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GATEWAYS & OTHER FEATURES

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GATEWAYS & OTHER FEATURES

6A GATEWAYS

Gateways are the physical entrances into a community and play a key role in communicating a first impression of an area. They can serve as landmarks to announce to pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists that they have arrived at a destination and help to define an area's edges. They can calm traffic by conveying to motorists that they should expect higher volumes of pedestrians and cyclists within the area and thus need to slow down. Gateway signage should convey a sense of arrival and impart a memorable visual impression at both human and vehicular scales.

There are three possible types of gateways that can mark the entrances into the McLean CBC. The first is the legacy 'Welcome' signage installed by the McLean Chamber of Commerce, the logo from which is emblazoned on bus shelters in the CBC. The second type is the existing McLean gateway signs recently installed by Fairfax County in collaboration with the McLean Revitalization Corporation (see image below). Both types have been located in landscaped medians and in the streetscapes of Chain Bridge Road and Old Dominion Drive leading into the CBC. The third type



BOTTOM

A small gateway sign
Image Credit: Fairfax County

Old Dominion Drive, McLean, VA

consists of the buildings and sites near these gateways that signify transition points into McLean.

Volume I Design Guidelines primarily addresses this third type of gateway. It discusses how buildings can be sited or designed to create vistas and how small plazas and streetscape moments can be used to signify the change to a pedestrian-focused downtown environment. Because Volume I recommendations apply to McLean, this document focuses on the landscape medians and streetscape features at McLean's gateway locations.

Figure 6-1 depicts the gateway locations in the McLean CBC. Precise locations are flexible in response to right-of-way availability, maintenance of existing features, sight distances, etc. Some of these have landscaping and signage already and some are proposed to incorporate these features in the future.

Signage and Landscaped Gateway Features

Figure 6-2 is an example of a landscape island and streetscape enhancement for the gateway locations. The graphic is not intended to be a comprehensive or final design, instead it is a starting point to express the types of features that could encompass a gateway design. Elements represented include:

- **Signs:** Gateway signs should mark the entrance of the community. To increase their impact and so that they fit in with the McLean character, gateway signs could also be installed on a low brick wall or with a brick base.

Gateways may be identified by a 'Welcome' sign in concert with information alerting drivers that they are entering a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly area.

Signs are ideally placed within a median in the roadway or alternatively behind the sidewalk on private property depending on maintenance responsibility and street design standards.

- **Median island:** Medians may include trees, landscaping, and brick paver edging within the median (see Chain Bridge Road gateway median as an example). Public art is also encouraged. Note, there are median width considerations for certain features.

FIGURE 6-1: GATEWAY LOCATIONS



GATEWAYS (CONT'D)

- **Gateway Features Behind the Curb in the Streetscape:** Consider widening the Landscape Panel to include additional hardscape and softscape features such as low walls, additional landscaping, and/or groupings of trees.
- **Lighting:** Streetlights and spotlights or other directional lighting should illuminate the sign and median area.
- **Special Roadway Paving:** If maintenance needs are understood and addressed, consider changing the paving from asphalt to stamped asphalt, concrete, or other material either around the median or at the nearest crosswalk to be a visual cue that the character of the area is changing.

Construction and Maintenance of Gateway Features

Most of the existing gateway locations are maintained by the County's Maintenance and Stormwater Management Division (MSMD) of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services. Future gateways could be constructed and maintained by either the County, a community group, or through an agreement with a private property owner. New developments near gateway locations may proffer improvements to the gateway. On-going maintenance requires a Covenant of Perpetual Maintenance agreement with VDOT. See Chapter 3K for more information.

**FIGURE 6-2:
SKETCH OF A
TYPICAL GATEWAY**



6B PUBLIC ART

Art is an integral component of McLean’s history and identity. The McLean Project for the Arts at the McLean Community Center has a robust arts program that is well-known in the region. Recent development projects within the CBC have included art or fountains as integral landmarks within their sites. Public art is often site-specific, meaning it is created in response to the place and community in which it resides. McLean’s history is a point of pride in the community and art can play an important role in unveiling and telling its story. Generally, the art described in this document is visual and permanent or semi-permanent.

