

NASHVILLE PUBLIC SQUARE

PUBLIC ART MASTERPLAN

Carolyn Law
December, 2003

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THE PROJECT

Site Background

The Courthouse, one of Davidson County's few examples of Art Deco architecture listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is the fourth one to occupy the site set aside for this purpose in the original plans of Nashville. The Courthouse's original public square was to the north and east, with the whole site bounded by 19th century commercial buildings, many of which were demolished in the twentieth century.

The city lost its public square with the construction of the Victory Memorial Bridge and James Robertson Parkway in the 1950s, which sliced off the north end of the square. The rest was lost to parking lots in the 1970s.

The existing art deco Davidson County Courthouse and Public Building built in 1936 and its adjacent parking lot are currently closed for renovations. The surface parking lot will be converted into the new Public Square with a multi-level parking garage underneath.

This four-acre site at the terminus of Deadrick Street is on axis with the state's War Memorial Building and Plaza. The space commands excellent views of the Cumberland River and Shelby Street Bridge, a former vehicular bridge recently reopened as a pedestrian bridge. On the south side of the Public Square, the historic Stahlman office building is being renovated and converted to residential apartments. The Downtown Greenway runs between the Public Square and the Cumberland River, presenting a connection opportunity. Courthouse renovation and parking garage construction are scheduled for completion in the summer of 2005.

By bringing back the square as open space in a strategic location, the City of Nashville is paying attention to an urban ingredient that is essential to a town center. This community open space will be critical in igniting a vibrant shift in downtown Nashville. One that combines housing, retail and business to create an active 24-hour mix of uses.



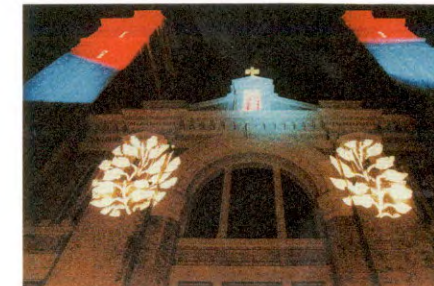
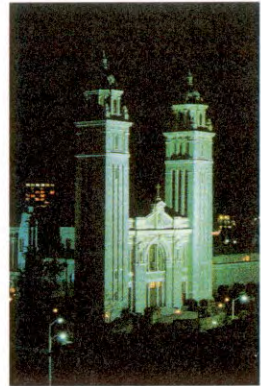
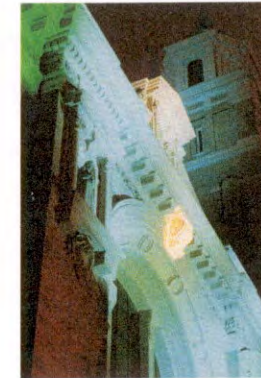
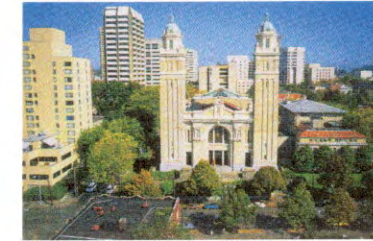
The Building and the Square: A Working Premise

The project must focus its attention on the centerpiece of the site—the courthouse building. This historic building beautifully expresses a solid physical presence within the site. As such, the building houses concrete daily activities that are graspable to employees and citizens. These activities are essential to the running of the civic life of Nashville.

Physically, the building sits on the high ground, with the square in the foreground. The open space of the square frames the view of and sets up the approaches to the building. The treed perimeter of the square filters the views so upon entering the open center, the view of the building is dramatized. Balancing the relationship of the two, the building and the square, is critical.

Additionally, a specific range of values and ideas of governing are symbolized physically through design details and decorative art utilized in the building. One sees these details during any interaction with the building. The intent of these physically expressed symbols is to create an experience for a person, which causes them to extend conceptually beyond the image to associated value-based words. Thinking about the values brings people into a realm of meaning that is ephemeral and open to discussion, and on-going interpretation. This experience of interacting with symbols, values and their meaning expands the understanding of the practical activities taking place daily in the building.

Another way of looking at the relationship of the building to the square is as a solid to the ephemeral, or solid to lightness. The new square will stand in relation to and balanced with the solid presence of the building. As such this space will provide an excellent forum for presenting the "lightness" of the conceptual ideas and symbols of the building through the design for the plaza and integration of public art.



Jeff Robbins & John Gierlich



Beliz Brother



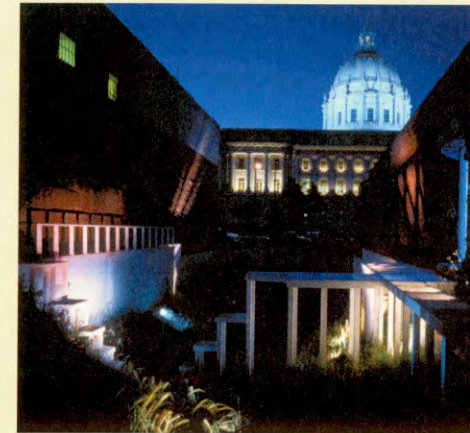
Barbara Grygutis



Ken Smith



Linda Beaumont



Anna Valentino Murch

Placemaking

By adding public art components to the square that are strongly integrated into the design, both conceptually and physically, the square will become a public space in the fullest and truest sense of placemaking. The idea of placemaking is to bring a full complement of meaning and function to a place in a way that especially resonates with people.

