



Placemaking Business Leader INSIGHTS

Summary Report
Fairfax County Economic
Development Authority
Commission

Project Overview and Process

Over the past year, the FCEDA commission and staff set out to capture business perspectives on placemaking given its growing role in site selection and talent attraction. These industry insights are meant to complement and inform the efforts of Fairfax County staff in the Department of Economic Initiatives and Department of Planning and Development, who are focusing on best practice design guidelines and regulatory adaptations, place management models and place-based economic development strategies. During a transformational change in the office market, placemaking is critical to recruiting and retaining commercial investment and growing the economy. At a time when it is possible to work from nearly anywhere, place has become a principal differentiating factor for site selection decisions and attracting talent. Companies and employees want to be in highly-activated, amenity-rich, mixed-use environments that are walkable and close to transit.

In total, our team engaged **ten executive level industry experts** in real estate development, place management and project implementation. These leaders shared their experiences and best practices prioritizing place in neighborhood development and real estate investments. Their work spans the greater Washington DC region, from the waterfronts to the town centers and main streets. Projects include RTC Next, the planned four-million-square-foot extension of Reston Town Center, anchored by Fannie Mae and Volkswagen Group of America; The Wharf project in Washington, D.C.; the development and place brand implementation at the Boro in Tysons; and recent mixed-use redevelopment in downtown Falls Church. We also participated in a site visit to the Navy Yard, in Washington D.C., to hear from business owners and learn about place management services in the area.

Based on these engagements, our team distilled six **Business Leader Insights** to guide and help achieve successful placemaking:

- Dedicated investment in public realm and place management
- Creative programming and local-serving businesses to build community and encourage repeat visitors
- Premier transportation assets that make it easy to navigate within neighborhoods and the region
- Adaptable policies and regulations to meet changes in the market and encourage desired outcomes
- Locations welcoming and accessible to a range of age and socioeconomic groups across the county; and
- Regular community engagement to capture resident, employee, and business perspectives, and serve as a sounding board and creative engine for new concepts.

Fairfax County has already made significant progress creating successful places and is actively taking on emerging dimensions. In addition to a long history of forward-looking land use planning and transportation investments, the County has recently made changes to regulations and policies (for example, permanent outdoor seating beyond the pandemic and a new place management organization) to meet current and future needs. The FCEDA will use this momentum to elevate place in its business investment and talent attraction strategies and promote the County's placemaking assets to companies seeking office space and people looking for jobs.

Project Objectives

- Articulate **placemaking's important role** in successful business investment, talent recruitment, and office market health.
- Contribute **business leader perspectives** and best practices to help inform Fairfax County initiatives and processes.
- Build **partnership** and support for County efforts advancing placemaking and place-based economic development.
- Promote placemaking **through FCEDA capacities** in marketing, talent attraction, and business development.

Why Placemaking?

Fairfax Sees Demand For New Offices Near Metro, But Older Suburban Properties Are Falling Behind

MARKET DEMAND

“By a four-to-one margin, office tenants prefer walkable communities over office parks”

-Urban Land Institute and American Planning Association

MARKET EFFICIENCY

“Activity centers concentrate, on average, 46 percent of tax-assessed commercial property value on 11 percent of a region’s developed land area”-American Planning Association and Brookings Institution

MARKET VALUE

“Rental rates for walkable urban office, retail and multifamily have a 66 percent premium over drivable suburban products”

– George Washington Univ. School of Business

Fairfax County Placemaking Partners



FCEDA Commission Project Leaders

- Pallabi Saboo, Chief Executive Officer, Harmonia Holdings
- Joe Vidulich, Director of Government Affairs, Capital One



Regional Business & Place Leaders

*“A strong local
economy demands
great placemaking”*

*“Employees want to
be in the live-work-
play environments,
and employers want
to deliver on that”*