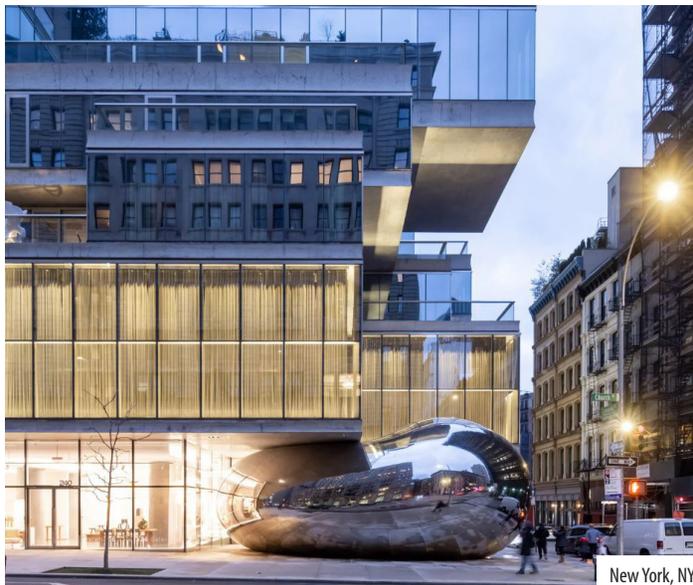
Public art in McLean will likely come from several sources. It may be proffered by a property owner to be included within a development proposal. It may be commissioned by a community or non-profit organization. It could also be procured by Fairfax County as a community revitalization project.

Community Expectations: Public art should reflect community ideals. When a public art project is planned by an organization or the county, community input is an integral part of the design and the process should be proscribed in advance so that it is inclusive.

Development Expectation: The *Visual and Performing Arts* section of the *Fairfax County Policy Plan* and the McLean CBC Comprehensive Plan highlight the expectation that developments will include public art within their projects. This is typically included as a component of a rezoning application in the form of a proffer of financial commitment along with description and location of the art in the Conceptual and Final Development Plans.

Educational Features and Artist Recognition: Public art should include a permanent plaque or sign describing the work, the medium, and crediting the artist(s).

Opportunities to incorporate educational signage that explains aspects of the art, such as a fountain that collects and treats rainwater, should be considered.



New York, NY



Downtown Silver Spring, MD

TOP
An urban scale sculpture by Anish Kapoor engages both the building and street corner
Image Credit: Iwan Baan

BOTTOM
A mosaic tile surface with a spray fountain in the center of a plaza
Image Credit: Deirdre Saunder

PUBLIC ART (CONT'D)

Locational Criteria: Public art should be visible and publicly accessible from the public realm. Art should be sited where it will create a place of congregation or where it will effectively enhance the pedestrian and streetscape experience. Art can be used as an organizing feature of the public realm by providing a terminus to a vista or a landmark for people to orient themselves. It can help publicly accessible but privately owned plazas feel more public. Typical locations include:

- Gateways
- Plazas
- Points of historical significance
- Locations identified for parks and trails in the Park Network Map (Figure 5-1)
- The Signature Urban Park
- Along, but not within, the streetscape
- The architecture of buildings or parking garages through the inclusion of attractive and interesting forms, or unique façades, features, textures, and colors



RIGHT

A fun hop-scotch crosswalk in Baltimore
Image Credit: Graham Coreil-Allen

Locations to Avoid:

- **Public Right-of-Way:** Art that is part of a development project should be located entirely within the property boundaries of the project outside of VDOT right-of-way.
- **Easements:** Most utility easements discourage or outlaw art from being placed within their boundaries since the potential exists for these areas to be disturbed in the future. Ensure that easement locations are mapped prior to the decision for where art should be placed.
- **Lines of Site and Pathways:** Do not block windows or pedestrian pathways and avoid creating a “blind” spot where illegal activity can take place.
- **Competing Scale:** Art should not be placed where it is overwhelmed by or competing with the scale of adjacent architecture or site features such as large retail signage, expansive parking lots, etc.