Nashville has very few well-used public open spaces in the downtown. This project is critical both to the integrity of the building and to the life of downtown. Everyone wants the public square to be a well used and just as importantly, a well-loved open space.

The partnership of artists and designers has demonstrated numerous times that their collaborative work can elevate public spaces to a different level. But this does not happen with the single placement of a piece of sculpture or one small integrated art component. Ideally, the entire project is infused with the seamless mix of design and art that works together to create a place that is a beautiful, comfortable, stimulating place to be—a place people want to visit just to see, a place that draws you back time and again. People like being in important civic spaces.

Creating a 24-Hour Place

In the case of this public space there is an added opportunity. This is that the building and plaza have the potential to display both a daytime and a nighttime personality and presence. It is important to acknowledge that the daily affairs and business taking place in the building during the day quiet down at the end of the workday. Then the building becomes part of the life of the nightlife of the surrounding city.

Taking this into account and creating a public place that works successfully through both cycles of time will establish the place an important square holds in the civic and social life of downtown. The chance of achieving this impact is strengthened through the combined impact of the plaza design and integrated artwork, particularly if they are strongly expressive and conceptually imaginative.

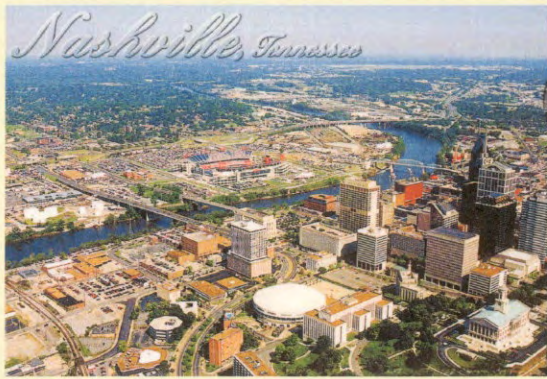
ART

Goals for the integration of art into design

A primary goal for the public art is to develop integrated artwork that contributes strongly to definition of this community place as a comfortable, interesting space to be in. At the same time, the integrated art is expected to contribute to making this public space a lasting place by imbuing it with a compelling physical presence and conceptual richness. This place should stay in people's memories and draw them back.

The art will work with the design ideas of the square as well as extend beyond them to heighten the appreciation of the historic building.

The concepts for the design and the artwork will spring from the metaphor of "ephemeral meaning or lightness" which relates directly to the symbols used in the building that express the working ideas and values of Nashville's justice and governing systems. Values such as protection, wisdom and strength, along with courage, loyalty, law, justice, and security are consciously evoked throughout the building. These ideas and values are meant to be contemplated in their fullest sense and as such reside in a realm of the ephemeral.



Potential Art Projects

Lighting: Courthouse Façade, Light Wells, Areas within the Square

Using light to activate the Square at night is an alluring way to create an awareness of the place for half of each day. People will be drawn to a creatively lit place. The building and the Square will also be visible from many locations, extending its overall impact within the downtown. By lighting the building, it can take a prominent place in the family of lit structures within the downtown.

- ▶ Developing an artistic, lighting scheme that honors the building.
- ▶ Choreograph the lighting so that there might be elements of scheduled change, i.e. shifts over a selected timeframe, a different scheme for selected important dates, etc.
- ▶ This project could extend to provide collaborative lighting concepts for areas of the plaza such as the seating areas, entry on Union, living steps, etc.

Sound

Sound can both add interest and “texture” to specific locations within the Square’s physical design. Sound can also help expand the place beyond its physical location by referencing sounds that connect back to historical events, to current activities that are happening in the building and/or are basic to Nashville such as music, the river, etc.

- ▶ Develop sound pieces that work together with the other projects and contribute to a sense of interest and the unexpected.
- ▶ The sound would be related to the activities and expressed values of the building, revealing these concepts in another medium.
- ▶ The sound pieces would be carefully conceived and located to work hand in hand with the way the design delineates activities such as walking, sitting and other programmatic uses.

Two Thematic Seating Areas

Two more intimately scaled seating areas along the south edge of the Square are intended to be destination places to sit. They both offer an exceptional view of the building, across the square. Paying special attention to these two areas will provide unique seating but also serve to further enliven the southern edge where a number of people will enter the Square.

- ▶ Develop a unique sense of place around a different theme for each quiet seating area. The theme is described by a particular value or idea expressed within the symbolism in the building such as wisdom or protection.
- ▶ The artist design will satisfy the functional expectations for seating and passage in each area, but through an artistic interpretation of the theme delivered via a sculptural (or three-dimensions) working of the space.
- ▶ The design would shift between intentionally different daytime and nighttime effects by considering how the seating area will be transformed in the dark hours with creative lighting of elements of each area.

