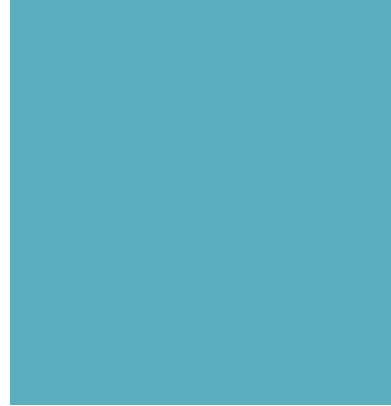




U.S. General Services  
Administration  
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE



# Achieving Great Federal Public Spaces

A Property Manager's Guide





# Achieving Great Federal Public Spaces

A Property Manager's Guide

## U.S. General Services Administration

Public Buildings Service

Office of the Chief Architect

Center for Federal Buildings and Modernizations

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Project Team:

GSA Urban Development/  
Good Neighbor Program  
and First Impressions Program  
Frank Giblin  
Brian Goldstein

Project for Public Spaces  
Cynthia Nikitin  
Ben Fried  
Carly Clark

### Special Thanks to:

Nelson Palma  
James Wyatt  
GSA First Impressions Regional Champions  
GSA Property Management Leadership Network  
GSA Urban Development Officers



# Table of Contents

	<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>7</b>
	The Return of the Civic Center	9
	Federal Spaces as Civic Places	11
	Public Space Goals	12
	Public Space Action Points	15
<b>2</b>	<b>EVALUATION</b>	<b>23</b>
	Undertaking a Place Audit	25
	The Place Audit	26
	Scoring the Audit Checklist	40
<b>3</b>	<b>SOLUTIONS</b>	<b>47</b>
	A Menu of Ideas	48
	Manage: Evaluate, Program, Maintain	49
	Design for Use	55
	Streamline and Integrate Security	63
	Improve Image and Aesthetics	69
	Enhance Access and Circulation	75
	Access Local Resources	81
<b>4</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>87</b>
	Planning for Implementation	88
	Eleven Principles	93
	Case Studies of Public Space Improvements	98
<b>5</b>	<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>107</b>
	Contacts and Links	108



# Foreword

**T**he U.S. General Services Administration builds and manages federal buildings, courthouses, and ports of entry that do more than meet the workplace needs of our clients. These public buildings play an equally important symbolic role, demonstrating the accessibility of our democracy and showcasing the government's commitment to communities nationwide. The plazas, lobbies, atria, and grounds that grace our buildings are frequently among the most significant public spaces in their neighborhoods. They host civic events, promote urban revitalization, support beautification efforts, and become beloved landmarks.

While the most evident spaces may be those found at our new facilities, a significant opportunity for urban development is present at our existing buildings as well. Indeed, these interior and exterior public spaces have the benefit—or burden—of longstanding history in their neighborhoods. Where these spaces succeed, they convey a positive image of the federal government, showcase agency programs, and earn the appreciation of their neighbors. Where they need improvement, these spaces send a less positive message, but represent an enormous potential to turn things around.

This is where *Achieving Great Federal Public Spaces: A Property Manager's Guide* can be most useful. GSA has no greater asset than the buildings we manage and no more qualified experts than our property managers, who maintain them on a daily basis. This guide provides them with an innovative evaluation tool, based on the notion that even the best spaces can be improved, while those spaces that are underperforming deserve renewed attention. To effect these positive changes, this guide suggests short-, medium-, and long-term improvements that have proven successful elsewhere.

With these tools, property managers can proceed confidently in assessing their public space assets from the ground up and in devising low-cost solutions that reap long-term benefits. Doing so achieves the goals of urban development and positive first impressions espoused by the Public Buildings Service, improves the experience of employees and the public who use our buildings, and enhances the long-term value of our federal inventory.

*Achieving Great Federal Public Spaces* represents a renewed commitment to the role our public spaces play in providing world-class workplaces and creating lasting symbols of government in their communities. I urge you to join me in this commitment, to evaluate our public spaces with fresh eyes and to recapture their full value for our clients and our citizens.

## David L. Winstead

Commissioner of the Public Buildings Service  
U.S. General Services Administration





# SECTION 1

## Introduction

### How to Use This Book

*Achieving Great Federal Public Spaces* provides GSA property managers with the tools to successfully evaluate and improve the public spaces in and around federal facilities. It is designed as a hands-on resource with exercises to complete on-site—by yourself or with a group of partners. It is also a source of reference that you will want to keep handy for ideas and inspiration. As you take concrete steps to make your public spaces better, use this book as a guide to help you navigate the process.

Section 1 outlines why public spaces are important to GSA, our clients, and the communities where we operate. It concludes with GSA's Public Space Action Points, which form the framework for the rest of the book.

Section 2 contains GSA's Place Audit, an on-site evaluation exercise that will help you quickly determine which aspects of a facility's public spaces are working well and which are not.

Section 3 shows how you can improve the performance of public spaces with a range of short-, medium-, and long-term solutions. The worksheets provided will help you organize your ideas effectively.

Section 4 explores the process of moving from thought to action. It outlines a step-by-step method of implementation, describes case studies of successful GSA public space projects, and presents the underlying principles that lead to optimal results.

Section 5 provides contacts and other resources that you can use to address inquiries and concerns that fall beyond the scope of this book.

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 2 EVALUATION

#### 3 SOLUTIONS

#### 4 IMPLEMENTATION

#### 5 RESOURCES



# The Return of the Civic Center

From the town greens of New England to the plazas of the Southwest, the United States enjoys a great legacy of civic centers, but for decades much of this rich heritage has gone to waste. Poorly maintained, underused, or overrun by automobiles, most of our civic districts have lost their rightful purpose: to sustain the economic and social vitality of cities.

Too often, areas where civic buildings are clustered together appear sterile, cold, and lifeless. They are no longer places where one can have the regular, random encounters that foster the kind of social contact that renowned urbanist Jane Jacobs called “the small change from which a city’s wealth of public life may grow.” In other words, they fail as public spaces, leading to squandered economic opportunities and public indifference to—or even distrust of—civic institutions.

Frequently located in downtown cores, federal properties are uniquely positioned to reverse this trend. In fact, some are already beginning to play a vital role in the resurgence of civic centers. Facilities such as the Kluczynski Plaza in Chicago and Hanley Courthouse Plaza in Syracuse now host numerous events and serve as community gathering places. They have made the transition from underutilized assets to successful public spaces that spur economic growth, promote civic engagement, and enhance the image of the federal government.

Local governments are also catching on to the value of public spaces to their civic districts and downtowns. Many projects are coming about

now because public officials, planners and citizens alike are beginning to understand that public life—meaning active, vital public spaces—is essential to the economic and social wellbeing of city centers. Portland’s Pioneer Courthouse Square and Boston’s Post Office Square, both built where parking garages once stood, are two premier public spaces that cities have reclaimed from once-derelict areas.

To get an idea just how big a difference great public spaces can make, look to the surprising turnaround underway in Detroit. The city is re-energizing its downtown with new residences, commercial areas, and office buildings – all centered around a public space plan. The centerpiece of this plan is the new Campus Martius Park, a two-acre civic square in the heart of downtown that debuted in November 2004. Already, new tenants (including Compuware corporate headquarters) have leased significant amounts of office space in the area around the park, developers are building new housing, and businesses are returning. The park has given downtown a much needed source of positive identity, appearing on national television as the venue for the 2006 Super Bowl pre-game broadcast. Detroit still has a long way to go, but its downtown renaissance would never have even gotten off the ground without Campus Martius Park.

---

*Local governments are also catching on to the value of public spaces to their civic districts and downtowns. Public life—meaning active, vital public spaces—is essential to the economic and social wellbeing of city centers.*

---

**M**ore than any other single institution, GSA can play a major role in shaping the future of America's civic centers. Since federal properties comprise a vast collection of public spaces in more than 2000 communities just begging to be transformed into first-class civic places, GSA is poised to lead a renaissance throughout the nation.

Clearly, there are many challenges to overcome if GSA is to fulfill this potential. The good news is that, with exceptional management, even the most desolate public space can be turned around. Speeding traffic can be tamed to create an atmosphere conducive to walking and gathering. Blank walls can be activated to make people feel comfortable and safe. Sterile spaces can be enlivened to attract people throughout the year.

A sustained commitment to a civic vision can surmount such obstacles. This commitment must come from every group with a stake in the project—building tenants, community groups, local merchant associations, public officials, neighborhood leaders, the list goes on. These are the people who will bring to bear their ideas, their labor as volunteers, and their ability to draw support from various constituencies – all critical to the success of any revitalization effort. GSA property managers can initiate such a vision and unleash the energy to see it through. This guide will show you how to get started.

---

*More than any other single institution, GSA can play a major role in shaping the future of America's civic centers.*

---

# Federal Spaces as Civic Places

**“It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.”**

William H. Whyte

**F**ederal properties are at their best when they function as extensions of the communities in which they are located. Ideally, courthouses, seats of government, and other federal facilities should serve as great civic places – the “front porches” of the public realm. If they function in their true civic role, they can be the settings where celebrations are held, where exchanges both social and economic take place, and where cultures mix. When they work well, they are valued as places that bring people together and belong to local residents.

## BENEFITS OF GREAT CIVIC PLACES

**T**he rewards of creating great civic places are numerous. Not only do better public spaces enrich the lives of the people who use them, they also make surrounding neighborhoods more desirable, attracting investment and spurring revitalization. They endow the civic realm with credibility and prestige – not just visually, but also by providing a sense of community and a forum for public activity. They anchor downtowns, acting as foundations for healthy growth. All of these benefits add up to greater livability.

Great civic places benefit all kinds of communities, from dense urban neighborhoods and downtowns to small towns and suburbs. The following benefits focus primarily on the importance of these places to urban centers, but they are applicable to every community.

### CIVIC PLACES GIVE IDENTITY TO CITIES

Without great civic places, there would be no great cities. For example, the public spaces around Rockefeller Center are some of the most-visited attractions in New York City. In Washington DC, places like the National Mall and the interior of Union Station shape people’s lasting impressions of the city. These public spaces represent New York and Washington the way the Louvre represents Paris.

---

*Great civic places provide a sense of community and a forum for public activity. They anchor downtowns, acting as foundations for healthy growth. All of these benefits add up to greater livability.*

---

While people travel thousands of miles to experience such revered places as Boston Common, the squares of Savannah, or Balboa Park in San Diego, others need only walk down the street to find places they treasure. Indeed, great public spaces can be world-renowned, or they can simply be community places valued by the people who live in a particular neighborhood. Community places are just as important to the identity of cities as their more famous counterparts, because that is where people live, work, meet each other, and experience their neighborhood. These places instill a shared sense of pride and ownership among cities’ diverse populations.

# Public Space Goals

## FOR GSA BUILDINGS

GSA buildings and public spaces should:

### Reflect the dignity and accessibility of government

The actions that government takes in and around its buildings send a clear signal about its priorities. When people see well-maintained and attractive spaces and buildings, they gain confidence in government and feel more comfortable working with federal institutions.

### Be secure and welcoming

GSA properties can achieve first-rate security without resorting to a fortress mentality. Innovative security measures both improve building safety and make visitors feel welcome in the property's public spaces.

### Improve tenant satisfaction and building revenue

Better GSA public spaces mean more desirable workplaces. And, as discussed in the next section, better workplaces mean lower vacancy rates and more revenue.

### Provide a forum for tenant activity and public use

Public spaces work best for people when they accommodate a variety of activity. By improving the design and amenities of GSA public spaces, federal properties can better support use by tenants and the public.

### Act as a catalyst for downtown revitalization

Public spaces like those around GSA buildings need to function at their best to add value to downtowns, making them attractive places to work and live. By transforming GSA's public spaces into multi-purpose destinations, our facilities can spur revitalization beyond the property line.

### CIVIC PLACES BENEFIT CITIES ECONOMICALLY

Great civic places impart many real and measurable economic benefits, like the effect of high-quality public space on a district's property values. Properties that face Boston's Post Office Square, for instance, enjoy lease rates 10 percent higher than those without a park view. In San Francisco, the construction of new and improved green space has led to significant increases in property values, which in turn have boosted tax revenues for the local government.

Another way public spaces achieve economic goals is by hosting public markets. In New York, the Greenmarket at Union Square has been a major catalyst in the revitalization of the surrounding neighborhood, boosting residential construction and providing opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurship. The River Market in Little Rock, Arkansas has made an even more impressive impact on that city's downtown, spurring the development of residential apartments, a museum, and a sports arena.

Revitalizing streets as places for walking and gathering can also benefit a city or town economically. In New Haven, Connecticut, street improvements that incorporated wider sidewalks, large trees, enhanced parking, and a leasing and development program conceived by local residents helped bring downtown's Chapel Street back to life, rejuvenating businesses in a crucial area of the city.

## CIVIC PLACES PROVIDE SETTINGS FOR CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Public spaces can provide free, open forums for people to enjoy art, performances, and other cultural activities. From “Shakespeare in the Park” festivals to string quartets at a downtown plaza, good places foster and enhance a city’s cultural life. For example, Providence, Rhode Island’s WaterFire, an award winning fire and music installation, has had an impressive cultural and economic impact, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors to the downtown riverfront on summer and fall evenings. A symbol of the city’s renaissance, WaterFire brings people to a central urban area that was typically deserted after dark. Events like this set the stage for positive social interaction.

## NEW ROLES FOR GSA

For federal properties to capture all the benefits of civic places, GSA must adopt a “place-oriented” approach to designing, locating and managing buildings and public spaces. Using a place-oriented approach means considering the place first and foremost – the lobby for example – and then determining how to make that place work better from the standpoint of the people who will use it. It means posing questions such as: Who has a stake in this place? What would they like to see happen in it? How can the place be designed and managed to support those activities?

In contrast, the more common “project-oriented” approach defines problems narrowly – repair and alteration of the lobby – and getting the project completed on time and on budget is of paramount importance. How well the lobby actually works for pedestrian flow and queuing, displays of art, or as an event venue, for instance, is not considered a priority from the outset. Ironically, the costs of a project-oriented approach ultimately add up down the road, as retrofitting, redesign and mitigation are often required after the fact.

Committing to a place-oriented approach translates into new roles for both GSA buildings and the people who manage them. It is a demanding but exciting challenge, which if successful will make GSA an important catalyst for greater livability in cities throughout the United States. When managed as dynamic places, our facilities and the spaces around them have a big impact not only on tenant agencies and customers, but also on neighboring communities. The Good Neighbor and First Impressions programs are based on this core idea. These initiatives provide the framework for GSA to work with communities to create better and more beneficial civic places, and to ensure that they are well-managed and maintained.

## BENEFITS TO GSA

A federal public space that is creatively shaped and managed is not only a gift to the community; it can also enhance the performance of a GSA facility. Many an underutilized courthouse entrance court or post office plaza has the potential to contribute directly to the economics of the building and the agency it houses, as well as to customer satisfaction. How is this done? The pages that follow provide guidelines for evaluating and transforming federal spaces into successful civic places that can benefit their communities as well as GSA and its clients. GSA examples are included to illustrate just a few of the myriad solutions that are possible.

A key point is that when GSA collaborates with other community partners to activate and manage a public space under its jurisdiction, it is not just a nice thing to do, a civic obligation, or a political gesture. It is also good business.

---

*Our clients’ first impression often begins with things that GSA may not control. By working closely with local partners on GSA projects—the things that we do control—we build the relationships that will encourage them to address neighborhood conditions.*

---

When held up to GSA's Public Buildings Service performance measures, it becomes clear how such a project becomes an important contributor to the bottom line. For example, a good civic space can:

- **INCREASE FUNDS FROM OPERATIONS.** Well-used civic spaces that make a positive first impression, whether inside or outside the facility, can increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of a GSA building. These spaces can also generate revenue directly—from leases for food operations and user fees for events, for example.
- **REDUCE VACANT SPACE.** By the same token, if a building's public spaces are perceived as lively, attractive, and efficient, its vacant interior space will fill up more quickly and the overall vacancy rate drop. In addition, previously unproductive outdoor space can be put to use for concessions, activities, and events on a seasonal basis.
- **INCREASE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION.** Both employees and visitors take pleasure in active and beautiful civic spaces in and around the building where they work and come to transact business. As part of the work environment, an attractive space has been proven to boost productivity, help recruit and retain employees, and vastly improve the public image of the agency that occupies the space as well as that of GSA and the federal government. In addition, a clean, safe and friendly civic space that is actively programmed feels much safer than one that is empty, no matter how many security guards are posted. The reassurance that comes from seeing many other people at ease in public—particularly women and children—greatly improves customer satisfaction with security, and thus satisfaction in general.
- **IMPROVE ON-SCHEDULE AND ON-BUDGET CONSTRUCTION.** Designing or rehabilitating a building with active use of its public space in mind from the outset can

actually lower construction costs. Extensive built forms in a building's public spaces may not contribute to the usability of that space. Instead, successful public spaces rely on simplicity and flexibility, which allow for a variety of programming, both active and passive uses, and change over time. This approach usually results in lower construction costs. Additionally, if the features that would make a public space easier to program and more attractive to programming partners (e.g. electrical or water lines, flexible seating, etc.) are designed into the initial project, retrofitting the space to accommodate such programming will be unnecessary. Inexpensive initial provisions for these activities can later help a facility attract partner organizations and their resources.