Jake Stroman

Executive Vice President, Co-Head of
the DC Region, Boston Properties

Robin Bettarel

Senior Vice President of Development,
Hoffman & Associates

Tom Boylan

Senior Vice President,
The Meridian Group

Jim Snyder

Director of Community & Economic
Development, City of Falls Church

Jon Griffith

Managing Director,
Capital One Center

Chris Leinberger

Professor Emeritus, GWU Center for
Real Estate & Urban Analysis

Jodie McLean

President & Chief Executive Officer,
EDENS

Richard Lake

Founding Partner,
Roadside Development

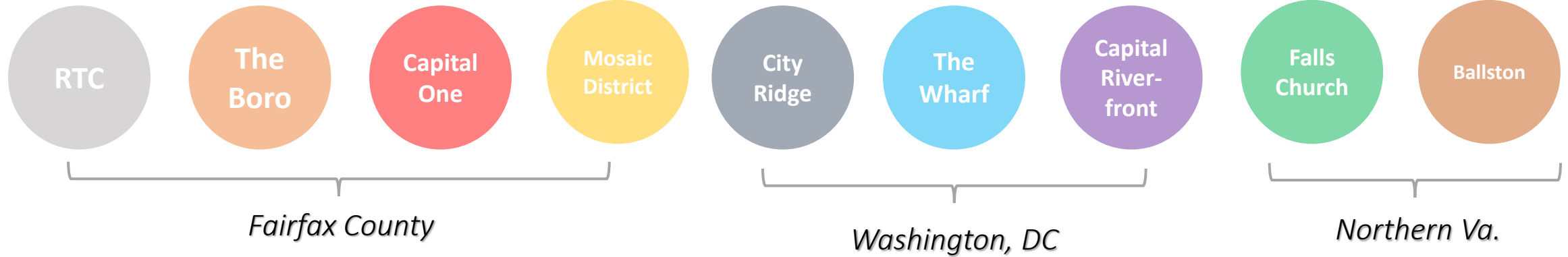
Michael Stevens

President, Capital Riverfront
Business Improvement District

Tina Leone

President, Ballston Business
Improvement District

Place Engagements



INSIGHT #1

Placemaking requires **dedicated, ongoing investment** in public realm and place management.

The most successful places are driven by supporting organizations with regular funding and staffing, working as a team to manage, beautify, and activate common areas, while also promoting and implementing programs.

The
Boro

RTC

The
Wharf

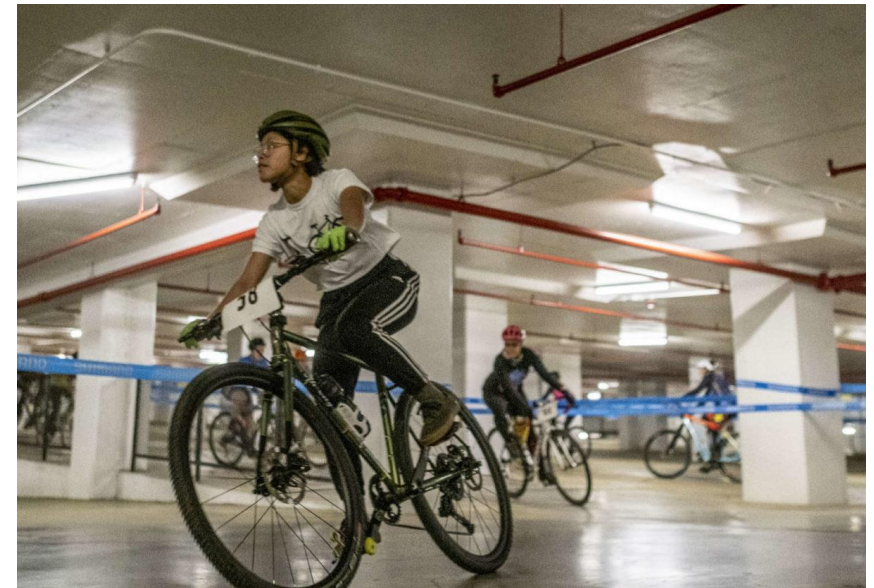
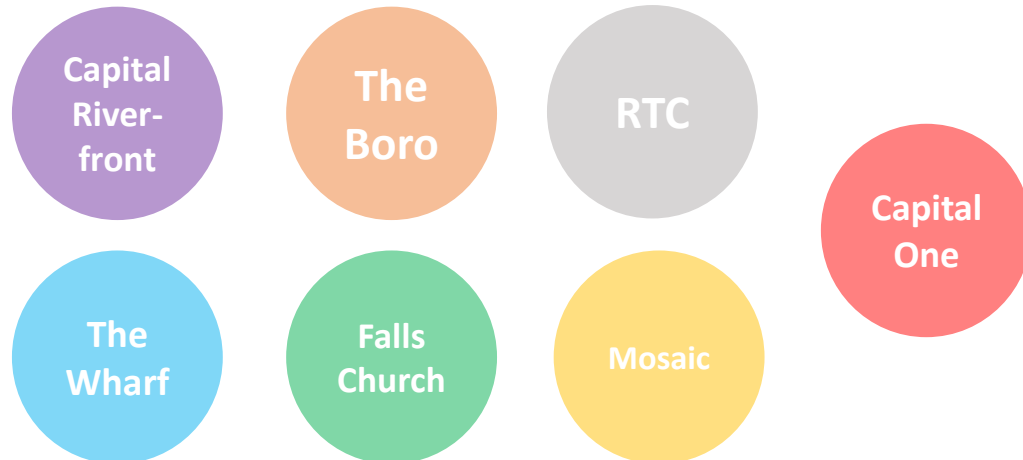
Capital
One