Maintenance: All projects, public or private, should anticipate the cost of and responsibility for maintenance in the selection of public art and include on-going maintenance costs into the art budget. In particular, digital art, water features, and art that is susceptible to graffiti, fading, or damage can be especially costly to maintain and therefore should only be proposed in projects that fully anticipate the life-cycle costs and can enter into a maintenance contract.

County Policies & Public Art Procurement Resources:

- *Arts Fairfax* provides resources to help property owners connect with local artists who are experienced in creating public art for specific projects. When appropriate, *Arts Fairfax* can recommend a public process that includes the community and arts groups in the selection of public art. <https://artsfairfax.org/contact-us/>
- [Fairfax County Policy Plan, Visual and Performing Arts](#)
- A [Public Art Master Plan](#) is scheduled for completion in 2024 by *Arts Fairfax*. It is expected to include documentation on existing public art sites, art opportunities, funding, and maintenance considerations.

McLEAN THEMES

A few themes permeate community sentiment about new public art proposals in McLean.

1. **Public art should be integrally designed into development projects.** Art should be incorporated into site designs and building architecture to the extent possible. Rather than stand-alone pieces, consider art in the conceptual design of the project. The artist, architect and engineer are encouraged to work collaboratively to integrate the artist's ideas into the building/site. Where art is anticipated in a development project, the potential infrastructure needs of an art installation should be anticipated.

Example: Architectural motifs and decorative designs commissioned as part of the building façade design that reflect the proposed style of architecture.

Example: A lighting installation designed as part of a covered public breezeway and where electricity and structural support for the installation is designed into the building architecture.

2. **Public art should activate or enhance public space.** Part of enhancing McLean's appeal as a neighborhood village and gathering spot for residents is giving people reasons to visit. Art that is both beautiful and interactive can draw people to the area for more than commercial activities. Functional or interactive art is highly desirable.

Example: Digital screens that react and play soothing music when pedestrians walk by them.

Example: Interactive water fountains with artistic paving or special lighting.

Example: Artful seating designed for both adults and children.

Example: Rotating displays of artwork produced at the McLean Community Center.



Melbourne, Australia

PUBLIC ART (CONT'D)

TOP

Art Deco motifs on building facades

Image Credit: InvitingHome.com

BOTTOM

Suspended lighting installation illuminates the Burke Street Mall serves as a placemaking element

Image Credit: Ronstan Tensile Architecture

PUBLIC ART (CONT'D)

3. Public art can tell the story of McLean and its residents.

The subject matter of art pieces should be relevant to McLean, its values, culture, and people. Community participation with the artist is strongly encouraged on the vision, subjects or themes. Examples include native populations who lived in the area prior to modern development; the history of McLean's founding; or the historical figures and events that helped shape McLean into the community it is today. Review the brief history and historical resources in Chapter 1 which explains the origins of McLean as a stop along the Great Falls & Old Dominion Railroad and post-WWII economy that influenced its growth from a farming community into a bustling suburb.

Example: A mosaic tile installation on the side of a building that depicts the founding and history of McLean Day or Dolly Madison's escape from Washington in 1814.

Example: The incorporation of streetcar and train track motifs in the design of a pavilion at the Signature Urban Park.

Example: Faceless statues near streetlights, trees, or benches that recall McLean's association to the Central Intelligence Agency.