Finally, we know that non-GSA controlled spaces—the neighborhoods around our buildings—play a big role in how our clients and their customers view our facilities. It's easy to see that their first impression begins with things that GSA may not control. However, by working closely with local partners on GSA projects—the things that we do control—we build the relationships and develop the understanding that will encourage them to address neighborhood conditions. In that way, a completed GSA project can bring value to the site and to our customers that is well beyond project investment alone.

This book is an attempt to pull together some of the best tools and ideas available to help GSA decision makers—property managers, realty specialists, project managers, and others—make the most of GSA projects and properties by maximizing the value of their public spaces. It offers lessons and techniques that can be put to immediate use by any GSA professional working on a project that affects or creates a public space, and demonstrates what has already been achieved.



# Public Space Action Points

**T**he Good Neighbor and First Impressions programs have developed the following Action Points to help GSA staff succeed in their challenging new roles and achieve the Public Space Goals discussed previously. Together, the Action Points map out an overall strategy for improving a facility's public spaces, from physical improvements to partnerships with communities to better management practices. They serve as underlying criteria for GSA staff to comprehensively identify opportunities to turn their facilities into great civic places—inside and out.

Adopting the Action Points is seldom easy. In fact, property managers constantly encounter obstacles, from security concerns to less-than-optimal building designs. The following pages illustrate how these common challenges prevent implementation of successful public spaces if left unaddressed.

The rest of this book will explore in-depth how to address challenges specific to your facility by applying the Action Points. Section Two explains how the Action Points can serve as the basis for evaluating your facility's exterior and interior public spaces. Section Three demonstrates how the Action Points can guide you in selecting which improvements to implement. And Section Four provides case studies of actual GSA projects that have embraced the Action Points to achieve wide-ranging success.

## SIX PUBLIC SPACE Action Points



### **ACTION POINT #1**

Manage: Evaluate, Program, Maintain



### **ACTION POINT #2**

Design for Use



### **ACTION POINT #3**

Streamline and Integrate Security



### **ACTION POINT #4**

Improve Image and Aesthetics



### **ACTION POINT #5**

Enhance Access and Circulation



### **ACTION POINT #6**

Access Local Resources



## ACTION POINT #1

Manage:  
Evaluate, Program, Maintain

The best civic places are the ones that people return to time and time again. The only way to achieve this is through management that adapts to the pulse of the place in question. For example, a good manager understands who constitutes the existing and potential users of a particular facility. In terms of maintenance, public space management means becoming so familiar with the patterns of how people use the facility that waste receptacles get emptied at just the right time, horticultural displays change with the seasons, and refreshment kiosks are open when people most want them. By programming and maintaining their facilities' public spaces, good managers create a feeling of comfort and safety—giving people a sense of assurance that someone is in charge. Continual evaluation of how well a building plaza or lobby is serving these users makes it all possible, enabling GSA staff to successfully tailor amenities to meet users' needs and gear events, exhibits, or other programs to the right audience.



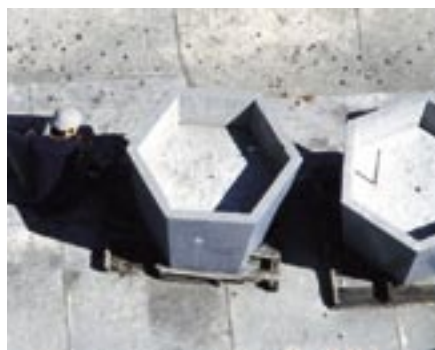
Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, Martinsburg, WV, before (above) and after (right).



## CHALLENGE

Thinking Too Narrowly

Even the best-designed public space will languish if no one supervises or cares for it. This can happen to GSA properties when management responds only to requests and complaints—thereby missing out on the full range of opportunities for improvement—or when it takes the narrow view that the spaces beyond a building's security zone—whether inside or outside—are “not our problem.” However, by not maximizing the public benefit of federal properties, thinking too narrowly does create problems: neglected spaces suffer from poor maintenance and lack the activity necessary to attract public use, making them more vulnerable to crime and decreasing the quality of the neighborhood as a whole. Combat the narrow-focused mentality by remembering that the domain of the property manager extends out to—and in some ways beyond—the property line.



Empty planters, Russell Federal Building, Atlanta, GA.



Planting bed, U.S. Courthouse, Tacoma, WA.



## ACTION POINT #2

### Design for Use

GSA's plazas and lobbies should feature amenities and other design elements that make spaces comfortable for people to use. Like a stage set or a well-designed interior, they should provide a backdrop where public use can take place, as well as the basic infrastructure to support this activity. Flexibility is perhaps the biggest factor in functional design. For example, providing the option to sit in the sun or shade can make the difference between people using a place or avoiding it. The placement of amenities is also important: benches or seats that face each other, for instance, should either be close enough for people to talk, or separate to the extent that people don't feel like they are intruding on someone else's space.

Seating is not the only important element in designing for use. Infrastructure for games or performances can also create a great magnet for children or a forum for adults to come together. Lighting can highlight these activities, as well as entrances and pathways. Indoor or outdoor retail kiosks introduce a human touch and draw people throughout the day. Whether temporary or permanent, good amenities arranged the right way will establish a convivial setting for social interaction.



Snack bar, William J. Green Federal Building, Philadelphia, PA, before (above) and after (right).



## CHALLENGE

### Dysfunctional/Inflexible Design

When not well-designed, architectural features may simply punctuate a space or make a "design statement" without actually serving the user. The result is dysfunctional space that actively discourages human activity. The hallmarks of dysfunctional space include: permanent, immovable elements; a space that can only function for one purpose; the lack of any place to sit or congregate; and empty spaces with no focal point. The basic rule of thumb is that people will not use a space that does not offer a good reason to be there. Adding some benches, lawns, or art—however well-intentioned—is not enough if done without thought as to how people will use those elements. By introducing flexible amenities and arranging them to support the desired activity of building tenants and visitors, a dysfunctional space can become a user-friendly place.



Byron Rogers Federal Building Plaza, Denver, CO, before (left) and after (below).





### ACTION POINT #3

#### Streamline and Integrate Security

The way federal buildings are designed and managed to increase security bears enormous significance: Emblems of democracy, they should remain active and open to the public. The challenge for GSA is how to achieve heightened levels of security while providing welcoming public spaces. In an increasing number of cases, GSA properties are secured not by barriers, but by better integrated structural means and careful arrangements for monitoring public access. The design and operation of interior security checkpoints can also be optimized to make the experience of arriving at GSA facilities as efficient and comfortable as possible. By streamlining the process of screening visitors and skillfully integrating security measures into the context of the site, federal buildings can retain the openness befitting democratic institutions.



Disorganized interior security not only is inefficient, but can intimidate first-time visitors with its bulk and lack of logical flow.



A better solution is to provide a welcoming presence through well-integrated security measures, such as the security desk at the Byron Rogers Federal Building in Denver, CO.

### CHALLENGE

#### Fortress Mentality

It's unavoidable: safety and security are of paramount concern in these times. But all too often security "solutions" transform a public building into a cold, forbidding place—a veritable fortress. The barriers can be physical, such as ubiquitous concrete Jersey barriers and unrelenting rows of bollards around the property's perimeter, or a matter of logistics, such as a lengthy, intimidating screening process inside the building. Perhaps even more pervasive are the psychological barriers that arise when a building is secured according to the misguided notion that "no people" equals "no problem." The challenge for building managers is to maintain active and open facilities in a time of enhanced vigilance and heightened fear. Washington, D.C.'s Reagan Building (below, bottom right) is a testament to GSA's ability to overcome the fortress mentality: Not only is it one of the country's highest-profile and highest-security federal buildings, but it is also one of the most active, with hundreds of public events held annually.



Phillip Burton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, San Francisco, CA.



Flexible security arrangements enable Washington DC's Reagan Building to hold hundreds of public events annually.





## ACTION POINT #4

### Improve Image and Aesthetics

Public spaces such as parks and squares play a huge role in shaping the identity of the communities where they are located: Think of the majestic Trevi Fountain in Rome or Philadelphia's famed Rittenhouse Square. Likewise, federal buildings project a strong message to the public about both the surrounding area and the agencies they represent. Every GSA facility constantly shapes people's perceptions of the federal government, from the sidewalk—where the edges of the property send the first signal to the public—to the interior—where visitors interact with tenant agencies. At each step in the sequence, GSA staff should ensure that the purpose of the building is clear; the quality of materials is excellent; and the spaces are free of clutter. Improving the image and aesthetic character of GSA properties is crucial both for facilities to function as community assets and for tenant agencies to fully express their missions.



Wallace F. Bennett Federal Building, Salt Lake City, UT, before (top) and after.

## CHALLENGE

### Poor Appearance

It's difficult to project a positive image of the federal government when a property's physical appearance is lacking. Outside, the challenge may take the form of blank walls that repel people and discourage pedestrian activity. Inside, it may be a cluttered lobby, poor lighting, or unattractive materials and finishes. Throughout, the mission of tenant agencies may not come across clearly to visitors, because there is no comprehensive signage or information program in place. The good news is that poor appearance is not a permanent affliction. Many GSA properties have overcome aesthetic deficiencies to win design awards and achieve recognition for their improved image.



Edward J. Schwartz Federal Building, San Diego, CA, before (top) and after.



## ACTION POINT #5

### Enhance Access and Circulation

To be successful, places need to be easy to get to. For a GSA property, this means two things: within the context of the surrounding neighborhood, the property's exterior public spaces should be easy to access via multiple modes of transportation; and once inside the property line, visitors should be able to easily enter the building and locate their destinations. The first can be accomplished by improving pedestrian and transit connections, the second by improving exterior and interior wayfinding. Making it easier to get to and move within a facility's public spaces not only improves the visitor experience, but accommodates a greater number of users and enables that facility to take on a more significant public role.



The redesigned lobby of the James A. Byrne U.S. Courthouse, Philadelphia, PA, shown before (top) and after, enhances the visitor experience with improved wayfinding signage and more intuitive circulation.

## CHALLENGE

### Isolation and Confusion

All sorts of obstacles may prevent people from getting to and around federal properties with ease. At the macro level, facilities may be isolated from the public transit system or surrounded by seas of parking and overly wide streets that are difficult to cross on foot. At the property line, they may be separated from the sidewalk by walls, pedestrian bridges, sunken plazas, garage entrances, guard rails, or steep entryway stairs. Moving inside, the entrance may be hard to identify or intimidating to use. Once in the building, inadequate wayfinding signs may confuse visitors on their way to conduct business with tenant agencies. Meeting the full breadth of this challenge requires both large-scale infrastructure improvements to integrate the facility into its urban context, and detail-oriented changes to improve users' understanding of how to reach their destinations.



The setback of the Salt Lake City Public Library (above) necessitates an awkward access ramp.

The pedestrian-friendly streets and sidewalks at the Multnomah County Library in Portland, Oregon (bottom) improve the building's openness and approachability.



## ACTION POINT #6

### Access Local Resources

Partnerships enable GSA staff to greatly multiply their efforts to improve public spaces. Some GSA properties have developed productive partnerships with museums, transit agencies, public works departments, and downtown associations, among others. By accessing these local resources, GSA staff have introduced new programs to their exterior and interior public spaces, enhanced neighborhood safety, improved transit stops, and created more walkable and attractive streets. These partnerships make GSA properties better public spaces, achieve change beyond the property line, and establish GSA as a good neighbor.



John C. Kluczynski Federal Building, Chicago, IL, before the weekly farmers market (top) and during.

## CHALLENGE

### Going It Alone

Engaging partners outside the federal government can be intimidating. GSA staff may be reluctant to reach out to local governments or other agencies because past projects have strained relationships. The desire to go it alone, however, bears very negative consequences for GSA properties. By not collaborating with local authorities on infrastructure improvements or working with neighborhood groups to host programs and events, property managers risk turning federal buildings into islands without connection to surrounding communities. Relationships with local agencies will only deteriorate in this scenario. In fact, communicating with local agencies as early and often as possible on issues of mutual interest is the best way to build healthy partnerships and maximize GSA's positive impact in the communities where we operate.



Employees of the Business Improvement District in Phoenix, AZ, review a map of downtown with GSA's building manager.





ACHIEVING GREAT FEDERAL PUBLIC SPACES:  
A PROPERTY MANAGER'S GUIDE

---

# SECTION 2

## EVALUATION

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 EVALUATION**
- 3 SOLUTIONS
- 4 IMPLEMENTATION
- 5 RESOURCES



Conducting a Place Audit at the Phillip Burton  
Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse,  
San Francisco, CA.

# Undertaking a Place Audit

**Y**ogi Berra once said, “You can see a lot by observing.” When it comes to public spaces, truer words were never spoken. By spending time in an area, observing how people use it, and asking people what they like or don’t like about it, anyone can come to understand first-hand how a place functions. This knowledge then becomes an important tool in determining how specific places can be improved.

Now that you’re familiar with GSA’s Public Space Goals and Action Points—and what prevents public spaces from succeeding—you are ready to evaluate the interior and exterior spaces of your property. The following exercise – the “Place Audit” – helps people understand how a place works from a user’s point of view, and is at the heart of the process behind creating a great civic place. Based on the simple power of observation, the Place Audit makes the most of participants’ unique knowledge, common sense, and intuition. It allows them to see the good and bad qualities of a place very quickly, and helps them identify both short- and long-term improvements.

The Audit in this book has been tailored specifically for GSA property managers to quickly get a sense of how their public spaces are performing. The exercise is not intended to evaluate the manager, but rather to determine how well the facility is meeting GSA’s Public Space Goals and what improvements can be implemented to boost that performance. It begins with a short worksheet about the background of your facility, which can be completed before or after you conduct the actual evaluation.

The bulk of the Audit is composed of two parts, the exterior and interior checklists, each divided into categories corresponding to GSA’s Public Space Action Points. The exterior public spaces to be evaluated include any plaza areas, stairways, and entry courts surrounding your facility. Sidewalks should be included even if they are under the jurisdiction of a city’s Department of Transportation or Public Works. Interior public spaces include anywhere

the general public is allowed, no matter what the size. This includes lobbies, cafeterias, auditoriums, and jury selection rooms. It is not meant to include offices, courtrooms, or conference rooms. A building may have more than one exterior or interior public space; all should be considered.

The checklists should be completed on-site while observing the actual spaces being evaluated. Don’t think too long about your answers and try not to get hung up on answering any single question – the on-site exercise is designed to harness your intuition and should take no longer than 30 minutes. After the checklists, there are two open-ended questions: one to help you highlight what is already working well, and an interview question to pose to

someone else using the place you are evaluating.

---

*By spending time in an area, observing how people use it, and asking people what they like or don’t like about it, anyone can come to understand first-hand how a place functions.*

---

You may conduct the Audit on your

own. However, we encourage you to take a small group of people with you and have them complete it as well. This group, your “stakeholders”, may include tenant agency representatives and employees, GSA colleagues, Federal Protective Service, U.S. Marshal Service or other security personnel, a concessionaire from your building, building clients, or others you think would add needed insight.

After you fill out the Audit on-site, retire to a meeting room or comfortable place and tally the points as indicated. Then refer to the Scoring section following the Audit to grade the spaces’ performance. Remember, the scores apply to the performance of the facility, not the property manager. The Scoring section will help you interpret the results of the Audit and direct you to the relevant solutions in Section 3, where you will find proven ideas for successful short-, medium- and long-term improvements for your facility’s public spaces.

# PLACE AUDIT

## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION WORKSHEET

QUESTION	ANSWER
1. Amount of square feet in the building	
2. List the three largest agencies in the building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
3. List the three agencies with the most visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
4. Number of people employed in the building	
5. Draw a diagram of the building footprint below, mark each entrance, and indicate which direction is north. Label the type of each entrance (employee, visitor, ADA). If there is more than one visitor entrance, put an asterisk by the one that is used most.	
6. How do visitors and tenants approach the building (from what direction)? For example, from a major parking lot to the north, a subway stop to the east, etc.	