INSIGHT #2

Routine programming and local-serving businesses build community and encourage repeat visitors.

- *Americans think of their community as a place they visit 3-to-4 x per week within 17 minutes of home*
- *70% feel happier when connected to a community*
- *Small business creates place authenticity and attracts recurring visitors*



INSIGHT #3

Premier transportation assets make it easy to navigate within neighborhoods and between places in the region

- *Safe streets and sidewalks, inviting storefronts, and breaking up large blocks among key factors for creating pedestrian scale.*
- *Most projects provide access to high-quality transit and ample parking.*

Capital
River-
front

RTC

Mosaic

Capital
One



INSIGHT #4

Public space policies and land use rules **should be adaptable** to changes in the market and encourage desired outcomes.

- *“When it comes to process and approvals, the desired policy outcomes should be easy to achieve”*
- *Projects receiving navigation assistance from the local government praised the services.*
- *Temporary policy changes related to public space have proven successful and adaptable for long-term use.*

Falls
Church

Mosaic

The
Boro



INSIGHT #5

The most successful places will be **accessible and welcoming** to a wide range of age and socioeconomic groups, in locations across the county.

- *“If we create a place where the public takes ownership, we all win. The public realm should be welcoming.”*
- *Programs should run on predictable schedules and be minimal cost or free of charge to lower the barrier to entry.*

Capital
River-
front

RTC

The
Boro

Capital
One

Falls
Church





INSIGHT #6

Regular community engagement captures resident, employee, and business perspectives, and serves as a sounding board and creative engine for new concepts.

“A good relationship with the community requires understanding their pain points, regular and clear communication about projects and meeting community needs”

RTC

The
Boro

The
Wharf

Falls
Church

Fairfax County is Advancing New Opportunities

**NEW: Tysons Partnership will morph
into the 'Tysons Community Alliance'**

**Fairfax County plans to let outdoor
dining continue beyond pandemic**

**Springfield considers how to support
development as study finds need for
more housing, amenities**

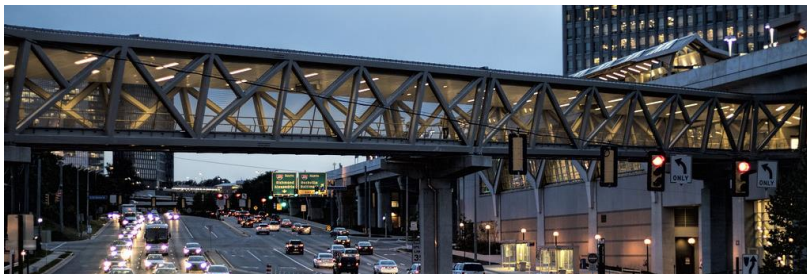


Ways to Keep it Going

- Apply successful **models and lessons learned** through past Fairfax projects to new areas of the county.
- Keep **regulatory adaptations** that have worked well for activation of public space and business operations.
- Continue support for community **placemaking demonstration projects** to try out creative concepts.
- Promote the use of **project management services and programs** to help navigate regulatory aspects.
- Take up **these types of ideas** through existing processes and initiatives focused on Placemaking.

