playground. There were a variety of opinions regarding the desired circulation pattern. Of the three alternatives shown, the oval circulation pattern of Alternative 3 was preferred. However, a vocal group wanted to minimize or eliminate vehicular circulation around or through the Green altogether. Suggestions that arose from discussion following the "Dot" exercise included:

- Consider other ground floor uses besides retail/commercial/entertainment (such as office or civic uses) surrounding the Green.
- Encourage two-story buildings where feasible to surround the Green.
- Encourage residential use of the top floors where feasible.
- Minimize/ eliminate vehicular circulation around and through the Green.

Based upon this input from the attendees, a fourth alternative plan was developed.

Alternative 4 incorporates a plaza/seating area and focal point playground at the northern end of the site, a large multi-purpose lawn at the center and an additional plaza and event pavilion at the southern extent of the site. Access from H.G. Trueman is suggested west of the Green and through vehicular circulation was minimized by only providing two-way accesses from east to west connecting the two halves of the Town Center. These connections curve around the pavilion and playground areas for traffic calming purposes and to limit the need for pedestrians to cross between features. These connections include parallel parking between the future development parcels to facilitate access to the Green and businesses fronting on the Green. The eastern and western sides are framed by a pedestrian promenade which can be opened for vehicular access during events or for emergency vehicles if needed.

It is important to note that eliminating vehicular circulation altogether could be problematic from a public safety standpoint. H.G. Trueman and Lusby Parkway are too far apart and too high-speed to provide adequate surveillance of the Village Green space. Circulation through the Green at key intervals will allow the general public to observe the green regularly, reducing the sense of seclusion and contributing to a safer environment overall. It also makes attracting the desired mix of businesses and activities around the Green easier. Without convenient, proximate parking to a restaurant or shop's front door and high visibility from nearby roads, retailers will be less likely to want to face the Green. We cannot separate the success of the Village Green as an amenity from the success of the businesses that surround it.

Following presentation of the fourth alternative plan many attendees said that the plan represented took into account the feedback from the previous evening and that it accommodated the desired activities well. There was still strong opposition from some regarding the need for limited vehicular circulation through the Green. Others voiced the opinion that that circulation contributed to creating the "Village" part of a Village Green. In the end some attendees requested that a fifth alternative be created that did not include vehicular circulation.