# PLACE AUDIT

## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION WORKSHEET

QUESTION	ANSWER
7. Describe what's on each side of your property. Include both the edges of the facility and what is across the street, beyond the property line.	<div>NORTH</div> <div>SOUTH</div> <div>EAST</div> <div>WEST</div>
8. Describe the setting around your property (residential neighborhood, main street, downtown anchor, edge of downtown, etc).	
9. What active uses are in the area surrounding the building (retail, entertainment, restaurants, etc).	
10. Are there other public spaces in the neighborhood, like parks or plazas, where tenants eat lunch, attend events, or otherwise gather during the workday?	<div>Yes</div> <div>No</div>
11. How close are these spaces to your facility? Describe them.	
12. Is your facility's exterior public space one of the larger public spaces in the neighborhood?	<div>Yes</div> <div>No</div>
13. Is it used by people who don't work in the building?	

# PLACE AUDIT

## 2. CHECKLIST

Circle the appropriate number for each statement below

### EXTERIOR

MANAGEMENT		STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
1	Management takes responsibility for the well-being and safety of tenants and visitors once they enter the site	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
2	Management provides a welcoming presence outside the building	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
3	People meet friends or take visitors to this plaza	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
4	The plaza is viewed as a destination, not only as a pass-through	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
5	Client agencies sometimes hold events in the exterior public spaces	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
6	Outside groups sometimes hold events in the exterior public spaces	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
7	Outdoor public spaces are clean and free of litter	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
8	Visitors or tenants will pick up litter when they see it	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
9	Plantings and flower beds are changed seasonally and are well-maintained	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
10	Outdoor public spaces are in good repair	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
COLUMN SCORE						

TOTAL




# PLACE AUDIT

## 2. CHECKLIST

Circle the appropriate number for each statement below

### EXTERIOR

		DESIGN		STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
11		Design of exterior public spaces invites public use		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
12		There is enough seating for both tenants and visitors		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
13		There are a variety of comfortable places to sit (e.g. benches, sitwalls, moveable chairs, stairs)		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
14		Seating is arranged to encourage interaction and use		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
15		Sitting areas are visible and inviting to pedestrians		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
16		Building tenants eat lunch on the plaza		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
17		The plaza is used by tenants for meetings		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
18		A range of informal social activities (e.g. card games, parties) take place on the plaza		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
19		There is adequate protection from sun and the elements		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
20		There is adequate lighting at night		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
21		There are landmark features where people can meet		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
22		The design of the plaza supports a range of large-scale activities (e.g. performances, markets, demonstrations)		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
23		There are retail services on the plaza (e.g. shopping, food service, post office)		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
24		A variety of people feel comfortable using the plaza		+2	+1	-1	-2	0
COLUMN SCORE								


TOTAL

# PLACE AUDIT

## 2. CHECKLIST

Circle the appropriate number for each statement below

### EXTERIOR

		SECURITY				
			STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
25	Permanent and temporary security measures are welcoming to tenants and visitors	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
26	Security measures do not impede access by the disabled	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
27	Perimeter security measures are well-integrated and attractive	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
28	Security measures fit the context of the building's exterior	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
29	Security measures are adequate and do not impede public use and circulation	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
30	Exterior public spaces are patrolled regularly	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
31	All public spaces around the building feel safe to tenants and visitors	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
COLUMN SCORE						

TOTAL




# PLACE AUDIT

## 2. CHECKLIST

Circle the appropriate number for each statement below

### EXTERIOR

 <b>IMAGE AND AESTHETICS</b>		STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
32	The building's public spaces are inviting and attractive from a distance	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
33	The building's public spaces are inviting and attractive as you move through the site	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
34	The purpose of the building is clear as you approach	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
35	The name of the facility is clearly marked	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
36	Public art and exhibits are well-presented	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
37	Permanent finishes are high-quality and in good condition	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
38	Secondary elements, such as trash cans, recycling bins, and cigarette urns are appropriate for the site and not obtrusive	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
39	Blank walls constitute less than 30 percent of the exterior facade	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
40	Public uses (e.g. retail, information center, cafeteria) are located on the ground floor and visible from the building's exterior	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
41	Visitors and tenants get a positive impression of the federal government from the exterior public spaces	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
COLUMN SCORE						


**TOTAL**

# PLACE AUDIT

## 2. CHECKLIST

Circle the appropriate number for each statement below

### EXTERIOR

		ACCESS AND CIRCULATION				
		STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
42	It is easy for tenants and visitors to find the correct entrance	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
43	There are clear, direct paths to building entrances	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
44	Signage provides adequate directional and locational information	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
45	Exterior public spaces are easily accessible from the sidewalk	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
46	The facility is Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standard compliant (ABAAS)	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
47	Vehicle drop-offs are conveniently located near the entrance	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
48	Location of public transportation and parking is clear to visitors	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
49	Employees can walk safely to parking and public transportation	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
COLUMN SCORE						


TOTAL

# PLACE AUDIT

## 2. CHECKLIST

Circle the appropriate number for each statement below

### EXTERIOR

 <b>NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS</b>		STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
50	The area surrounding the building feels safe	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
51	Building tenants and visitors frequent nearby amenities (e.g. retail, entertainment, parks)	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
52	This site is an active, integral part of its neighborhood	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
53	Streets surrounding the facility are easy to cross	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
54	The building can be reached easily using public transportation	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
55	The design of the exterior public space connects the facility to the rest of the city	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
56	The mix of ages and ethnicities of those using the plaza reflects the community at large	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
57	The building's surrounding neighborhood positively affects the desirability of this workplace.	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
COLUMN SCORE						

**TOTAL**

2

EVALUATION


PLACE AUDIT

# PLACE AUDIT

## 2. CHECKLIST

Circle the appropriate number for each statement below

### INTERIOR

 <b>MANAGEMENT</b>		STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
58	Tenant agencies program events in the interior public spaces	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
59	Programmed events are well-promoted and consistently well-run	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
60	The public sometimes requests to use the ground floor for events	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
61	Interior public spaces are clean and free of clutter	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
62	Management provides a welcoming presence inside the building	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
63	There are interior spaces that can be used by outside groups and organizations	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
COLUMN SCORE						


**TOTAL**

# PLACE AUDIT

## 2. CHECKLIST

Circle the appropriate number for each statement below

### INTERIOR

	DESIGN					
		STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
64	The lobby is open and inviting	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
65	There are comfortable places to sit and wait in the lobby	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
66	Services such as ATMs and delivery service drop-boxes are unobtrusive, easily accessed, and consolidated where possible	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
67	Informal meetings often take place in the lobby	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
68	Lighting throughout the lobby is appropriate and highlights special features	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
69	The layout of the lobby supports its use for a range of activities	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
70	The building includes spaces for public meetings and events	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
71	There are retail amenities in the lobby before one passes through security (such as shopping, food service, post office, etc.)	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
72	There are retail amenities in the lobby after passing through security	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
COLUMN SCORE						

TOTAL

# PLACE AUDIT

## 2. CHECKLIST

Circle the appropriate number for each statement below

### INTERIOR

((O)) SECURITY		STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
73	There is sufficient space for security queuing inside the lobby	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
74	Seating outside of the secured area makes visitors feel welcome while waiting for their escort to receive them	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
75	Passing through security is a comfortable and reassuring process	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
76	Security functions smoothly during peak hours	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
77	Security personnel serve as unofficial ambassadors for the building tenants	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
78	Security can readily accommodate special events in the lobby	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
79	Employees enter the building and pass through security in under one minute	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
80	Tenants meet visitors offsite in order to avoid security delays	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
81	Visitors can easily navigate security to attend meetings in the building on time	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
82	Security procedures are obvious and transparent	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
83	Visitor screening procedures adjust to changing threat levels	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
84	Security equipment is unobtrusive and arranged efficiently	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
85	Security equipment and furnishings are in good condition and reinforce the character of the building	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
COLUMN SCORE						


TOTAL

# PLACE AUDIT

## 2. CHECKLIST

Circle the appropriate number for each statement below

### INTERIOR

 <b>IMAGE AND AESTHETICS</b>		STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
86	Information about the building and its namesake is provided in the lobby	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
87	Information about tenant agencies and what they do is clearly communicated in the lobby	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
88	Public art or exhibits are present in the lobby	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
89	Public art and exhibits are well-maintained and presented appropriately	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
90	Signage is uniform throughout the lobby and presented in consolidated locations	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
91	Permanent finishes are high-quality and in good condition	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
92	Lobby furnishings are consistent and reinforce the character of the building	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
93	Portraits and plaques are hung in an orderly fashion	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
94	Government literature, handouts and information are well-presented and organized	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
95	Secondary elements, such as trash cans and recycling bins, are not obtrusive	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
96	Visitors and tenants get a positive impression of the federal government from the lobby	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
COLUMN SCORE						

TOTAL

# PLACE AUDIT

## 2. CHECKLIST

Circle the appropriate number for each statement below

### INTERIOR

ACCESS AND CIRCULATION		STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NOT APPLICABLE
97	The lobby connects to the primary exterior public space	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
98	Signs, maps and other wayfinding devices are easily understood by visitors to all tenant agencies	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
99	Visitors can quickly locate tenant agencies from the lobby	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
100	Elevators and stairs are labeled so they can be easily found	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
101	Signage and information is removed as soon as it is out of date	+2	+1	-1	-2	0
COLUMN SCORE						

TOTAL



# PLACE AUDIT

## 3. QUESTIONS

Which of your building's public spaces are performing the best and why?

### INTERVIEW

Ask one or two people using the public spaces you evaluated (including at least one tenant) what they like about the place and what they might change. If a particular issue has emerged from this evaluation, ask them their opinion about it.

Record their answers below:

# Scoring the Audit Checklist

## INSTRUCTIONS

Tally the scores for each Audit category using the space provided on the Audit itself. Then refer below to see what the scores indicate about the current performance of your building's public spaces. Think of the scores as a measuring device to help you determine the appropriate improvements.

The scoring categories interpret the results of the Audit. Following the explanation of Audit results, each category explores what you can do next to address areas of concern, directing you to the relevant material in Section 3: Solutions.

If the facility scored in the low range for a given category, then it is best to start with some inexpensive, short-term steps that will make a difference immediately. A medium score indicates that you should consider some medium- and long-term steps right away, as well as quick improvements. And if the facility is already performing well in a certain respect, then focus on what can be done in the long run to achieve even greater success, but don't let short- or medium-term opportunities go unexplored.

## RESULTS FOR EXTERIOR SPACES

## MANAGEMENT EXTERIOR PAGE 28



SCORE	RESULTS
-20 to -7	The exterior public spaces require significant additional maintenance and programming, meaning they are currently a liability in terms of GSA's performance measures.
-6 to +6	Some aspects of public space management are being handled well, but there is clearly a lot of unmet potential. Further improving maintenance and programming will generate big returns in tenant satisfaction, public perception, and value added to the surrounding district.
+7 to +20	The management of your exterior public spaces meets many of GSA's objectives. Since there is always room to improve, try going the extra mile by undertaking management tasks that, according to the Audit, are not currently being practiced.
What's Next?	<p>By conducting the Audit, you have already embarked on the first step towards continually evaluating the exterior of your facility and how it can be improved. Meeting with building tenants and other stakeholders to conduct the Audit together can further identify what needs work (<b>see Solutions Category 1.A, page 50, for more ideas on improving public space evaluation</b>).</p> <p>A major item to discuss with this group should be which public and private sector partners, volunteers, and tenants could assist with programming the exterior public spaces (<b>Solutions Category 1.B, page 51</b>). Another partnership worth exploring may be to contract with the local Business Improvement District to cover maintenance that is now lacking (<b>Solutions Category 1.C, page 52</b>).</p>

## DESIGN EXTERIOR PAGE 29



SCORE	RESULTS
-28 to -10	Tenants may avoid bringing visitors to the space. The exterior public space tends to function as a dead zone that turns its back on the rest of the area. Though the facility is currently viewed as a place to pass through rather than a destination, it may be an untapped resource that could greatly improve tenant and visitor satisfaction if designed for public use.
-9 to +9	There are good design elements in place, but they may not be working as well as desired. With more user-friendly touches, the exterior of the facility could become a much better gathering place.
+10 to +28	The exterior public spaces succeed as a forum for tenant activity and public use, and may even serve to catalyze neighborhood revitalization.
What's Next?	<p>A plaza where people enjoy spending time can be a facility's greatest asset. If it is uncomfortable to use, however, the exterior public space can be a huge liability, creating security problems. To stay on the right track, arrange amenities to encourage use (<b>see Solutions Category 2.A, page 56</b>), provide ample protection from the elements (<b>Solutions Category 2.B, page 57</b>), and illuminate public spaces so they can be used at night (<b>Solutions Category 2.C, page 58</b>).</p> <p>More people will want to use your exterior spaces if there is some activity to draw them there, so it's important to provide infrastructure for events (<b>Solutions Category 2.D, page 59</b>) and add retail such as a food cart or ground floor café (<b>Solutions Category 2.E, page 60</b>).</p>

EXTERIOR  
SCOREEXTERIOR  
SCORE

## RESULTS FOR EXTERIOR SPACES



SECURITY EXTERIOR PAGE 30		
SCORE	RESULTS	
-14 to -5	Perimeter security measures are too heavy-handed, detracting from the perception of the federal government as open and accessible to the public.	
-4 to +4	The fortress mentality does not dominate the exterior of your facility. Some security features and functions are well-integrated into the exterior public spaces, but others require attention—sooner rather than later.	
+5 to +14	Most security measures are unobtrusive or double as attractive design features, providing building users a sense of safety without sacrificing comfort or accessibility.	
What's Next?	Well-integrated exterior security is especially important because it sets the stage for successful implementation of GSA's other public space Action Points. In many cases, however, security measures set up to meet an immediate need or designed as short-term solutions—such as jersey barriers—get left in place too long, cutting facilities off from public use. Work with government security experts to identify better, permanent options that integrate perimeter security with surrounding streets and sidewalks <b>(see Solutions Category 3.A, page 64, for suggestions)</b> .	

IMAGE AND AESTHETICS EXTERIOR PAGE 31		
SCORE	RESULTS	
-20 to -7	The exterior image and aesthetics are not meeting GSA's public space goals. The purpose of the building is unclear to visitors, and its appearance does not reflect the dignity and accessibility of the government.	
-6 to +6	The appearance of the facility is passable, neither detracting from nor contributing to the building's value to tenant agencies and the surrounding neighborhood	
+7 to +20	The exterior spaces project a good image, comparable to a Class A office building. You are likely seeing benefits in your tenant satisfaction surveys and in the rents you are able to charge, and the city may also be reaping rewards from the positive effect of your exterior on the public perception of the area.	
What's Next?	Improving the image and aesthetics of a building's exterior doesn't necessarily start with costly projects. If the facility lacks a strong identity of its own, try adding a new building sign or sidewalk banners that communicate the building name and its tenants <b>(see Solutions Category 4.A, page 70, for more ideas on strengthening building identity)</b> .  Enhancing the quality of fixtures and small furnishings like trash cans, as well as arranging amenities to reduce clutter, are simple steps to take at first <b>(see Solutions Categories 4.B and 4.C, respectively, pages 71-72)</b> . Likewise, when addressing permanent exterior problem areas like blank walls, starting small builds momentum for further improvements <b>(see Solutions Categories 4.D, page 73)</b> .	