How the FCEDA Can Help

- **Collaborate** with County staff on Place-led Economic Development and placemaking initiatives.
- Promote the County's **placemaking assets** to companies seeking office space and talent looking for jobs.
- Introduce **developers and potential investors** to areas of opportunity, coordinating with County staff.
- Enlist **university and partner organization resources** to help identify tools and project opportunities.
- Share findings and **further explore, develop and review ideas** with County staff and leadership.



Project Profile: The Wharf

Project Name	Year Built	Developer/ Owner	Office	Retail	Residential	Hotel Rooms
The Wharf	2017	Hoffman & Associates	1,000,000 SF	115 stores	1490	821

Summary: The Wharf reimagined and reinvigorated historic waterfront properties in Southwest Washington, DC. Through years of extensive community engagement and partnership, the developer and City government delivered a project that will endure for generations. The Wharf uses a community association model to produce creative programming and events for residents, workers and visitors. The Wharf was named the Washington Business Journal Best New Development of 2018.

Key Takeaways:

- Due to the success of its office leasing, the project is set to deliver five times the original planned amount of office square feet.
- The Community Association is responsible for the maintenance, safety and beautification of all common areas like parks, piers, paths, roads and even the water.
- The site achieved enhanced connections to Metro, nearby roadways, and Water Taxi routes.
- The 57,000 SF Anthem Concert Hall delivers large crowds on evenings and weekends.



*The Wharf was in the works for more than **a decade and a half** before it opened. It required extensive property assembly, hundreds of community meetings, and even required acts of Congress.*

Project Profile: City Ridge

Project Name	Year Built	Developer/ Owner	Office	Retail	Residential	Hotel Rooms
City Ridge	2022	Roadside Development	170,000 SF	155,000 SF	750	-



Summary: Once home to the Fannie Mae headquarters, the City Ridge project adapted the historic site for new uses. The developer worked extensively with the community to protect historic buildings while adding new infill development and amenities such as a playground, and fitness and childcare facilities. The project is anchored by a Wegmans grocery that uses space beneath the historic structure. A large public green facing Wisconsin Avenue (previously off-limits) is used for community events. The balance of the project is a mix of office space leased to a large education firm and multifamily residential units designed with families in mind.

Key Takeaways:

- The project required significant excavation beneath the historic building to create the space necessary for the grocery store. The underground square feet made the project feasible.
- The team faced challenges siting the project within an existing urban area but overcame them through creative engineering and extensive community engagement.

Excavation beneath the site's historic structures allowed full preservation while increasing the project's capacity by 350,000 SF. The dig went down to bedrock and removed 440,000 cubic yards of dirt.

Neighborhood Profile: Capitol Riverfront

Area Name	Year Built	Developer/ Owner	Office	Retail	Residential	Hotel Rooms
Capitol Riverfront	--	Multiple	7,600,000 SF	860,000 SF	12,319	1,422

Summary: Formerly an industrial district serving Washington’s Navy Yard, the Capitol Riverfront neighborhood now offers a mix of sports, entertainment, hospitality, green spaces and abundant access to the Anacostia River. The area is supported by a Business Improvement District offering year-round programming and community events. The city has invested heavily in parks and recreation as well as transportation. The Washington Nationals and D.C. United attract sports fans from around the region. Small business also has had a lasting impact on the success of the neighborhood.

Key Takeaways:

- The dining scene has built a following through local entrepreneurs and community relationships.
- Programming is often focused on areas by the water, which is like “magic” for attracting visitors.
- The public realm has been carefully designed to maximize water views and water features.
- Sports and entertainment events bring large crowds on evenings and weekends; the area draws 3.5 million visitors per year.



