

Buildings That Can House Citizen Spaces – Physical Hubs for Engagement

Developing Shared Civic Infrastructure *BUILDING BLOCK 4 OF 12 – CREATING SPACES FOR CITIZENS*



A Building that Serves Community

Herndon, Virginia (pop. 23,000)
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The Herndon Neighborhood Resource Center (NRC), which opened in 1999, is a collaborative effort of the Town of Herndon and Fairfax County. NRC offers integrated services to address the complex social and physical challenges facing many of Herndon's neighborhoods. It is within walking distance of many of the neighborhoods and is located on a bus route. The NRC building features include three multipurpose rooms, meeting rooms for service providers and clients and a 2,000-square-foot learning center with a state-of-the-art computer lab. Audio/visual equipment is available for programs and activities. The NRC's Community Association Reference Library contains written and audio materials to assist and strengthen community associations. Also located in the NRC is the Herndon Police Department's Community Resource Office, offering a variety of crime prevention programs, including the Neighborhood Watch Program. NRC staff manages the day-to-day operations of the center, including scheduling all programs and activities. The NRC staff is bilingual in English and Spanish and provides minor translation assistance to Town of Herndon community associations.

Most cities already have a number of buildings that can be important assets for long-term engagement planning. Some of these facilities may already be fulfilling their potential as hubs for engagement, while others may be under-utilized. Potential hubs include schools, libraries, community centers, recreation centers, hospitals, community colleges and universities, churches and other faith institutions, businesses and City Hall itself. Plans for the renovation of these buildings, and the construction of new ones, should be influenced by the community's long-term civic infrastructure needs.

PRIORITIES TO ADDRESS:

- Build a stronger sense of community.
- Support other components.

POTENTIAL ACTIONS:

- Make existing hubs — schools, libraries, community centers, etc. — more available, more welcoming and more widely used.
- Ensure that each neighborhood or area of the city has access to nearby facilities.
- Ensure that other “citizen spaces,” such as neighborhood or school associations and groups, have a strong role in the management and use of the hub.
- Build or renovate new hubs.

WORK BEST WHEN THEY INCLUDE:

- Large and small meeting rooms.
- Computer workstations that are open to the public.
- Free assistance for people using the computers.
- Free wireless Internet access.
- Spaces that are designed for children and young people.
- A safe and welcoming atmosphere.