## RESULTS FOR EXTERIOR SPACES

## ACCESS AND CIRCULATION EXTERIOR PAGE 32




SCORE	RESULTS
-14 to -5	The facility is difficult to access by transit or on foot, and entrances may be hard to locate. As a result the exterior public spaces feel disconnected from the surrounding neighborhood and do not generate as much public activity as they could.
-4 to +4	First time visitors may be able to find their way around without much confusion. However, pedestrian connections between exterior public spaces and surrounding streets and sidewalks could be significantly improved.
+5 to +14	It is easy to walk or take transit to the facility. Pedestrian traffic flows smoothly from nearby streets and sidewalks into the exterior public spaces, and signage clearly directs visitors to their destinations.
What's Next?	<p>A GSA property can only capture the full value of its public spaces if people have no trouble getting there in the first place. You may find that access and circulation problems result in complaints from people who have to circle your building to find the correct entrance, or in security personnel fielding an inordinate amount of queries about directions and wayfinding (<b>see Solutions Category 5.B, page 77, for suggestions on wayfinding</b>).</p> <p>If people think crossing the street to get to your facility is too difficult, or they find surrounding sidewalks to be a hostile environment, then improving pedestrian connections should be a priority (<b>see Solutions Category 5.C, page 78</b>).</p> <p>Transportation connections may also be sub-par, with traffic congestion clogging nearby streets, visitors and tenants demanding more parking, and few users arriving by transit (<b>see Solutions Category 5.D, page 79</b>).</p>


## NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS EXTERIOR PAGE 33



SCORE	RESULTS
-16 to -6	The exterior public spaces are not contributing to the economic or social well-being of the city or the neighborhood in which you are located. This has a negative effect on building user satisfaction and the public's perception of your facility.
-5 to +5	The foundation is in place for a positive relationship between your facility and the surrounding neighborhood, but there is still plenty of work to do to strengthen this connection.
+6 to +16	Your building's exterior public space functions as a destination within the city that is used by people other than just tenants and visitors. The next step should be to leverage this influential position to encourage the city and private property owners to make complementary improvements to the area.
What's Next?	<p>The connection between exterior public spaces and the surrounding neighborhood is a two-way street. In one direction, your facility should be a public asset producing benefits that flow to nearby businesses, property owners, and residents. Going the other way, local partners should assist in making your public space as lively, welcoming and attractive as it can be.</p> <p>For both sides to function properly, GSA properties need to: form partnerships with civic groups or BIDs to program activities and events (<b>see Solutions Category 6.A, page 82</b>); coordinate with local government on neighborhood security and infrastructure improvements (<b>see Solutions Category 6.B, page 83</b>); and work with local merchants to enhance the area's appearance, safety, and economic vitality (<b>see Solutions Category 6.C, page 84</b>).</p>

## RESULTS FOR INTERIOR SPACES

MANAGEMENT INTERIOR PAGE 34		
SCORE	RESULTS	
-10 to -5	Upon entering the building, people encounter spaces with low levels of activity and insufficient maintenance. Visitors and tenants may sense the lack of a management presence, negatively affecting their regard for the facility.	
-4 to +4	The interior public spaces display signs of good management but there is room for improvement, perhaps in terms of the programmed activities that take place, the frequency of litter removal, or the repair of lobby features and fixtures.	
+5 to +10	Management is in tune with the pulse of the interior spaces, and it shows. Events are scheduled often, maintenance keeps pace as needed, and users feel comfortable knowing that someone is in charge.	
What's Next?	<p>When lobbies, atriums, and other interior public spaces are actively managed, they can generate income for the GSA and become “adopted” as valuable community gathering places by a whole city. Without good management, however, visitors may feel intimidated or put off, and the space will not realize its potential value.</p> <p>Talk with staff who manage these spaces to identify the problems they face, the improvements they recommend, and the questions they are most frequently asked by visitors and tenants <b>(for more suggestions about evaluating your facility, see Solutions Category 1.A, page 50).</b></p> <p>If the spaces are not being used effectively for activities, look into forming partnerships to help program the space <b>(see Solutions Category 1.B, page 51)</b>. If the quality of maintenance gives people a poor first impression, strategies for maintaining the space over the long term are necessary <b>(see Solutions Category 1.C, page 52)</b>.</p>	

DESIGN INTERIOR PAGE 35		
SCORE	RESULTS	
-14 to -5	The interior public spaces lack basic amenities and generate little economic or social value. They do not create a welcoming or comfortable atmosphere, so people move through as quickly as possible.	
-4 to +4	While some practical design elements are provided, there may not be enough or they may not be arranged well. The space does not attract as much use as it should.	
+5 to +14	Tenants are proud to bring visitors to the building. The interior public space is well-utilized by tenants and visitors, serving as a “living room” where building users can spend time and socialize.	
What's Next?	<p>A well-designed interior public space is a great asset, yielding increased revenue from retail activity and higher user satisfaction—as opposed to merely incurring maintenance expenses. Several factors go into achieving this level of performance.</p> <p>If your facility lacks comfortable places to sit and wait for people, for instance, look into improving amenities <b>(see Solutions Category 2.A, page 56)</b>. Or certain areas may go unused because lighting is less than optimal <b>(see Solutions Category 2.C, page 58)</b>. It may be difficult to hold exhibits and events because the infrastructure is not sufficient <b>(see Solutions Category 2.D, page 59)</b>. There may also be few reasons for people to use the space, in which case adding retail can spark activity <b>(see Solutions Category 2.E, page 60)</b>.</p>	

## RESULTS FOR INTERIOR SPACES

## SECURITY INTERIOR PAGE 36



SCORE	RESULTS
-22 to -8	Tenants and visitors view security as a hindrance. The arrival and security sequence is inconsistent or illogical, causing confusion and delays. Pre-screen areas are not comfortable for visitors, and checkpoints function as obstacles without providing a welcoming presence.
-7 to +7	Visitors can navigate security without too much difficulty, but there is still a lot of room to improve the experience.
+8 to +22	Security is effective and efficient, increasing people's sense of personal safety, security and well-being. Visitors feel welcome in your facility and are comfortable coming there to transact business with the federal government.
What's Next?	<p>There are two things to focus on when it comes to improving interior security—the pre-screen area (<b>see Solutions Category 3.B, page 65</b>) and the screening process itself (<b>Solutions Category 3.C, page 66</b>). Both probably need to be addressed if tenants in your facility regularly bypass security by meeting clients outside the property altogether.</p> <p>Other telltale signs that action is needed include queues that extend outside the building (especially at peak times like during special events or after the lunch rush), visitors moving repeatedly back and forth between desks and magnetometers, or visitors being constantly late for meetings with tenant agencies on account of security procedures.</p>

## IMAGE AND AESTHETICS INTERIOR PAGE 37



SCORE	RESULTS
-24 to -9	Interior public spaces may be cluttered, disorderly, or visually unattractive, projecting a poor image of tenant agencies and the federal government. Improving the aesthetics of these spaces should be an immediate priority.
-8 to +8	Some aesthetic elements are working better than others. Recognize what is detracting from the image of your interior public spaces and focus initial improvements on these areas.
+9 to +24	The interior of your facility boosts the image of the federal government and may improve public perception of the surrounding neighborhood and the city as a whole.
What's Next?	<p>Optimizing the image and aesthetics of your interior public spaces is a multi-faceted challenge. Even a facility that scores well in this regard can take further steps to become a showpiece for tenants, GSA, and the federal government. If the lobby has no display about tenant agencies or the building itself, for instance, then this information should be communicated clearly (<b>see Solutions Category 4.A on page 70 for suggestions</b>).</p> <p>Clashing styles of materials, finishes, and amenities may also need to be remedied. For example, public art or exhibits may not be well-installed, or prior aesthetic improvements may have been left incomplete due to budgetary issues (<b>see Solutions Category 4.B, page 71</b>). Another common factor is the careless arrangement of items such as drop-boxes, ATMs, and furniture, which if left uncoordinated may create an impression of unkempt physical clutter (<b>see Solutions Category 4.C, page 72</b>).</p>

## RESULTS FOR INTERIOR SPACES

ACCESS AND CIRCULATION INTERIOR PAGE 38	
SCORE	RESULTS
-10 to -4	People using your facility tend to be confused about wayfinding. This is probably taking valuable time away from both client agencies and visitors, which decreases tenant satisfaction.
-3 to +3	Visitors can find their way around your facility without becoming frustrated, but there are still inefficiencies to improve upon.
+4 to +10	Being able to navigate a public facility increases people's comfort level and puts them at ease. People are able to find their way around your public facility efficiently. They feel confident about coming to do business in your facility, and they know they won't get lost or lose time.
What's Next?	<p>All public spaces—good and bad—encounter problems with access and circulation. You may find your facility suffers from congestion and excessive queuing in the lobby as people wander back and forth looking for the proper elevator bank or the building directory. It may also be common for security personnel to spend much of their time giving people directions.</p> <p>Handmade, temporary signs may be helping first time users find their way around, but a more permanent, attractive solution is required. <b>(See Solutions Category 5.A, pages 76, for ideas on how to improve the access and circulation of your interior public spaces.)</b></p>



ACHIEVING GREAT FEDERAL PUBLIC SPACES:  
A PROPERTY MANAGER'S GUIDE

---

# SECTION 3

## SOLUTIONS



- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 EVALUATION
- 3 SOLUTIONS**
- 4 IMPLEMENTATION
- 5 RESOURCES

# A Menu of Ideas

In Section 2, the Place Audit identified what aspects of your facility's public space need improvement. Section 3: Solutions provides ideas to address these needs. The ideas are arranged according to the six Action Points and divided further into sub-categories, each presenting a range of possibilities—from short-term, inexpensive steps to long-term measures that require more investment. The worksheets provided after each Action Point will help you organize your ideas.

The easy-to-implement short-term recommendations should be the first place you look to improve the aspects of your facility's public space that rated poorly. These ideas are great for effecting change when major resources are not expected, or simply to get something done "in the meantime" while waiting for a major project approval or an outyear project start. By starting small, GSA can change how its clients and communities feel about federal spaces in a 30 to 90 day timeframe—getting results without the multi-year process and relative uncertainty that accompany larger projects. Alternatively, if your facility is already performing well in a given area, you may want to prioritize the medium- and long-term suggestions.

Keep in mind that this section is meant to generate ideas, not necessarily prescribe specific solutions. The suggestions in this book should serve as a starting point from which you can develop a unique strategy, while working with building tenants and local partners, to make your facility's spaces as good as they can be.

The sample solutions in this section are grouped according to the following categories:

## **Action Point #1: MANAGE: EVALUATE, PROGRAM, MAINTAIN**

- A. Evaluate property performance in terms of public use
- B. Program and encourage active use of space
- C. Maintain the space over the long term

## **Action Point #2: DESIGN FOR USE**

- A. Arrange amenities to optimize use
- B. Provide protection from weather and the elements
- C. Illuminate public spaces
- D. Provide infrastructure to support uses and activities
- E. Introduce retail

## **Action Point #3: STREAMLINE AND INTEGRATE SECURITY**

- A. Improve appearance of perimeter security features
- B. Improve level of comfort and amenities in pre-screen areas
- C. Expedite and streamline the screening process

## **Action Point #4: IMPROVE IMAGE AND AESTHETICS**

- A. Communicate building's role in both government and community
- B. Improve the quality and consistency of materials
- C. Reduce clutter
- D. Improve appearance of edges and exterior

## **Action Point #5: ENHANCE ACCESS AND CIRCULATION**

- A. Improve interior wayfinding
- B. Improve exterior wayfinding
- C. Improve accessibility and pedestrian connections
- D. Improve transportation connections

## **Action Point #6: ACCESS LOCAL RESOURCES**

- A. Establish partnerships for programming and events
- B. Coordinate with local government
- C. Coordinate with local business



SAMPLE SOLUTIONS

# ACTION POINT #1

Manage: Evaluate, Program, Maintain

3

SOLUTIONS



Ribbon cutting for Twin Rivers Complex,  
Ogden, UT.



## ACTION POINT #1

Manage: Evaluate, Program, Maintain

### A. EVALUATE PROPERTY PERFORMANCE IN TERMS OF PUBLIC USE

#### SHORT TERM

**Conduct the Audit with a group of stakeholders** (community and building tenants, Business Improvement District, local organizations and agencies).

**Count the numbers of people using the public spaces** at different times during the day. Note what areas people are using and what they are doing there (smoking, eating lunch, waiting for a ride home, etc).



Participants conduct the Place Audit at the Phillip Burton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, San Francisco, CA.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Conduct a meeting with stakeholders** such as local BIDs, city staff, and tenants to brainstorm short- and long-term solutions and improvements.

**Convene additional workshops** and/or a design charrette with Good Neighbor/First Impressions partners to develop an overall vision for improvement of the space beyond resolving specific problem areas identified in the Audit.



Stakeholders discuss and map out improvements to the Phillip Burton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse.

#### LONG TERM

**Monitor and revise the “vision”** on an ongoing basis as improvements are completed and activities are planned.

**Evaluate the success** of these improvements and make changes as needed.



Concept plan portrays the “vision” for the plaza at Phillip Burton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse.





# ACTION POINT #1

Manage: Evaluate, Program, Maintain

## B. PROGRAM AND ENCOURAGE ACTIVE USE OF SPACE

### SHORT TERM

**Contact tenant agencies and cultural and civic associations** in the immediate area to inform them that the interior and exterior public spaces are available for public use. Spell out conditions of that use, including types of activities permitted, preferred hours, security procedures, etc. Provide a contact name and number.

**Plan a special event with tenant agencies** (such as lunch on the plaza) in your exterior or interior public spaces.

**Arrange a lunchtime talk** by a regional specialist on the history of your building or the neighborhood.

**Talk to other property managers** in your region about the types of programming and activities they've produced in their public spaces and who they partner with to run them.



Event organized by a nearby elementary school at the Phillip Burton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, San Francisco, CA.

### MEDIUM TERM

**Program day-long events on the plaza or parking lot**, planned with and for tenants and local partners. These could include food festivals and markets, or events that capitalize on the functions of the tenant agencies (e.g. "earth day" or "law day").

**Program events in your interior public spaces**, such as a fundraiser for local charities in the lobby, or a lunchtime performance in the cafeteria, auditorium, or atrium.



Hurricane Katrina Fundraiser, Alexander Hamilton U.S. Customs House, New York, NY.



Outdoor jazz festival and farmers market held at City Hall and NJTransit parking facilities, East Orange, NJ.

### LONG TERM

**Organize a recurring event** to be produced by a local partner or BID.

**Create a permanent "building management team"** to regularly program the interior and exterior public spaces of your facility.



City-run farmers market, Kluczynski Federal Building, Chicago, IL.



Smithsonian jazz band at the U.S. Department of Education Plaza, Washington, DC.



## ACTION POINT #1

Manage: Evaluate, Program, Maintain

### C. MAINTAIN THE SPACE OVER THE LONG TERM

#### SHORT TERM

**Walk around your building's public spaces on a daily basis** to assess conditions in the lobby, plaza, parking areas, and so on. Don't leave this to a maintenance person, but do it yourself or assign it to someone who reports directly to you.

**Don't allow easily remedied problems to linger.** Fix broken or missing paving, burnt out lights, graffiti, and other temporary conditions as quickly as you can.



Easily remedied problems can snowball into a difficult mess if allowed to linger.



Security fencing and bulky planters create an unwelcoming atmosphere.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Organize a "public space beautification day" with tenants** to plant flowers and pick up trash on site and at adjacent properties.

**Improve the site through better landscaping.** For instance, rotate horticultural displays to reflect seasonal changes.



Volunteers at work at Baltimore City Hall Plaza, Baltimore, MD.



Flower display at the Byron Rogers Federal Building, Denver, CO.

#### LONG TERM

**Develop a comprehensive plan for maintaining and programming the plaza, landscaping and lobby** in partnership with tenants, stakeholders and the local BID, if one exists.

**Work with community partners and the city** to implement consistent, thorough and regular sidewalk cleaning, maintenance, and repair, including steam cleaning and chewing gum removal.



BID landscaper, Buffalo, NY.



City street sweeper, Atlanta, GA.



## WORKSHEET #1

### A.

List five activities and uses that would enliven the interior and exterior public spaces around this facility.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### B.

Generate a list of people and organizations who could help produce, manage, fund and oversee bringing these new uses and activities to your space. You can convene a group of building tenants and stakeholders to help you do this.

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_







SAMPLE SOLUTIONS

# ACTION POINT #2

Design for Use



The public enjoys a Latin Jazz concert at “Live! at Woodrow Wilson Plaza”, a program at the Ronald Reagan Building, Washington, DC.

3

SOLUTIONS



## ACTION POINT #2

Design for Use

### A. ARRANGE AMENITIES TO OPTIMIZE USE

#### SHORT TERM

**Reconfigure existing seating options** to optimize use. For example, use tables and chairs to create an area in the plaza or lobby for meetings and lunch breaks.

**Count the number and types of amenities** in your public spaces. Note how well they are being used and their condition.



Moveable seating and tables, atrium of CitiGroup Center, New York, NY.



Seating area, Byron Rogers Federal Building, Denver, CO.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Upgrade existing amenities** that may need replacing by introducing new furniture—such as movable and semi-permanent chairs, benches, and tables—and configuring to promote use.

**Add** tables for informal employee meetings.

**Group similar uses together**, like mail boxes and ATMs, to facilitate their use.



Indoor courtyard with seating and chess tables, New York, NY.

#### LONG TERM

**Add** new lawn areas.

**Introduce sitting stairs** and sitting walls.



New lawn area, Edward J. Schwartz Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, San Diego, CA.



Sitting stairs, City Hall, Oakland, CA.





## B. PROVIDE PROTECTION FROM WEATHER AND THE ELEMENTS

### SHORT TERM

**Make use of existing shade** by moving chairs and benches into shaded areas and removing obstructions (garbage cans, planters) from areas that provide protection from the weather.

**Purchase small umbrellas** for tables and seating areas.



Umbrella with sidewalk seating and tables, Burlington, VT.



Shade structures, San Diego, CA.

### MEDIUM TERM

**Introduce flexible, moveable shade structures** to allow experimentation with placement and to accommodate seasonal changes. Consider large umbrellas or tented structures to give color and form to the plaza.