The Yards Park embodies the neighborhood’s “Water is Magic” ethos, designed to connect the urban grid to the water’s edge. It was built in the early stages of redevelopment.

Neighborhood Profile: Downtown Falls Church

Area Name	Year Built	Developer/ Owner	Office	Retail	Residential	Hotel Rooms
Downtown Falls Church	--	Multiple	170,000 SF	830,000 SF	1,729	202

Summary: Downtown Falls Church has grown from a traditional main street area into a mixed-use, walkable and activated city center. Lacking the resources of its larger neighbors, the City has used a mix of civic spirit, determination, creativity and commercial redevelopment tools to transform the downtown. It has pursued smaller projects that can produce outsized outcomes, such as beautification of key public spaces or taking steps to unlock challenging sites. Their differentiator is the authenticity of the downtown experience for residents and visitors.

Key Takeaways:

- Difficult projects have succeeded through creative problem solving and willingness to work with property owners through potential impediments.
- Larger mixed-use developments have bridged gaps between parcels and improved walkability within and between blocks.
- The City strongly supports small business to help deliver the place authenticity it is cultivating.
- Direct community engagement and listening to their input has made the change possible.



Northside Social, a popular coffee stop and community gathering place, established a Downtown Falls Church location in an 18th century building, adding outdoor seating and an upstairs deck.

Neighborhood Profile: Ballston

Area Name	Year Built	Developer/ Owner	Office	Retail	Residential	Hotel Rooms
Ballston	--	Multiple	8,300,000 SF	861,000 SF	7,760	1,078



***Ballston Quarter** is the result of a public-private partnership to revive an aging mall and energize the streetscape. Its pedestrian bridge connects two transportation pillars: a 3,000-space public parking garage and Metro rail.*

Summary: Ballston was once a service commercial neighborhood visited mainly by automobile. Today it is a walkable, transit-oriented, urban district with a finely tuned balance of residential and commercial uses. Home to a large cluster of federal science and research agencies, Ballston adopted a Business Improvement District (BID) in 2011 supported by office, retail and hotel property. The area has grown in recent years with the addition of multifamily buildings and new entertainment and retail, concentrated along Glebe Road and Wilson Boulevard.

Key Takeaways:

- Arlington County and the BID have invested in pedestrian safety and public realm enhancements to help activate the neighborhood on a regular basis.
- The 1980 Ballston Sector Plan envisioned a near balance of residential and commercial property, which is largely reflected in the numbers today.
- The Ballston Quarter redevelopment opened once-enclosed retail, dining and entertainment uses to the street, reflecting consumer preferences for outdoor shopping and dining.

Project Profile: The Boro

Project Name	Year Built	Developer/ Owner	Office	Retail	Residential	Hotel Rooms
The Boro	2019	The Meridian Group	500,000 SF	250,000 SF	700 units	--

Summary: The Boro is an urban mixed-use development in the Greensboro section of Tysons. It is one of the first projects in Tysons to transform formerly suburban commercial parcels into a walkable urban grid with easy access to the Silver Line Metro. It is anchored by a Whole Foods grocery store, 16-screen movie theater and multiple new programmable community open spaces. It was named the Washington Business Journal Best New Development in 2020.

Key Takeaways:

- The project deployed placemaking strategies to deliver on a digital branding campaign that was developed and distributed prior to the project opening.
- Having delivered in 2019, the project had to endure pandemic impacts on commercial uses, such as the office space and the movie theater.
- In addition to strong residential performance, keys to success include usable, programmed open space, a sound retail merchandising plan, and neighborhood-serving retail.



*The Boro is designed to deliver on **daily needs** – live, work, transit, grocery, recreation – without having to use a car, replacing a former 18 acre auto-oriented office campus.*

Project Profile: Capital One Center

Project Name	Year Built	Developer/ Owner	Office	Retail	Residential	Hotel Rooms
Capital One Center	2021	Capital One	4,000,000 SF	50,000 SF	Future	306



Summary: Capital One Center has set the bar for urban redevelopment in Tysons with high rise office towers and 1.2-acre elevated park, plus direct access to Metro Silver Line, a Wegman’s grocery anchoring the ground floor and a world class performing arts center at Capital One Hall. Aligned with the Comprehensive Plan for Tysons, the project delivers the vision for a downtown village with community gathering places, neighborhood services and entertainment. Capital One Center was named the Washington Business Journal Best New Development of 2022.