4. McLean's residents love water and environmentally friendly art.

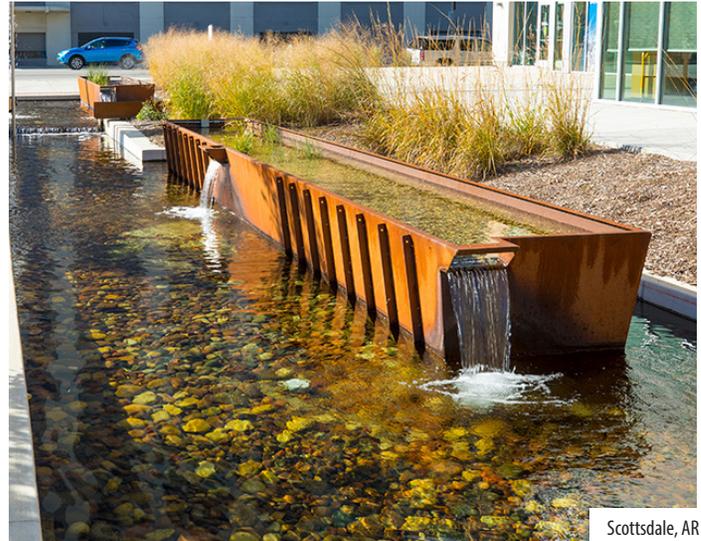
Existing developments in McLean have included water as a primary element to activate public space and residents would like this trend to continue. Water features that include mechanical pumping or that allow children to play in them require a high degree of maintenance and oversight and would typically be encouraged at strategic locations or as part of larger developments. Alternatively, consider use of natural art and beauty through the preservation of trees, waterways, and other environmental features. Celebrate the natural weather cycle using rainwater and a means to convey stormwater.

Example: Children's splash pad with artistic paving.

Example: Naturally designed stormwater management feature that is a fountain when it rains, irrigates native plants, and uses educational signage to explain the process.



Sunrise of McLean Village, McLean, VA



Scottsdale, AR

TOP

An engraved map in the plaza depicts the development and context early in McLean's history
Image Credit: Fairfax County

BOTTOM

This fountain recirculates rain runoff, cleaning it in the process
Image Credit: James Wasley

6C WAYFINDING & INTERPRETIVE SIGNS

Wayfinding and interpretive signs play an important role in demarcating an area, identifying points of interest, and helping people navigate. These sign types also can play a central role in defining the character and identity of a place and inform people’s daily experiences. There are two purposes of wayfinding: function and branding. This guidance is intended to be used in the public realm to aid residents and visitors.

Signage should be coordinated with applicable County standards. The CRD Regulations in Article 3 of the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance regulate the size of wayfinding signage in CRDs. VDOT regulates signage in the public right-of-way. Most of the signs addressed in this section should be located outside the right-of-way but within the public realm. For guidance on project identity and commercial signage, refer to Article 7 of the Zoning Ordinance which regulates the permitted types, size, and location of signs on private property and Section 4E in the Volume 1 Urban Design Guidelines.

The primary types of signage in the McLean CBC include:

1. **Wayfinding signage** serves to help people orient themselves in physical space and navigate from place to place. Depending on the context, wayfinding signage should be oriented towards multiple travel modes. Signs that are oriented towards pedestrians can increase confidence in walking, reduce walking times, help with route planning, and make transit connections easier.
2. **Interpretive signage** is used to highlight important points of interest, provide educational material, or depict historical aspects of the community. Interpretive signage may also include Fairfax County historical markers (see example on page 6-11).

Applicants should consult with the *McLean Historical Society* and the *McLean Chamber of Commerce’s McLean Visitor Center* when developing and considering interpretive signage.



TOP
Wayfinding sign with map
Image Credit: littletonreport.com

BOTTOM
Interpretive sign
Image Credit: Wayfound.com

WAYFINDING & INTERPRETIVE SIGNS (CONT'D)

3. **Privately-owned public spaces, also known as POPS**, are spaces dedicated to public use which are owned and typically maintained by private property owners. Fairfax County developed basic signage standards for POPS to ensure that they are clearly marked for public use and are not confused with private open space. Signs should state the name of the park, include the POPS logo, and may list nearby landmarks, park rules, and/or operating hours, as necessary for the safety and enjoyment of all users. All POPS parks, trails, and open spaces should include signs in accordance with [Fairfax County's POPS standards](#).

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- **Consistency:** uniformity of design, content and placement is fundamental to effective wayfinding, providing predictability for users and establishing a consistent brand identity while reducing visual clutter. Wayfinding in the McLean CBC should utilize a consistent family of graphics and materials. Different sign types (e.g., directional, orientation, and gateway/identity) may vary in size and shape to serve their intended functions and locations while sharing a consistent design motif and graphic style.