**Add canopies and awnings** to building overhangs and windows.

**Plant trees** in large planters.



Left (top and bottom): Tents and awnings provide shaded seating at the Ronald Reagan Federal Building, Washington, DC. Above: Tree planters, Denver, CO.

### LONG TERM

**Install a permanent shade/protection structure** to cover sitting areas, key pathways, and entrances. This could include building a freestanding trellis, a loggia, or permanent tents.

**Plant more trees** along the street and other exterior public spaces.



Loggia, Byron Rogers Federal Building, Denver, CO.



Seating nooks with shade trees, John Joseph Moakley Courthouse, Boston, MA.



## C. ILLUMINATE PUBLIC SPACES

### SHORT TERM

**Adjust/aim existing fixtures** to adequately illuminate public spaces, sidewalks, entrances, and signage.

**Repair broken fixtures;** replace burnt out bulbs.



Wilbur Wright Federal Building, Washington, DC.

### MEDIUM TERM

**Install façade uplighting** on the building to highlight design elements and increase the ambient lighting in the area. Light fixtures can be affixed to neighboring buildings or grounds.

**Introduce** pathway and landscape lighting.

**Reconfigure interior lighting** to ensure that all areas are appropriately illuminated.



Special uplighting for Breast Cancer Awareness Day, Alphonse D'Amato United States Courthouse, Central Islip, NY.

### LONG TERM

**Install new light standards** on the grounds.

**Hire a GSA lighting consultant** to evaluate lobby lighting levels and quality of fixtures and recommend improvements.



Above: James A. Byrne Federal Courthouse, Philadelphia, PA.

Left: Pedestrian-scale street lights.



## D. PROVIDE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT USES AND ACTIVITIES

### SHORT TERM

**Help events programmers** obtain electrical service and sound systems.

**Alternatively, contract with a local events programmer** or theatrical supplier/producer to provide the lighting, electrical and sound equipment needed for your plaza on an as-needed basis.



Electricity is run to a temporary stage for the weekly "Party in the Plaza" at the James Hanley Federal Building, Syracuse, NY.

### MEDIUM TERM

**Introduce hard surfaces** to provide a place for kiosks and tables.

**Add electrical service, lighting, and sound systems** to public spaces or build them into the event areas of public spaces as part of restoration, renovation or repair projects.



A platform in Oakland, CA equipped with electrical service also supports passive use.



Freestanding kiosk with electrical service, National Mall, Washington, DC.

### LONG TERM

**Plant a lawn area** for passive use, tenant lunches, or audience seating.

**Install security elements that can double as amenities**, such as sitting stairs or stages.

**Incorporate single-use features** such as fountains or life-size chess boards into exterior public spaces to draw people and serve as an attraction.

**Provide permanent display panels** and gallery quality lighting for interior public exhibition areas.



Above: New display panels, Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, Martinsburg, WV.

Top left: Education Plaza, Washington, DC before removal of bushes and trees.  
Bottom left: After plantings were removed, the plaza could accommodate a greater variety of use.





## ACTION POINT #2

Design for Use

### E. INTRODUCE RETAIL

#### SHORT TERM

**Contract with your existing concessionaire** to operate a coffee and sandwich cart in exterior and/or interior public spaces.

**Invite a local merchant** to operate a retail cart on the plaza.



Vending cart, San Diego, CA.



#### MEDIUM TERM

If the retail cart is successful, construct a **permanent exterior kiosk** (with plumbing and electric) or an in-building structure on the ground floor (pre-security).

**Turn existing snack bar into a café** with seating and tables.



Food vendors, State Courthouse, New York, NY.



Indoor café area, William J. Green Federal Building, Philadelphia, PA.

#### LONG TERM

**Externalize building cafeterias:** Relocate to an at-grade location and add an outdoor dining area.

**Introduce a free standing restaurant** or café.

As part of new construction, **build a publicly accessible restaurant** into the ground floor.



Clockwise from above: Lunch on the plaza at the Ronald Reagan Building, Washington, DC; Junction City Diner at the IRS Facility, Ogden, UT; Daily Catch Restaurant, John Joseph Moakley U.S. Courthouse, Boston, MA.



## WORKSHEET #2

### A.

List the important areas of the building's exterior and interior public space that may be underperforming:

---

---

---

---

### B.

List at least THREE things that you could do to improve these areas. Focus on actions that can be done right away and wouldn't cost a lot:

---

---

---

---

---

---

### C.

What FIVE improvements would you make to the building's exterior and interior public space in the long-term?

1. 

---

---
2. 

---

---
3. 

---

---
4. 

---

---
5. 

---

---







SAMPLE SOLUTIONS

# ACTION POINT #3

Streamline and Integrate Security

3

SOLUTIONS



Light installation designed for GSA's Art in Architecture program by artist Jim Campbell reduces the visual impact of a security barrier at the Byron Rogers U.S. Courthouse, Denver, CO.



## A. IMPROVE APPEARANCE OF PERIMETER SECURITY FEATURES

### SHORT TERM

**Remove temporary measures** that are no longer needed

**Encourage security personnel to walk a beat** around the perimeter of the public spaces surrounding a federal property to ensure that existing features are in good condition.

**Replace metal “cattle fencing”** with configurable “Tensabarriers,” which use retractable webbing and are more attractive and easier to move.

**Install** cameras inconspicuously.



Security cameras are installed in the sidewalk light fixtures at the John Joseph Moakley U.S. Courthouse, Boston, MA.



Leaving jersey barriers in place after they are no longer needed perpetuates the fortress mentality. (Pictured: World Bank Headquarters, Washington, DC)

### MEDIUM TERM

**Use permanent, well-designed features** to address perimeter security concerns rather than fencing or jersey barriers.

**Increase lighting at night** as needed for plazas, parking areas, and entrances.



Bollards, Kluczynski Federal Building, Chicago, IL.



Perimeter benches, planters and bollards, International Monetary Fund Headquarters, Washington, DC.

### LONG TERM

Carry out perimeter security projects so as to **integrate security measures into site improvements**, new furniture, and landscaping. For example, transform existing bollards into usable amenities, such as tables, benches, or game tables.

**Activate and program exterior public spaces** to dissuade undesirable uses and activities.



Seating steps can function as a security barrier, Oakland, CA.



Positive activity like this street market in front of a downtown courthouse in New York, NY discourages undesirable use.





## B. IMPROVE LEVEL OF COMFORT AND AMENITIES IN PRE-SCREEN AREAS

### SHORT TERM

**Install seating outside of the secured area** so that visitors can sit and feel welcome while waiting for their escort to receive them.

**Relocate furniture** to allow sufficient room for queuing, especially if existing arrangements often force people to wait outside.



Pre-screening area seating, GSA National Capital Region Headquarters, Washington, DC.



Federal Courthouse, Tacoma, WA.

### MEDIUM TERM

**Install an in-house phone in the lobby** before the magnetometers so that visitors needing additional time or assistance in getting through security can call up to the person they are visiting.

**Introduce retail in the pre-screen area** to serve visitors as well as employees.



Pre-screening area phone, GSA National Capital Region Headquarters, Washington, DC.



Federal Courthouse, Tacoma, WA.

### LONG TERM

**Engage First Impressions design firm** in complete renovation of interior security area to make it more welcoming, functional and attractive.

**Build a new entrance pavilion** onto the building to provide larger weather-protected areas for queuing and security functions.



Security area, Hale Boggs Federal Building, New Orleans, LA.



Entrance Pavilion, Richard B. Russell Federal Building, Atlanta, GA.



## ACTION POINT #3

Streamline and Integrate Security

### C. EXPEDITE AND STREAMLINE THE SCREENING PROCESS

#### SHORT TERM

**Cultivate the presence of federal security staff as “ambassadors.”** Train them to guide visitors to the proper destination and provide information, when appropriate, about building tenants and services.

**Talk to client agencies to** determine whether security for visitors and customers is inconvenient and if so, make small changes to security policies to address identified issues.



Security desk, Byron Rogers Federal Building, Denver, CO.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Work with Building Security Committee and FPS/Marshals to create streamlined building security procedures** for visitors and tenants that vary appropriately according to different threat levels (DHS Color System).

**Purchase appropriate security furniture and equipment** to ensure visitors and tenants alike can pass through security as quickly as possible.



Security furniture, William S. Moorhead Federal Building, Pittsburgh, PA.

#### LONG TERM

**Work with First Impressions architects** to redesign lobby so security is as integrated and efficient as possible.

**Consider adding or reopening** an existing visitor entrance.

**Introduce Smart Card technology** to separate employee entry points from visitor entries.

**Create a consistent policy** across regional service centers that outlines how security processes are to be conducted. Include factors such as building security rating, tenant versus visitor procedures, and flexibility for special events and agencies that have many visitors.



Lobby, James A. Byrne Courthouse, Philadelphia, PA.



## WORKSHEET #3

### A.

Talk to clients and visitors after they pass through security. List the features of the building's security program that may be causing unnecessary delays and inconvenience.

---

---

---

---

### B.

List at least THREE things that you could do to improve these features. Focus on actions that can be done right away and wouldn't cost a lot:

---

---

---

---

---

---

### C.

What FIVE improvements would you make that would help streamline and integrate security at this facility in the long-term?

1. 

---

---
2. 

---

---
3. 

---

---
4. 

---

---
5. 

---

---





**SAMPLE SOLUTIONS**

# **ACTION POINT #4**

Improve Image and Aesthetics

**3  
SOLUTIONS**



Lobby of the Wallace F. Bennett  
Federal Building, Salt Lake City, UT.





## ACTION POINT #4

Improve Image and Aesthetics

### A. COMMUNICATE BUILDING'S ROLE IN BOTH GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY

#### SHORT TERM

**Display flags and banners** along the sidewalk that identify the building and its tenants.

**Work with the city** to include the building and its public spaces on city maps and websites, and materials at the visitors bureau and chamber of commerce.

**Add appropriately scaled, legible, exterior building signage** that declares the purpose of the facility.



Above: District map, Arlington, VA.

Left: National Geographic Society, Washington, DC.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Implement signage program in exterior and interior spaces** that clearly communicates the building's name, function, and its major tenants.

**Communicate history of the site and the building's namesake** through an exhibition or display.

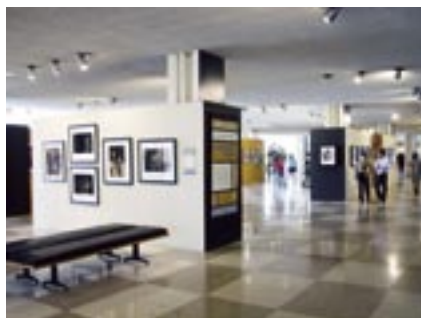


Left: Exterior signage at the Ronald Reagan Building, Washington, DC.

#### LONG TERM

**Install rotating exhibitions** showcasing the work of tenant agencies.

**Use a repair and alteration project** to enhance the image of the building and communicate the mission of tenant agencies.



Exhibition in the lobby of the Paine Webber Building, New York, NY.



Display panels exhibiting history of judicial system, Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, Martinsburg, WV.



## ACTION POINT #4

Improve Image and Aesthetics

### B. IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND CONSISTENCY OF MATERIALS

#### SHORT TERM

**Purchase new trash cans, frames, flower pots, and other small furnishings** that are stylistically similar to one another and the building.

**Update or replace building directory** to complement interior finishes.

**Use consistent graphic design standards** to advertise and announce building events.



Planters, Atlanta, GA.



Event graphics at Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland, OR.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Replace historically inaccurate fixtures** with ones that fit the context of the building.

**Purchase new furniture** for exterior and interior public spaces.

**Conserve** existing public art.



Low-cost furniture, United States Department of Agriculture, Beltsville, MD.



Sculpture by Dale Chihuly, Federal Building, Tacoma, WA.

#### LONG TERM

**Carry out exterior and interior public space renovation** incorporating new material, lighting and landscape standards.

**Undertake complete modernization** project (prospectus level).

**Enhance the architectural details** of the building using gilding or painting at entrances, cornices, and other façade areas to provide visual interest. These details could be lighted at night to enhance the building's image and the general perception of the area.



Richard Bolling Federal Building, Kansas City, MO, after renovation of interior and exterior public space.



## ACTION POINT #4

Improve Image and Aesthetics

### C. REDUCE CLUTTER

#### SHORT TERM

**Organize ad-hoc signage** with new bulletin board and posting guidelines.

**Consolidate similar functions**  
- for instance, by grouping trash cans with recycling bins.

**Regularly throw out outdated signs** and old periodicals. Put all periodicals in one location.



Ad-hoc signage such as these easels at the Phillip Burton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in San Francisco, CA may detract from a facility's image.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Purchase new display furniture**  
(e.g. racks to hold forms, display panels for artworks).

**Relocate amenities** as necessary so that they don't block access from the street to the plaza or to the building.



Display panel at the James A. Byrne U.S. Courthouse, Philadelphia, PA.

#### LONG TERM

**Carry out repair and alteration project** to streamline uses. For instance, create a business center that combines shipping, ATM and U.S. Mail services.



Floor plan of business center which consolidates uses adjacent to the lobby.



## ACTION POINT #4

Improve Image and Aesthetics

### D. IMPROVE APPEARANCE OF EDGES AND EXTERIOR

#### SHORT TERM

**Install temporary planters, hedges and fences** to reduce visual impact of parking lots, maintenance areas, HVAC area, and loading docks.

**Hang banners, install uplighting, or paint a mural** on a blank wall.



Posters liven up a blank wall in Seattle, WA.



A blank facade is used to advertise local attractions, Phoenix, AZ.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Make streetscape improvements** that incorporate the city's design standards and guidelines.

**Make streetscape improvements using new site design standards** based on evaluations of the property.



Streetscape improvements may include seating, planters, and pedestrian-scaled lighting.

#### LONG TERM

**Make permanent improvements to problem areas** such as façades and blank walls so that they are more transparent and engaging.

**Retrofit the ground floor** of the building so that there are active uses (retail, information kiosks, etc.) on all four sides.



A false facade provides the appearance of a transparent ground floor at the Edward J. Schwartz Federal Building, San Diego, CA.



Galleria of the public library in Salt Lake City, UT.

3

SOLUTIONS



## WORKSHEET #4

### A.

List the aspects of the building's image and aesthetics that may be improved for clients and visitors.

---

---

---

---

### B.

List at least THREE things that you could do to improve these shortcomings. Focus on actions that can be done right away and wouldn't cost a lot:

---

---

---

---

---

---

### C.

What FIVE changes would you make that would help streamline and integrate security at this facility in the long-term?

1. 

---

---
2. 

---

---
3. 

---

---
4. 

---

---
5. 

---

---





SAMPLE SOLUTIONS

# ACTION POINT #5

Enhance Access and Circulation

3

SOLUTIONS



Wayfinding signage in Washington, DC.



## ACTION POINT #5

Enhance Access and Circulation

### A. IMPROVE INTERIOR WAYFINDING

#### SHORT TERM

**Remove outdated signage** and information.

**Keep building directory up to date** and replace or relocate if necessary.

**Reduce use of handmade wayfinding signs.**



Building directory, Wilbur Wright Federal Building, Washington, DC.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Create a consistent graphic identity for signage** throughout the building.

**Use signs and lighting** to highlight elevators, stairs and exits.



Directional signage, Wilbur Wright Federal Building, Washington, DC.

#### LONG TERM

**Develop an information center** (such as a staffed kiosk or desk) to provide “concierge”-type services in the interior public spaces.

**Redesign the lobby** to improve interior pedestrian flow and circulation to exterior public spaces.



Lobby, Richard Bolling Federal Building, Kansas City, MO.





## ACTION POINT #5

Enhance Access and Circulation

### B. IMPROVE EXTERIOR WAYFINDING

#### SHORT TERM

**Add signs** to distinguish between visitor and employee entrances.

**Establish a zone** for pick-ups and drop-offs.



The employee entrance at the Wilbur Wright Federal Building, Washington, DC is clearly marked.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Create an area map**, including locations of nearby transit, to place in exterior public spaces.

**Use art** to highlight entrances.



Above: Entrance to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Courthouse in Newark, NJ.

Left: Area map in Atlanta, GA.

#### LONG TERM

**Develop an information center** (such as a free standing, staffed kiosk) to provide “concierge”-type services in the exterior public spaces.

**Implement a repair and alteration project**—such as constructing a new entry pavilion, redesigning building entrances, or reconfiguring paths to align with intersections and entry points—to make entrances more prominent.



The renovated entrance to the U.S. Post Office in Montpelier, VT is transparent and prominent to visitors, with paths that connect directly to the sidewalk.