The Perch is an innovative elevated urban park with a large open space, mini golf course, food truck corral, beer garden and dog play area.

Key Takeaways:

- Project leverages prominent employment, retail and entertainment anchors.
- Connects large corporate headquarters and major performance venue with Metro.
- Designed to attract shoppers, diners, business travelers and neighborhood families.
- Conference facilities and hotel can attract trade shows and business events.

Project Profile: Mosaic District

Project Name	Year Built	Developer/ Owner	Office	Retail	Residential	Hotel Rooms
Mosaic District	2018	EDENS	72,750 SF	500,000 SF	1,116 units	148

Summary: Mosaic District is a premier shopping and entertainment destination serving Northern Virginia. Formerly an assortment of commercial and industrial parcels, the project created a new neighborhood and community from the ground up. The developer focused on connectivity within and around the site, along with abundant community spaces and programming. Fairfax County made the project possible through district-based infrastructure financing, paying for public roads, parks, parking and other community improvements.

Key Takeaways:

- Connection with the surrounding area, including Metro and nearby streets, has been vital. Partnership with Fairfax County has helped make this happen through the district financing of public improvements.
- Mosaic District has benefitted from experimental policies such as the Relay shuttle and creative use of streets and greenspace.
- The main success factors have been safety and vitality at the street level, ample parking, open space, and attention to the customer experience.



***Mosaic District** was one of the first locations in Virginia to implement Community Development Authority financing and has served as a model for other projects in the state seeking to use this mechanism.*

Project Profile: Reston Town Center

Project Name	Year Built	Developer/ Owner	Office	Retail	Residential	Hotel Rooms
Reston Town Center	1990	Boston Properties	5,100,000 SF	50 stores, 35 restaurants	2,000 units	800



Summary: Reston Town Center is one of the most successful mixed-use submarkets in the entire Capital Region, and in the nation. Its office market has continually outperformed markets across the country, with vacancy rates commonly landing below five percent. It is a highly-walkable and experience rich environment, sustained by the investment of property ownership and the privately-funded Reston Town Center Association. The Town Center is in the process of expanding with new office towers and retail stores, and immediate access to Metro Silver Line .

Key Takeaways:

- Four main success factors: (1) walkable, safe streets; (2) two-sided retail street design; (3) ample, convenient parking; and (4) a clustered, critical mass of retail stores.
- Completed 1.7 million square feet of new office leasing since the pandemic began.
- Attracted 60,000 visitors over one weekend to the community arts festival.
- Consults with office and residential tenants regularly to keep programming current.

The pavilion and fountain plaza areas have recently been improved with more seating options, outdoor dining space and greater flexibility to accommodate programming and events.

Summary Data Table

Project Name	Year Built	Developer/ Owner	Office	Retail	Resid Units	Hotel Rooms
Reston Town Center	1990	Boston Properties	5,100,000 SF 5.2M incl. construction	50 stores, 35 restaurants	2,000	800 (incl. construction)
Mosaic District	2018	EDENS	72,750	500,000 SF	1,116	148
Capital One Center	2022	Capital One	2,335,000 SF	140,000 SF		306
The Boro	2019	The Meridian Group	969,000 SF	250,000 SF	700	-
The Wharf	2017	Hoffman / Madison	1,000,000 SF (Phase 1)	115 stores, Concert Hall	1490	821
City Ridge	2021	Roadside Development	170,000 SF	155,000 SF	750	-
Neighborhoods						
Capitol Riverfront	--	Multiple	7,400,000 SF	860,000 SF	12,319	1,422
Downtown Falls Church	--	Multiple	170,000 SF	830,000 SF	1,729 350 U.C.	202
Ballston	--	Multiple	8,300,000 SF	861,000 SF	7,760 602 U.C.	1,078