Baltimore, MD

RIGHT

Streetlight banners highlight institutional assets in the area
Image Credit: Fairfax County

- **Inclusivity:** Wayfinding and information signage should cater to the needs of all user types, especially those with special needs. It should ensure that publicly accessible spaces and walkways are clearly marked. Collaboration with local organizations is encouraged when developing sign programs to ensure that the desired community information is provided.
- **Adaptability:** The full life cycle costs of sign infrastructure should be considered. How designs can be modified as new CBC destinations are added should be anticipated.
- **Connectivity:** Safe and efficient directions that connect important points to enable people to move seamlessly should be provided, particularly for those walking and biking between destinations within the CBC.
- **Local Identity:** Celebrate distinct features of the McLean CBC to promote a sense of community using the Neighborhood Village concept. Use signage to educate the community about McLean's assets. Signage should build upon the existing McLean brand through consistent color, graphics, and materials. This may extend to other streetscape features such as the McLean bus shelter and streetscape furnishings.

FONT STYLE

Consider using a newspaper font style and benday dots for images on wayfinding signage to make the connection to McLean's founding by two newspaper publishers.

DESIGN STRATEGIES: GENERAL

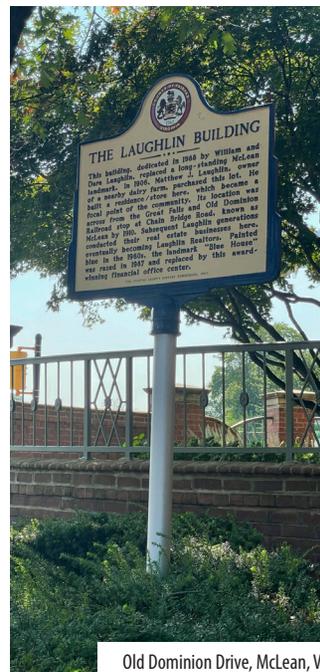
- Important information should be located between 34 and 56 inches above ground level for ease of reading and accessibility for most users.
- Information should be presented in several ways (such as both maps and words) to help people better understand the content.

WAYFINDING & INTERPRETIVE SIGNS (CONT'D)

- Durable materials such as stainless steel and tempered glass that will withstand the rigors of the public realm are recommended.
- Standardized signs that are paired with maps and text and customized to reflect local character and landmarks are encouraged.
- Signs should be designed to allow for future illumination, if desired.

DESIGN STRATEGIES: WAYFINDING SIGNS

- Wayfinding information should be communicated through a unified system of maps, signs, and directional markers throughout the public realm to enable orientation.
- New developments should include at least one wayfinding sign adjacent to the streetscape.
- Content should include directions to public parks, public facilities, and amenities such as the McLean post office.



Old Dominion Drive, McLean, VA



Broad Street, City of Falls Church, VA

DESIGN STRATEGIES: INTERPRETIVE SIGNS

- Interpretive signs should serve as a means of educating the public about the history and environmental features of the area and surrounding communities. The crossroads, the Community Center, McLean Central Park, the stream valleys and the many parks surrounding the CBC, the fire station, McLean Day sites, the post office, and long-standing local businesses are signature elements or points of pride of the McLean CBC. These, and other notable historical elements should be acknowledged and celebrated through the design and information shared on signs.
- Signage installed within green stormwater infrastructure should be designed to educate the public on the benefits of these systems to promote public health and a healthy environment.



Sunrise Senior Housing, McLean, VA

TOP LEFT
Fairfax County historical markers are at many locations throughout the McLean CBC
Image Credit: Fairfax County

TOP RIGHT
Directional sign scaled for vehicles and pedestrians
Image Credit: Fairfax County

BOTTOM
Interpretive sign that explains the history of the property prior to redevelopment as well as a famous McLean-based physician who worked in the building
Image Credit: Fairfax County