## ACTION POINT #5

Enhance Access and Circulation

### C. IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AND PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

#### SHORT TERM

**Stripe crosswalks** at all intersections around facility.

**Remove temporary security barriers and furniture** that impede pedestrian access.



Crosswalks, Honolulu, HI.

#### MEDIUM TERM

In repair and alteration projects, **ensure ABAAS accessibility**.

**Adjust traffic signals** to increase walk times.



Signage indicating universal access, Portland, OR.



Tucson, AZ.

#### LONG TERM

**Partner with the local Department of Transportation** on a traffic calming program for the area around your facility.

**In repair and alteration projects, ensure pedestrian access.**

For instance, eliminate and consolidate curb cuts, sidewalk grates, and driveway entrances to minimize negative impacts on pedestrian environment where possible, and reconfigure entrances so that they are oriented towards the sidewalk.



Entrance atrium, Richard V. Dellums Federal Building, Oakland, CA.



Traffic calmed downtown street with bulbout and angled parking, San Bernardino, CA.



## ACTION POINT #5

Enhance Access and Circulation

### D. IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS

#### SHORT TERM

**Provide clear information to visitors** about how to access your facility.

**Provide transit information** (schedules and routes) to employees and tenants.

**Start a volunteer service** to escort employees to their cars, or to their transit stop.



Left: Station Manager, Christopher Street subway station, New York, NY.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Identify opportunities to share parking** or swap parking lots with neighboring institutions, in order to increase parking availability without constructing new facilities.

**Implement program to encourage carpooling and transit use** by making transit route maps and schedules available in the building and promoting the federal government's transit discount.



The Washington Metro serves federal buildings throughout the capital region.

#### LONG TERM

**Partner with local transit agency** to include facility on bus routes.

**Work with transit agency** to improve transit stops on your property.



Regional Transportation District transit stop at the Byron Rogers Federal Building, Denver, CO.



## WORKSHEET #5

### A.

List the elements related to circulation and wayfinding through the building's exterior and interior public spaces that may be unclear or confusing for new visitors.

---

---

---

### B.

List at least THREE things that you could do to improve these elements. Focus on actions that can be done right away and wouldn't cost a lot:

---

---

---

---

---

---

### C.

What FIVE changes would you make to the building's circulation elements in the long-term?

1. 

---

---
2. 

---

---
3. 

---

---
4. 

---

---
5. 

---

---



**SAMPLE SOLUTIONS**

# **ACTION POINT #6**

Access Local Resources

**3**



GSA's facilities in Norfolk, Virginia depend on partnerships with the local Business Improvement District and its dedicated staff.





## ACTION POINT #6

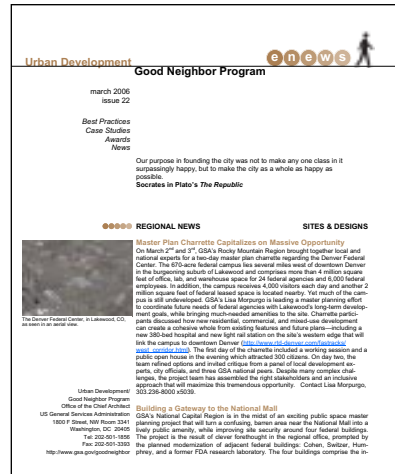
Access Local Resources

# A. ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS

## SHORT TERM

**Disseminate information to your tenants** about events happening in the area.

**Disseminate information to the community** about events taking place in your facility.



GSA Urban Development/Good Neighbor Program enews.

## MEDIUM TERM

**Reach out to civic associations** to organize events for your exterior and/or interior spaces.

**Jointly plan and produce events** in your public spaces with civic partners.

**Contract with local Business Improvement District (BID)** to produce events on your plaza and to participate in the BID's other events.



Evening event, Ronald Reagan Federal Building, Washington, DC.

## LONG TERM

**Create a district council with local stakeholders** to cross-promote events and activities, and to discuss issues and problems such as how to enforce codes and laws.

**Participate in planning a yearly events calendar** listing all events programmed and planned for the city's public spaces.



GSA representatives from the Federal Courthouse in Tacoma, WA meet with local partners to discuss event planning for a nearby plaza.



## ACTION POINT #6

Access Local Resources

### B. COORDINATE WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### SHORT TERM

**Invite the City Planning Department** to present their current and future projects to interested staff and tenants.

**Identify opportunities** where you can leverage your public space improvement initiatives or new construction projects with what the city is planning.



Meeting with city staff, Elmira, NY.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Incorporate the city's design standards** and guidelines into contracts for design services.

**Meet annually with city officials** to identify projects planned or underway proximate to your facility.



Lighting standards in Ottawa, Ontario.



Pedestrian scale lighting in Milwaukee, WI.

#### LONG TERM

**Undertake public space improvements** simultaneously and in coordination with city projects.

**Partner with local police forces** to provide surveillance of areas surrounding your facility and for employees walking to and from your building.



Police assisting pedestrians in Boston, MA.



Sidewalks and streets outside the U.S. Post Office, Montpelier, VT were renovated in tandem with the city's reconstruction of a nearby water main.



## ACTION POINT #6

Access Local Resources

### C. COORDINATE WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

#### SHORT TERM

**Partner with individual merchants** or merchant associations to offer discounts and promotional programs to building tenants.

**Participate in neighborhood watch and ambassador-type programs** to serve tenants and visitors.



GSA Ambassador, Byron Rogers  
Federal Building, Denver, CO.

#### MEDIUM TERM

**Coordinate with merchants** to keep their stores open during weekends and evenings when events are held at your facility.

**Invite local merchants** to operate satellite retail carts in your facility's public spaces.



A retail flower cart adds color and life to Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland, OR.

#### LONG TERM

**Work with area merchants** to clean up storefronts, repair facades, schedule deliveries, and improve street lighting in the areas frequented by building visitors.

**Contract with local BID** to provide surveillance of areas surrounding your facility and for employees walking to and from your building.



Merchants in downtown Aspen, CO maintain attractive, clean storefronts with well-tended facades.





## WORKSHEET #6

### A.

List five programming, maintenance, or security tasks specific to your facility for which you could receive assistance from local partners.

---

---

---

---

---

### B.

List five goals for the neighborhood surrounding your facility that could be accomplished by collaborating with local partners.

---

---

---

---

---

### C.

With your GSA colleagues, brainstorm a list of partners who can help you OR who have jurisdiction over the ideas you suggested in questions A and B above.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# SECTION 4

## Implementation



- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 EVALUATION
- 3 SOLUTIONS
- 4 IMPLEMENTATION**
- 5 RESOURCES

# Planning for Implementation

Once you have completed the Place Audit and worksheet exercises in Sections 2 and 3, the following steps will help you move forward as you prepare for the next phase of work on your facility's public spaces. Each letter below (A-I) contains a sequence of outreach techniques and activities. It is not necessary to follow each step in the order in which it is presented. Read through all the steps in their entirety first, then carry out the tasks that seem most appropriate to the work you are currently engaged in or planning to undertake. If you are currently focusing on short-term improvements, for instance, then the internal steps will be most relevant at this time. If you are considering medium- or long-term improvements, then both internal and external steps will prove useful.

## INTERNAL AGENCY-BASED IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- A. Develop an observation routine
- B. Compile a list of short-, medium- and long-term improvements from the Section 3 worksheets and from your daily rounds.
- C. Identify federal agency resources that can help implement the list of improvements.
- D. Identify the regulations and approvals that would have to be amended or obtained to permit or encourage the improvements.
- E. Match the improvements with existing funding sources available to you.

## EXTERNAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- F. Identify key stakeholders to include in the implementation process
- G. Engage with key stakeholders
- H. Expedite tasks that fall outside GSA's jurisdiction and responsibility.
- I. Coordinate with public and private partners on capital construction or repair and alteration projects.
- J. Create long-term partnerships

## INTERNAL AGENCY-BASED IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The first set of steps (A-E) focuses on working within GSA and within your building. You can do many of these tasks on your own or with a small group of staff and GSA colleagues.

### A. DEVELOP AN OBSERVATION ROUTINE

Property managers are uniquely qualified to observe how well their public spaces function on a day-to-day basis. The tasks outlined below will help property managers keep an eye on things, both systematically and comprehensively:

- Keep a notebook in which to track your observations.
- Walk around the property at different times each day of the week—for example, early morning when people are arriving for work; at lunchtime; and in the evening – after dark – when tenants are leaving for home. Jot down what people are doing at these times of day, where they may be seeking shelter, how they are moving through the space, what areas they may be avoiding. Where are people sitting? Where are they congregating? Watch people as they approach the building. Do they seem lost? Do they have trouble crossing the street due to fast moving traffic or a lack of crosswalks?
- Walk around the property at different times of year—when the weather is hot and sunny, when it is raining, and, if possible, when it is snowing. Note how people's use of public spaces changes in different conditions.
- Also keep track of the physical condition of your space. Make notes of outdated signage, dead plants, graffiti, burnt out light bulbs, overflowing waste receptacles, cracks in the paving, and so on. Make a list of things that need to be repaired. Identify "quick fixes" that should be made right away.

- Talk to your security personnel. Find out what questions they are being asked by visitors and tenants. Ask them what needs attention or what may be a problem.

**B.  
COMPILE A LIST OF SHORT-, MEDIUM- AND LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS FROM THE SECTION 3 WORKSHEETS AND FROM YOUR DAILY ROUNDS.**

- Make a list of those items that are the responsibility of GSA personnel. If possible, identify precisely whose area of responsibility and jurisdiction these ideas fall under.
- Make a list of those tasks that fall out of the range of GSA personnel jurisdiction and responsibility. If possible, identify whose area of responsibility and jurisdiction these non-GSA-related ideas fall under.
- Prioritize all the GSA-related short-, medium- and long-term tasks in one list; do not divide into segments based on the Action Points.
- Locate the desired activities and improvements on a basemap of the site to create a concept plan for what the changes will look like. This can be used to guide implementation of both short-term improvements and long-term changes to the site.
- To promote the idea of making public space improvements, outline all the potential benefits that would accrue to customer agencies, visitors, and neighboring businesses and institutions if the improvements were implemented.

**C.  
IDENTIFY FEDERAL AGENCY RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP IMPLEMENT THE LIST OF IMPROVEMENTS.**

- Select a group of GSA colleagues, including program officers as well as facilities officers, with whom to share ideas.

- Work with this group to generate a list of agencies to approach about assisting with the improvements.
- Approach the federal and tenant agencies you have identified about assisting with your public space projects, using the list of benefits from item (B) to build interest. By having your tenant agencies and non-GSA federal partners talk about the larger spin-off benefits to be garnered by your efforts, you build external support for these ideas among people who can assist you in getting them implemented among GSA “higher-ups.”

**D.  
IDENTIFY THE REGULATIONS AND APPROVALS THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE AMENDED OR OBTAINED TO PERMIT OR ENCOURAGE THE IMPROVEMENTS.**

- Select a group of GSA colleagues with whom to share ideas.
- Work with this group to generate a list of relevant regulations and approvals.
- Take the list to your Property Management Leadership Network representative to discuss at their next meeting.
- Determine how flexible the regulations may be.
- Talk to your Assistant Regional Administrator about allowing you to a) modify the rules or b) test your ideas to see how well they work and then modify the rules to allow them to happen more regularly.

**E.  
MATCH THE IMPROVEMENTS WITH EXISTING FUNDING SOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU.**

- Brainstorm a list of available sources to fund the improvements.
- Develop a timeline showing how the improvements can be phased in over consecutive funding cycles.

---

*A number of people—key stakeholders—also have a working knowledge of your public spaces, which can help deepen your understanding of both challenges and potential solutions.*

---

- Review the Case Studies later in this section for innovative, successful initiatives undertaken by GSA property managers.

## EXTERNAL IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

The second set of steps (F-I) necessitates a broader outreach effort to partners and potential collaborators from around your city. One important thing to keep in mind is that the Place Audit can be used at different stages in this process. Whether you are developing an SFO, putting together a prospectus, or undertaking a repair and alteration project, you can conduct the Place Audit with your partners to generate ideas and shape a sound strategy.

### F. IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO INCLUDE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

As a GSA property manager, you possess critical knowledge about the public spaces on and around your property. But a number of other people—key stakeholders—also have a working knowledge of your public spaces, which can help deepen your understanding of both challenges and potential solutions. For this step, you may wish to form a steering committee with colleagues from your building and downtown area contacts. The committee can help you identify additional stakeholders and prepare to conduct the Place Audit with a broader group.

#### Who are your key stakeholders?

People who use your building and its public spaces:

- Employees who deal directly with visitors to your building
- Building tenants
- Client agencies
- Building visitors

People who affect the environment around your property:

- Owners, managers, and/or employees of nearby properties
- City agencies (Departments of Planning, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, etc.)
- Chambers of Commerce, BIDs, downtown associations, or other civic organizations that produce events and offer other services
- Owners or employees of retail establishments in your building or in nearby buildings

Potential partners for programming, retail, and other activity:

- Retailers that could locate satellite vending kiosks and carts at your facility
- Visitors bureaus to encourage a connection between downtown and your facility
- Convention centers and arenas to coordinate and program “before and after events” on your plaza
- Musical groups, such as local orchestras, choirs, or marching bands, to perform at events
- Public art commissions to provide guidance on selection and location of temporary exhibitions and works of public art
- Schools and universities to use buildings for exhibition space

### G. ENGAGE WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Survey tenants, client agencies, and other stakeholders identified in Item F about what they would like to see take place in the public spaces inside and outside of the building. Ask about:
  - Everyday uses and activities
  - Amenities
  - Programming and special events



OR

- Conduct the Place Audit with representatives of all stakeholder groups:
- Observe the facility's public spaces (have stakeholders fill out the checklists as a group)
- Talk to people who are using the public spaces about their ideas
- Identify problems and opportunities for short-, medium- and long-term changes
- Locate the desired activities and improvements generated by your stakeholders on a basemap of the site to create a concept plan for what the changes will look like. This can be used to guide implementation of both short-term improvements and long-term changes to the site.
- Jointly identify with stakeholders the assets and skills they can each bring to the project. For example:
- Programs and events that highlight the mission of their institutions
- Specific professional expertise (e.g. horticulture, theater, etc.)
- Joint marketing and advertising

**H.**

#### **EXPEDITE TASKS THAT FALL OUTSIDE GSA'S JURISDICTION AND RESPONSIBILITY.**

- Review the list from Item B of tasks that fall outside GSA's jurisdiction and responsibility, then contact the agencies, organizations, and individuals responsible for these areas. Call a meeting to present and discuss the list.
- As part of the meeting, schedule times to conduct the Place Audit with these partners on the publicly and privately managed spaces and properties proximate to your site to generate even more ideas. Use the results to generate additional short-, medium- and long-term non-GSA-related tasks with these partners.

- Combine these additional ideas with your original list from Item B, then prioritize all non-GSA-related short-, medium- and long-term tasks in one list; do not divide into segments based on the Action Points.
- Brainstorm available sources to fund the improvements.

**I.**

#### **COORDINATE WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERS ON CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION OR REPAIR AND ALTERATION PROJECTS.**

Long-term improvements pose their own set of challenges and opportunities. When you are about to undertake a capital construction or repair and alteration project, meeting early on with the city, redevelopment authority, or other agencies outside GSA will enable you to determine opportunities to leverage your project and receive additional or higher-standard design features, amenities, or services in exchange. Use the following steps as a guide to successful collaboration and partnership building.

- Meet with staff from city agencies in charge of infrastructure outside GSA's jurisdiction that you would like to see improved (sidewalks, streets, transit facilities, non-GSA public spaces) and present the long-term changes generated by your stakeholders from Item H.
- Ask the city to identify repair, replacement, or capital construction projects they are already executing or planning for the areas proximate to your building. For a GSA property manager, becoming familiar with the master plans, studies, and city initiatives for the areas immediately adjacent to your facility and in the city at large is crucial, providing a 'window of opportunity' to effect changes that would otherwise be unworkable or too costly. Likewise, a GSA project can provide an impetus for the city to modify development plans for adjacent properties to benefit GSA clients and the community at large.

- Meet with the developers and owners of private properties and present the long-term improvements from Item H. Determine what private development is planned for the blocks surrounding your building as well.
- Develop a strategy for making improvements to your property that will dovetail with the work planned by the city and private sector.
- Include the city's concerns and plans in the FedBizOpps announcement so that bidders have an opportunity to address and incorporate city design guidelines and standards in their proposals from the start.
- Prioritize and develop a phasing plan for the improvements based on funding availability and the public and private sector projects planned or underway in your area.
- If necessary, conduct a master planning effort for a new site, and include the city in the process.
- Contact First Impressions Architecture and Landscape Architecture IDIQ firms to assist you with a more formal planning process or any step under items I and J.

## J.

### CREATE LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS

If no expansion or repair and alteration project is planned for the immediate future, but GSA or any of its public and private partners foresees the need for a major capital improvement in five or ten years' time, it is still a good idea to share plans as soon as possible. The following steps will help you sustain good working relationships with your long-term partners.

- Convene public and private partners to discuss the broader, long-term goals of each stakeholder. Present GSA's future site development/redevelopment plans, no matter what stage the ideas are in.
- Brainstorm areas of overlapping goals and opportunities for cooperation.
- Identify potential points of conflict that will need to be resolved, keeping in mind the larger, long-term goals of the collective effort.

# Eleven Principles For Turning Federal Spaces Into Great Civic Places

**T**he following principles provide a framework for achieving GSA's Public Space Goals, applying the Action Points, and implementing the solutions described in the earlier sections of this guide. As you go forward with the process of improving your facility's public spaces, keeping these principles in mind will increase your chances for success.

Although every public space has different features, resources, constraints, and stakeholders, the approach to maximizing their potential is similar. Certain situations and challenges affect every GSA public space project, and the principles offer ways to solve these common problems and implement solutions effectively from the outset of the process. Whether building or renovating facilities to meet core business goals—or even working with community partners to address client concerns about a facility's surroundings—the principles offer useful concepts and techniques that can be applied to any GSA project that affects public space.

## 1. THE COMMUNITY IS THE EXPERT

To create a successful place, it is essential to address the concerns, desires, and talents of the people who will use it. Tapping into the ideas and talents of a community—that is, those who have a stake in a particular place—is crucial in deciding how to improve an existing place or develop a vision for a new place. The people who live or work in an area know from experience which areas are dangerous and why, which spaces are comfortable for lunching outside, in which location the traffic moves too fast, and where children can safely walk, bike or play. They provide perspective and valuable insights into how an area functions; overall, they have a unique understanding of the issues that are important.

The 'community' includes local partners, city officials, and others who we might traditionally think of as the public. And remember that 'community' means 'client' too. Consider

all the different types of federal agencies in a GSA building, such as the Social Security Administration, or Immigration and Naturalization Service, that generate high numbers of visitors and depend on public access or visibility. Agencies like the National Park Service or Environmental Protection Agency have missions that may be educational or of special local interest, and a building's public spaces present opportunities to get those missions out to the public. Consider, too, any concern you've heard from a client agency about the quality of their workplace or its surroundings. All of these agencies are key members of the 'community'. In addition, stakeholders from the larger community may share many of these concerns and desires and, if asked, would be willing to bring valuable resources to the table to address these issues.

The sooner the community becomes involved in planning a public space the better. Projects are most successful when the community is encouraged to stay involved throughout the process and eventually become stewards of the place as it changes over time.

## 2. YOU ARE CREATING A PLACE—NOT JUST A DESIGN

In order for a federal project to create a valuable civic place, the entire undertaking must be approached more comprehensively than simply creating a design. When people describe a place they enjoy, they use words like "safe," "fun," "charming," and "welcoming." These words describe the intangible qualities of a true place – the kind of place people talk about and return to over and over again. GSA knows bricks and mortar projects as well as anyone, but it takes more than just the bricks and mortar to make the place. While design is crucial, design alone cannot create a place that is inviting and active. A truly successful project incorporates effective ongoing management and requires the involvement of many different disciplines and stakeholders.

### 3. YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE

Improving a public space and its surrounding neighborhood requires more resources and expertise than any one individual or organization can provide. Never underestimate the value of a broad range of partners. Partners can contribute innovative ideas, financial support or in-kind goods and services that contribute to GSA's properties as well as the neighborhood. They can help by collaborating on activities such as joint marketing, fundraising, and security that are difficult to organize at the scale of a single public space. Partners can also broaden the impact of a public space by coordinating on improvement projects or programming schedules.

In fact, the right partners can help GSA maximize the potential of its public spaces even where budgets and human resources are constrained. GSA's public spaces can be very valuable venues to support an organization's mission. In many cases, they can "bring" their program to GSA's space and create the activity without requiring resources from GSA, since the value of the public space makes it worth the partners' effort. It pays to involve a broad range of partners—and to appreciate how GSA's public spaces can offer attractive venues for them.

### 4. THEY ALWAYS SAY, "IT CAN'T BE DONE." BUT IT DOESN'T ALWAYS TURN OUT THAT WAY.

Because government is compartmentalized and fragmented, public officials often have a limited ability to deal with public spaces effectively themselves. In municipal governments, for instance, there are myriad agencies that affect public space, but unfortunately, few cities have a single department or person responsible for developing and managing public places. Also, these agencies often have larger mandates that make the creation of effective public spaces a secondary consideration. Therefore, when an idea stretches the established habits of an agency, and an official says, "It can't be done,"

## 11 Principles

FOR TURNING FEDERAL SPACES  
INTO GREAT CIVIC PLACES

- 1 The community is the expert.
- 2 You are creating a place, not a design.
- 3 You can't do it alone.
- 4 They always say it can't be done.
- 5 You can see a lot just by observing.
- 6 Develop a vision.
- 7 Form supports function.
- 8 Triangulate.
- 9 Start with the petunias.
- 10 Money is not the issue.
- 11 You are never finished.

what that usually means is: "We've never done things that way before."

This is especially challenging for GSA property managers, given the very real fiscal constraints and security concerns under which they operate, the preferences of tenant agencies, and the often pressing issues that compete for their limited time. However, changing one's perspective as to what is possible is the key to success. In fact, when you reach the point when people start to say it can't be done, that usually means you are well on your way to getting the most out of the project. Bringing clients and partners into the process early on, and in a meaningful way, will enable you to overcome obstacles together and exceed expectations.

### 5. YOU CAN SEE A LOT JUST BY OBSERVING.

It is important for property managers to gain an intimate understanding of how their civic place functions on a day to day basis. Regularly observing the way people use your facility's public spaces as you go on your rounds can yield tremendous insight into what people want from the space and what improvements are

---

*When you reach the point when people start to say it can't be done, that usually means you are well on your way to getting the most out of the project.*

---

needed. People will often go to extraordinary lengths to use a less-than-optimal space in the manner that suits them best. For example, if you observe people using waste receptacles as places to sit (which happens more often than you would think), then that is a strong signal that better seating is needed.

By routinely observing the use of a public space, you will also be better prepared to guide potential partners through the Place Audit to evaluate the facility. GSA has found that observing places together with clients and other stakeholders goes a long way toward developing the relationships that are needed to make great projects. Often, stakeholders have not had an opportunity to discuss their mutual interests and concerns. Bringing them together to observe a place is a highly effective way to further mutual understanding and trade insights and thoughts as to who can contribute the energy and resources needed for improvements.

## 6. DEVELOP A VISION.

Every federal facility has its own community whose ideas can evolve into a vision for the place. What is a “vision”? Put simply, it is an outline of what people would like to see a place used for—what activities should happen there and what amenities should be present. The vision should be defined primarily by those who will use the place, rather than the professionals or public agencies who are responsible for planning it and maintaining it. Creating a long-term vision for programming and securing a facility’s public spaces, as well as future site development, will enable you to undertake the more easily achievable short-term changes in ways that support long term goals.

Property managers can start bringing forth these ideas by asking tenants to think about other places they have enjoyed, the activities that occur in those places, and the physical elements that support those activities. GSA project

architects and staff from the Art in Architecture, Historic Preservation, Urban Development, and First Impressions programs can be brought in to share successful examples from elsewhere to stimulate and excite people as well as demonstrate what works and why. This will help people develop a vision for the place you are trying to improve.

A comprehensive long-term vision extends beyond the property line. Consider how the area around your facility may change over time, and what local entities are likely to effect that change. By including these partners in the process of developing a vision, GSA can influence the future of the surrounding area for the better.

## 7. FORM SUPPORTS FUNCTION.

As discussed in Principle 2, design alone cannot create a successful place, but it remains a critical ingredient. The important thing to keep in mind is that most great public spaces are designed based on an understanding of how people will use the space. Conversely, when public spaces fail it is often simply because function was never seriously considered at the outset of the design process. Completing the Place Audit in Section 2 will help determine what functions are desirable in your facility. The sample solutions in Section 3 will also help you understand what design improvements will make the space attractive, usable and comfortable for people—in other words, how you can use form to support function.

Implementing some solutions may require the help of a designer or architect. In that case, the preceding steps in this guide are especially crucial for a GSA project team to follow, in order to help their architects understand the program of desired uses, which should inform the design from the outset and make it more effective once completed.

---

*Developing the ability to engage local partners is more critical to success than a large financial investment or capital project.*

---

## 8. TRIANGULATE.

“Triangulation” refers to the fact that places with multiple uses are more active, enjoyable, flexible, and stable than locations that have just one use. On the micro scale, it means locating elements in such a way that they play off each other, creating a synergy of activity. For example, a bench, a trash receptacle and a vending cart placed near each other “triangulate” because together, they create a livelier zone of activity than if they were isolated from each other. On a larger scale, triangulation means creating districts with good pedestrian connections and active ground floor uses, giving people several destinations within walking distance of each other.

For GSA buildings, where the mix of activities within a building is mostly pre-determined, triangulation often means being thoughtful about where an agency or activity is placed within the building. The placement of high traffic agencies can be used to activate public spaces, and this typically serves their business interests as well. Placing cafeterias, credit unions, recruiting offices, post offices, or the like on the ground floor with direct physical or visual connections to the outside can improve access and circulation, as well as enhance the image of the facility. Additionally, the ability of these agencies to generate high levels of foot traffic is a key component in attracting partner organizations to program the public spaces of the facility. When the ground floor of a facility is perceived as active, then, for example, a theatre group or farmers market will have a greater interest in using that location. This is the process by which uses at a GSA facility can accumulate and triangulate with each other.

## 9. START WITH THE PETUNIAS.

To create a good public space requires more than long-term planning and large-scale changes. Many great plans get bogged down because they are too complex, cost too much, or take too long to happen. Starting with quick

and inexpensive changes, however, can generate the necessary momentum, commitment and buy-in to make longer-term changes a reality. By showing results fast, like planting a bed of petunias in a formerly colorless plaza, a property manager generates broad additional support for other placemaking efforts. Short-term actions are also a great way to test out ideas and give people confidence that change is occurring and their input matters.

In many of the most successful public spaces, short-term actions occurred at the outset and were evaluated while longer-term planning was in progress. One example is a downtown park that was scheduled for a complete capital restoration. A preliminary step in this expensive, long-term campaign was to set up a book market to draw positive activity. The experiment gave confidence to the organization managing the park’s restoration and demonstrated that such uses would draw people. When the park was fully restored several years later, similar types of uses were included in the final plan. Likewise, short-term changes can be made to the interior of a federal building as precursors to a major repair and alteration project. Replacing outdated signs, rearranging lobby furniture to create conversational seating areas, and adding interior lighting can all be done quickly.

Good public spaces don’t happen overnight, and people don’t have all the answers at the outset. The key is to provide for flexibility – to grow the space by experimenting, evaluating and incorporating the lessons learned into the next steps. It is up to the property manager to “nurture the space” as it grows.

## 10. MONEY IS NOT THE ISSUE.

Since GSA’s primary resources must be directed first toward meeting client needs, funds for pure public space improvements are often scarce. But the lack of money should not be an excuse to do nothing. In fact, too much money often discourages the inventiveness, creativity and



persistence required to create a great place, because the pressure to spend it can result in projects that overlook the smaller types of improvements that can have very strong impact. As demonstrated in Principle 9, the way to start achieving GSA's Public Space Goals is through small-scale, inexpensive improvements that have a positive impact at low or no cost. Amenities such as vending carts, outdoor café tables and chairs, umbrellas, flowers, benches, or movable seating are all relatively inexpensive and can get the ball rolling in creating a well-used public space.

It is also important to remember the value of the public space itself to potential partners. In GSA facilities located in Syracuse and Chicago, the location, level of activity, and visibility of the public spaces—combined with the staff's willingness to work closely with local partners—elicited significant resources from outside GSA to activate and manage these places (See the Case Studies later in this Section). In the long run, developing the ability to engage local partners in effective management of a space is more critical to success than a large financial investment or capital project (See Principle 11: You are Never Finished).

Most importantly, when the lack of money is a problem, it indicates that the wrong concept is at work—not simply because the plans are too expensive, but because the project has not generated the broad-based buy-in that allows GSA to leverage the resources of others. If the community—meaning both client agencies and outside stakeholders—is a partner in the endeavor from the outset, their involvement will lead to a sense of ownership that will foster support and contributions, which will in turn make the place grow and thrive. In other words, when the community's vision drives a project, resources follow. The most successful public space projects tend to use an incremental approach in which the place grows little by little; accordingly, people become more and more invested as it grows. Such contributions are not necessarily monetary. They may come in the

form of donated goods and services or volunteer labor; the cost of any project is therefore reduced in proportion to the benefits received from these contributions.

## 11. YOU ARE NEVER FINISHED.

No matter how good the design of a space is, it will never become a true place unless it is well cared for. The reason is that good places are not static. The use of public spaces changes daily, weekly, and seasonally. Given the certainty of change and the fluid nature of the use of a place at different times, developing the ability to respond effectively is absolutely critical.

According to Project for Public Spaces, about eighty percent of any public space's success can be attributed to its ongoing management. A good management structure includes mechanisms to ensure effective communication with tenant agencies and clients and a reliable system for tracking and responding to requests. Applying this structure to public spaces means responding proactively to issues related to the maintenance and programming of a plaza or lobby, and maintaining communication with security personnel, adjacent stakeholders, and city staff in order to identify and resolve problems quickly. Good management, for example, means hosting a range of events, noticing changes in the use of the space and then acting on them, and having the ability to put out items such as movable furniture at a moment's notice.

There are several outstanding public space management models that GSA project managers can follow. The Management Models included in the next section provide an outline of the management structure of the James A. Hanley Courthouse and Federal Building in Syracuse, New York and the John C. Kluczynski Federal Plaza in Chicago, Illinois. Models such as these show the value of GSA-managed public spaces to outside groups and illustrate how these spaces can be activated without placing demands on GSA's limited resources.

# CASE STUDIES OF PUBLIC SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

## LOW COST

### CHICAGO, ILLINOIS: PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMMING TURNS FEDERAL BUILDING INTO A CITY-WIDE DESTINATION

Chicago's John C. Kluczynski Federal Plaza is used regularly for community events, including a popular farmers market, making it a well-known destination that improves the image of the Kluczynski Federal Building. The farmers market operates every Thursday from May to October. In addition, the Plaza has hosted an annual Oktoberfest, a Job Corps exercise program, and the public schools' "City Year" program for high school seniors, as well as various cultural events, fairs, political rallies and demonstrations. In the warm months the Plaza is used an average of three days per week. The activity in the Plaza helps build partnerships with neighboring institutions and businesses, and generally promotes a sense of community. Following implementation of the farmers market, the facility's tenant satisfaction scores increased. These benefits were realized with very little cost to and effort from GSA.



The weekly farmers market at John C. Kluczynski Federal Plaza.

#### Reasons for Success

Because of the Plaza's central location and visibility, it is in demand for use by outside parties. The farmers market, for instance, is operated in partnership with the City of Chicago.

Use of the Plaza includes an agreement with the event sponsor that GSA will not incur any extra cleaning or security costs. GSA provides no more security than it would if there were no events in the Plaza. Chicago bicycle police regularly patrol on the days the farmers market is active, and some large event sponsors, such as those for the eight-day Oktoberfest, provide additional security.

### NORFOLK, VIRGINIA: TEAMING UP WITH LOCAL BID TO ACCESS LOCAL RESOURCES



GSA's management staff and the BID team in Norfolk, VA.

In 2004, GSA's Mid-Atlantic Region signed a services contract with the Downtown Norfolk Council. Under the contract, the Council provides cleaning services to the area around three federal buildings in Norfolk's newly revitalized Granby Street corridor. The Council has also played a leading role in downtown Norfolk's overall improvement, effectively improving the working environment and surrounding neighborhood for the federal workers at GSA's Norfolk facilities. The Council is one of thirty BIDs nationwide with which GSA contracts for services. Unlike private property owners that typically are assessed (or 'taxed') to cover the costs of enhanced district services (including sidewalk cleaning, security patrols, marketing, etc.), as a federal agency

# Management Models

**JOHN C. KLUCZYNSKI**  
**FEDERAL PLAZA**  
Chicago, IL

**Managed by:** Federal Plaza is owned and overseen by the GSA Property Management Office as a part of the federal complex in Chicago. The property manager's office uses GSA Form 3453, "Application for Use of Space in Public Buildings and Grounds," to review and approve use of the plaza by outside parties. Regular events make a blanket application for the season. Events and programs are managed by their sponsoring organizations.

**Maintenance:** Third parties cover all cleaning and security costs when they use the plaza, so there is no cost to GSA.

**Marketing and Promotions:** GSA does not generally advertise the availability of its public spaces; most organizations approach GSA on their own to inquire about using the spaces. Because of the plaza's central location and visibility, there are many requests for use.

**Challenges:** When the farmers market was first proposed for the plaza, the Federal Protective Services (FPS) was the only group to raise concern. The FPS and city conducted background checks on all proposed vendors, and the city continues to monitor the standard of food sold and enforce health codes.

**Funding:** Other than the BA-54 operating funds already allocated for this facility, which cover the administrative costs and occasional extra cleaning necessary after the events, there is no cost to GSA. GSA charges event promoters a \$25 fee to oversee form processing; the vendors are not charged any fees by GSA.

GSA may only contract for those services that it finds are necessary and beneficial to the federal agencies at the GSA buildings in these districts. In various locations, GSA has contracted for security patrols, streetscape maintenance, or a combination of these and other services.

## Reasons for Success

GSA's property manager has found that the BID contract provides services that improve the working environment for his client agencies at a price that is fair and reasonable to the government. Moreover, the contract discussions between the Council and GSA also led to enhanced coordination on broader downtown issues. As the Council's Executive Director, Cathy Coleman, noted, "Federal building security officers and our own security personnel are working together much better now, sharing information. As valuable as our contract with GSA is, this type of coordination is just as important for keeping the neighborhood a great place to do business."

## SYRACUSE, NY: THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND INTEGRATED SECURITY

The "Party in the Plaza" at the Hanley Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse is more than a twenty-year tradition; it's a linchpin of community life in Syracuse, New York. Every Wednesday in the summer, starting at about 5 p.m., the party fills up the plaza and bands perform music ranging from gospel to pop, country & western to R&B. Up to 5,000 people turn out to listen, dance, and enjoy all manner of festival food. "This makes or breaks businesses in downtown Syracuse, it's like another weekend night," says William A. Cooper, president of the UpDowntowners, the volunteer group that organizes the events. On top of that, proceeds are used to provide grants to local nonprofits. In recognition of the event's significance to

## Management Models

### JAMES A. HANLEY COURTHOUSE AND FEDERAL BUILDING

Syracuse, NY

**Managed by:** The GSA Property Management Center.

**Maintenance:** The GSA Property Management Office handles normal daily maintenance of the plaza. The Syracuse Updowntowners handle all of the sanitation arrangements, as well as clean the plaza every Wednesday after the event.

**Marketing & Promotion:** Currently the availability of the federal plaza is not promoted; most groups wishing to hold an event on the federal plaza approach GSA on their own.

**Challenges:** One of the early major challenges that GSA faced was to decide what role the federal government would take in the “Parties.” Initially, the GSA was providing minimal security, sanitation, and restroom accommodations inside the building. However, as attendance grew into the thousands, and security concerns heightened, these contributions became impractical. The GSA Field Office now provides a secure room for counting money, and limited access to and storage in the building. The Updowntowners now provide their own portable restrooms (delivered and removed the same day), cleaning, and most of the security. The Field Office also finds it helpful to work closely with the individuals producing the event to make sure that all promotions are consistent with government rules regarding what may take place on federal property.

**Funding:** No GSA funding is used.



The Party in the Plaza draws up to 5,000 people to the James A. Hanley Federal Building and Courthouse.

Syracuse, GSA received the Updowntowners’ “Award for Excellence”, given annually to the individual, business or organization that has contributed substantially to the downtown area.

### Reasons for Success

A key reason these arrangements could be worked out effectively is the collaborative relationship between GSA, building tenants, and the UpDowntowners. As part of their planning every year, the Updowntowners put together a proposal about the organization, their licenses, their insurance, and get written approval from every judge in the building. Security for the event was tightened after September 11, 2001. Today security staff observe everybody who enters the site, which has four access points, but there are no metal detectors or searches. More than a dozen uniformed city police are on the scene, as well as FPS officers and contract security, with the UpDowntowners picking up the extra cost. City police and bomb-sniffing dogs inspect every vehicle that comes to the Plaza — including delivery trucks, trailers for food vendors, even the local radio station’s promotional van. Security risks were also reduced by moving portable toilets and dumpsters farther from the building, and by banning parking on streets surrounding the plaza during the event. Complaints about the new arrangements have been minimal.

## MEDIUM-COST

### MARTINSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA: IMPROVING ACCESS, CIRCULATION, IMAGE, AND SECURITY

Prior to the renovation of the lobby and entryway of the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Martinsburg, West Virginia, the entry was too small for the building, forcing pedestrians to enter directly from the sidewalk with no approach area. Building identification signage was in poor repair, lighting was insufficient at night, and mail and paper boxes cluttered the street in front of the building. Within the lobby, security equipment compromised both entry and circulation while eliminating what little interior public space had existed. Green glazed wall tile and brown quarry tile flooring throughout the interior space projected an institutional image.

Once derelict, the space now receives full public use. Employees and visitors easily navigate sophisticated public spaces commensurate with the important nature of the building's functions. Visitors encounter displays that link the history of the judicial system with the current purpose of the building, further elevating their perception of the federal government. The project won



Before



After

both the 2003 Excellence in Government Award for Improved Federal Image, Federal Executive Board and the 2002 GSA Design Award Citation.

#### Reasons for Success

The simple addition of a vestibule outside the existing entrance has allowed for comfortable passage into the building, improving access and circulation. A mural inscribed with the Charters of Freedom welcomes visitors and directs them to the entrance. The image of the facility is further enhanced by glass and metal walls that harmonize with the building's International Style architecture, establishing a light-filled entry point along the street. Finishes and signage also create a new graphic identity sympathetic to the building's modern roots. Inside the ground floor lobby, the public space has been enlarged and now doubles as a gallery with floor-to-ceiling panels at the perimeter exhibiting the history of the local, state, and federal judicial system.

### MONTPELIER, VERMONT: DESIGNING A PLACE THAT WORKS FOR PEOPLE

For years, Montpelier's International Style Post Office, which occupies the ground floor of a federal building with a mix of federal tenants, was considered an eyesore that disrupted the visual continuity of Main Street and obstructed pedestrian movement between the state capitol and the downtown. Local residents thought the building was neither visually nor functionally integrated with the sidewalk or Main Street. GSA collaborated with the Montpelier Downtown Community Association (MDCA) to enhance the image of this building by creating a user-friendly public space in front of the Post Office.

GSA upgraded the paving in front of the building, relocated mail and news boxes, and reinstalled the benches in a better location. This improved pedestrian circulation and made the space more appealing for public use. The city, under its existing funding for downtown improvements,





The improved streetscape at the Montpelier Post Office creates better pedestrian connections to downtown.

widened the sidewalks, instituted short-term angled parking in front of the building (at the request of the Postal Supervisor), added landscaping, upgraded the lampposts, and put in new crosswalks on the street leading to the building in order to facilitate safe and direct pedestrian access—all as part of a scheduled water main replacement project. The improvements have also slowed traffic through the Main Street corridor, making it safer for cyclists, pedestrians, and customers of the Post Office and federal offices.

#### Reasons for Success

When GSA and community stakeholders worked through the Place Audit together, it became clear that the optimal solution was not MDCA's original request to replace the building's façade. Instead, the Audit findings indicated that people wanted the Post Office to function better as a social gathering place. Generating more public activity would then lessen the detrimental impact of the building's facade on the pedestrian experience between the state capitol and the downtown retail area. While GSA, the Post Office, and the Montpelier community were discussing how to fund and implement the desired improvements, the city revealed plans to replace a Main Street water main. GSA and MDCA contacted the city about opportunities to coordinate this infrastructure project with the Post Office improvements; the cooperative effort led to the implementation of many elements in the community's vision.

#### SIoux FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA: PARTNERS COMBINE TO CREATE A DOWNTOWN GATHERING PLACE

In February, 2005, GSA's Rocky Mountain regional office convened a public workshop to discuss the design of public spaces around a planned building for the U.S. Attorneys Office in Sioux Falls. The new build-to-suit lease facility

is located next to a beautiful Richardsonian Romanesque federal courthouse built in 1895, just half a block from the busy Phillips Street restaurant district. The street between the two buildings was vacated for security setbacks, creating room for a new public plaza. Completed in the summer of 2006, the courthouse plaza was designed to create an attractive, active public space that supports city improvement plans, creates an outstanding workplace for the U.S. Attorneys, and bolsters long-term marketability for the developer.



A concept diagram of the new square at the U.S. Attorneys Office in Sioux Falls.

The finished plaza incorporates a range of amenities to promote public use, including a water feature using locally-quarried South Dakota Granite, a small amphitheater for public speeches and performances, a small food kiosk for lunch and snacks, an outdoor café and seating areas, an area for games, attractive seasonal displays of flowers, and locations for temporary sculpture. It is regularly the site of programmed activities, from horse-and-carriage rides to "Hot Summer Nights," a recurring event that features music and food vendors. Access and circulation have also been improved—both within the public space itself and between the GSA facilities and the neighboring downtown—with better informational signage and maps of other downtown destinations. Future goals involve making the GSA property an effective link between nearby residential areas and the commercial district downtown by improving the walking environment around the plaza.



Ideas include adding trees, plantings, murals, pedestrian scale lighting, and better crosswalks.

### Reasons for Success

At the initial workshop, participants based their ideas on how best to support public use of the square. The U.S. Attorneys Office, federal District and Bankruptcy courts, U.S. Marshals Service, GSA, city planners, Main Street Sioux Falls, local arts organizations, private developer Stencil Development, project manager The Winkels Group and project designer Koch Hazard Baltzer Architects all participated in the workshop, which was facilitated by Good Neighbor consultant Project for Public Spaces. “The workshop helped all of us to think in new ways and at new levels. Public space is more than a landscape. It is about people and connection, sustainability and pride. The experience transformed how we will approach our work in the future,” says GSA project manager Janice Dinkel.

Following the workshop, the collaborators formed a working group that successfully saw the project through the phases of planning, implementation, and ongoing management. “The working group is like an impromptu board of directors for plaza management,” says Dan Statema of Main Street Sioux Falls, a coalition of downtown businesses that oversees programming and maintenance. “The plaza created new opportunities for cooperation between businesses, GSA, and federal agencies, and it will continue to do so.”

## HIGH-COST

### DENVER’S FEDERAL DISTRICT: THE VALUE OF INCREMENTAL PLACEMAKING

Denver’s Federal District occupies four square blocks near the heart of downtown, including the Byron Rogers U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building—a modern complex with 1,200

employees—and a new courthouse annex completed in 2002. To coincide with the addition of the \$75 million courthouse, GSA initiated a multi-phased repair and alteration project of the District’s public spaces, planned by Project for Public Spaces, First Impressions IDIQ consultant Gensler, and Civitas, a landscape architecture firm. The project included a \$1.6 million reconstruction of the Byron Rogers plaza, funded as a GSA First Impressions project.

At the time, the plaza was little more than “an expanse of sprawling concrete with not much going on,” according to GSA’s Al Camp. During the McVeigh trial, the facility bunkered down, adding perimeter security barriers and banning parking from adjacent streets. The office tower entrance was also dysfunctional, obscured in a corner of the plaza and too small to accommodate a modern security checkpoint, resulting in long queues. Some tenants were so unhappy they asked to leave.

GSA began looking at ways to renovate the plaza and soon realized that success hinged upon developing a plan for whole area. Changes evolved over time, beginning with simple design and maintenance steps that improved usability and appearance, such as adding benches near sidewalks and planting flowers at street corners, near building entrances and atop concrete security barriers. An “ambassador” began greeting visitors at a podium, dispensing directions and other assistance. The space was also programmed with special events, such as a festival celebrating cultural diversity and a giant cookout. These small-scale public space improvements were financed through GSA operating funds. They not only signaled that longer term changes were planned, they also resulted in increased use of the plaza and immediate positive feedback from employees and the public.

The longer term improvements were implemented gradually over a span of four years.

Today, well-designed permanent security barriers around the plaza have replaced the clunky temporary barriers, while new benches and seating added to grassy areas create a welcoming space for employees wishing to sit or eat lunch outside. A new entrance pavilion yields a more efficient security process while respecting the historic character of the building. New features at the rear of the courthouse improve the blank facade on that side: landscaping makes a reinforced wall seem less like a security feature, and an Art in Architecture commission by artist Jim Campbell enlivens the building with a kinetic light show that represents scenes of the American West.

Throughout the design process, plaza and annex improvements were tied into broader goals for the area. Representatives from federal tenants, city agencies, cultural groups and civic groups, as well as surrounding property owners, took part in the process. Partner contributions included: a day-care center mural painted by a local youth service organization; new trees along the rail line that passes through the area, courtesy of the Denver Regional Transportation District; and art for the courthouse interior on loan from a local foundation. In addition, the city played a role in infrastructure improvements. For example, the annex project involved the construction of a tunnel to the Rogers Courthouse under the street, which meant the street and sidewalks had to be reconstructed. To fully leverage this construction, the plan called for working with the city to narrow the street and improve the pedestrian environment.

The renovated plaza and new courthouse annex now provide a friendlier place for federal workers and people visiting these federal facilities, and have acted as a catalyst for public and private investment.

Before



After



After



After

## Reasons for Success

The improvements to the Denver Federal District gained credibility and support from tenants and other stakeholders for two main reasons. First, although the scope of the project called for major capital investment, changes began at a small scale, using operating funds. The quick improvements built momentum for what came later. "This shows there is a lot a building manager can do on their own," says Tim Horne, manager of the properties in the Federal District.

Second, community partners were sought from the outset, and their participation in both infrastructure projects and event programming turned out to be invaluable. "It's extraordinary to see a local face on a federal agency, to see this process engage the local community so intimately and think about these issues at such a fine grain," notes Denver City Councilmember Susan Barnes-Gelt. The successful changes at the Federal District are thus an outgrowth of GSA's commitment to make its buildings not only better places for workers and visitors, but also better neighbors in the communities where they are located.

## 3RD AND C STREETS IN SOUTHWEST DC: BUILDING A GATEWAY TO THE NATIONAL MALL

GSA's National Capital Region is in the midst of a public space visioning and planning process that will turn a confusing, barren area near the National Mall into a lively public amenity

while improving site security around four federal buildings. The project was prompted by the planned modernization of four adjacent federal buildings: Cohen, Switzer, Humphrey, and a former FDA research laboratory that will be converted to a federal office building. The buildings comprise the intersection of 3rd and C Streets in Southwest Washington, DC, just north of a busy Metro stop.

As the daily workplace of thousands of federal workers and a primary gateway between the Metro and the landmarks that millions visit each year—including the U.S. Botanical Garden, U.S. Capitol, National Museum of the American Indian and the future American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial and Eisenhower Memorial—the intersection provides a prime opportunity to create a vital public amenity. Currently, however, the Humphrey Plaza is a very large open space that sees very little activity, C Street is dominated by car traffic, and three large parking lots create too many dead zones near the facilities.

Rios Clementi Hale Studios, a Los Angeles landscape architecture firm, is completing the plan for the area after thoroughly consulting a wide-ranging assortment of stakeholders, and their suggestions will be incorporated as each of the four buildings is modernized—a creative way to realize a large-scale vision one step at a time. The public space elements will be funded as the site improvement components in the budget of each individual project.

Improvements aim to turn the sterile areas into places that accommodate activity and create links to the nearby National Mall. The plan will create new public open space, with the Art in Architecture commissions for the first two projects combined to create one or two large commissions in these new spaces. A “hot corner” will take shape at the corner of the Humphrey Plaza, featuring seating and an outdoor dining area to create a focal point of activity. Better wayfinding signage on the sidewalks will strengthen the connection between the Metro entrance and the Mall. The pedestrian

experience will also improve with the addition of unobtrusive perimeter security measures that double as amenities, such as benches that also serve as security barriers.

### **Expectations for Success**

The project is the result of clever forethought in the regional office, which led to the coordination of improvements to the four buildings. At the same time, the site-by-site approach ensures that the whole project won’t get bogged down by its own weight. GSA’s project executive for these four buildings, John Crowley, is a champion of the coordinated plan, and will hold design architects of each project to the plan’s vision for the public spaces.

The plan itself is a model of GSA’s Public Space Action Points. The Humphrey Plaza’s new amenities will make it much more attractive for public use. The perimeter security measures are well-integrated into the sidewalk experience. Pedestrian circulation will benefit from the improved wayfinding. Replacing the dead zones with landscaped areas will drastically improve the image and aesthetics of the area. Neighboring institutions, including the museums on the Mall and the National Botanic Garden, will play an important role in ensuring the future success of the project, especially in their capacity to program the promising new public spaces.