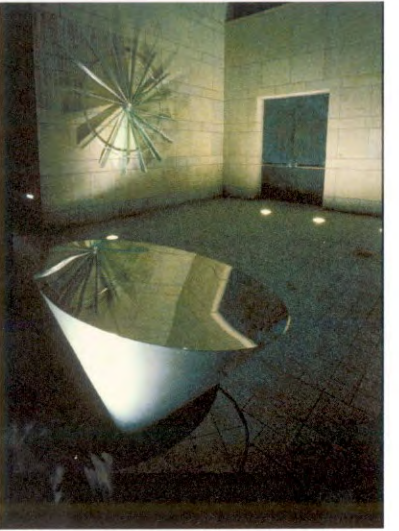
Dispersed interactive piece

This artwork will add a subtle liveliness to the plaza by suggesting that people of all ages move through the entire site and “collect” the information contained in the art piece, thereby garnering a more detailed story of the place.

- ▶ Develop an artwork that references events, anecdotes, and historical uses of the courthouse site and is located throughout the site in a way that does not conflict with other projects.
- ▶ This piece could work with the historic narrative located in the Founder’s Building.



Ellen Sollod



Anna Valentino Murch



Paul Sorey



Peter Riequam



Anna Valentino Murch & Doug Hollis



Jim Sanborn

Visuals for screens

If video display screens are part of the project, visuals from artists would provide another perspective of the area's past, present, and future. These artworks, if interspersed within more typical programming, would act like a poem amidst a non-fiction narrative.

► Develop artists' videos/films and possibly photographs that could be programmed into the overall mix of on-going projections on screens placed in the plaza.

Water

In the design for the square, the use of water along the south edge is intended to draw together the entire site by referencing the water that is present in the original fountains in the building's entry plaza. Water in public spaces is always a draw for people of all ages. The design team has developed the main ideas for the water features.

► An artist could work with the design team to further develop the water features; especially looking at how light at night could enhance the presence of water.

Artist Selection Process, Schedule and Methods

A basic premise is that the art projects and artist selections will not negatively impact the design or construction schedule.

Artists would be selected in a timeframe that works with the existing design schedule and design team and allows art concepts to be developed to an agreed upon level of detail by the finish of Construction Documents. This would necessitate a streamlined selection process to identify a small group of artists that are experienced and able to meet the project schedule. It may be necessary to have an invitational or direct selection of artists to meet the project schedule.



Beliz Brother

Consideration will be given to the continuing involvement of the current planning design team artist developing the Art Masterplan as to whether she would continue on in the role of a lead artist with or without a project site.

The Arts Commission will hire a local project manager for these projects. This project manager will attend to the details of the art projects. At the same time they would be invaluable in building a network within the city government and educating a variety of people about public art. All of this activity will further the program.

Budgets

Art dollars would be partnered with construction dollars wherever possible to leverage art funds. For example, the lighting of the buildings façade already has an allocated dollar amount that could be put together with the art dollars allowing the artist a more reasonable budget to accomplish this important art project.

Budgets are yet to be determined and are dependent on the final public art dollar allocation for the project, as well as determining the amount of construction dollars available for any artwork sites. All amounts listed below would cover artists' design time, travel, fabrication, and installation.

A suggested allocation of the currently proposed amount of up to \$750,000 could be prioritized and broken out as follows:

Lighting	\$ 200,000
Sound	\$ 150,000
Two Seating Areas (\$150,000 each)	\$ 300,000
Interactive Artwork	\$ 50,000
Water (for design work only)	\$ 30,000
Commissions for screens	\$ 20,000

If the art allocation changes, certain low priority projects could be deleted and the budget amounts reconfigured to reflect different priorities for the overall project.

ART CONTRIBUTES TO A COMFORTABLE YET LIVELY PLAZA THAT DRAWS PEOPLE IN

ART WILL HELP CREATE BOTH THIS DAY AND NIGHT LIVELINESS FOR THE COURTHOUSE AND PLAZA

INTEGRATED ARTWORKS STRENGTHENS THE IMPACT OF THE PLAZA IN THE DOWNTOWN

DURING THE DAY, THE WORKING VALUES OF THE ACTIVITIES IN THE BUILDING ARE EVIDENT IN THE ARTWORK

THE DAYTIME PLAZA ART IS EXPRESSIVE OF NOTED CONCEPTUAL VALUES OF THE COURT AND CITY HALL SUCH AS STRENGTH, LOYALTY, PROTECTION, AND WISDOM

AT NIGHT, THE PLAZA AND BUILDING JOIN IN WITH ACTIVITIES OF DOWNTOWN

THE NIGHTTIME PLAZA IS DISTINGUISHED AND TRANSFORMED BY CREATIVE USES OF LIGHT AND SOUND

LIGHTING THE COURTHOUSE BUILDING



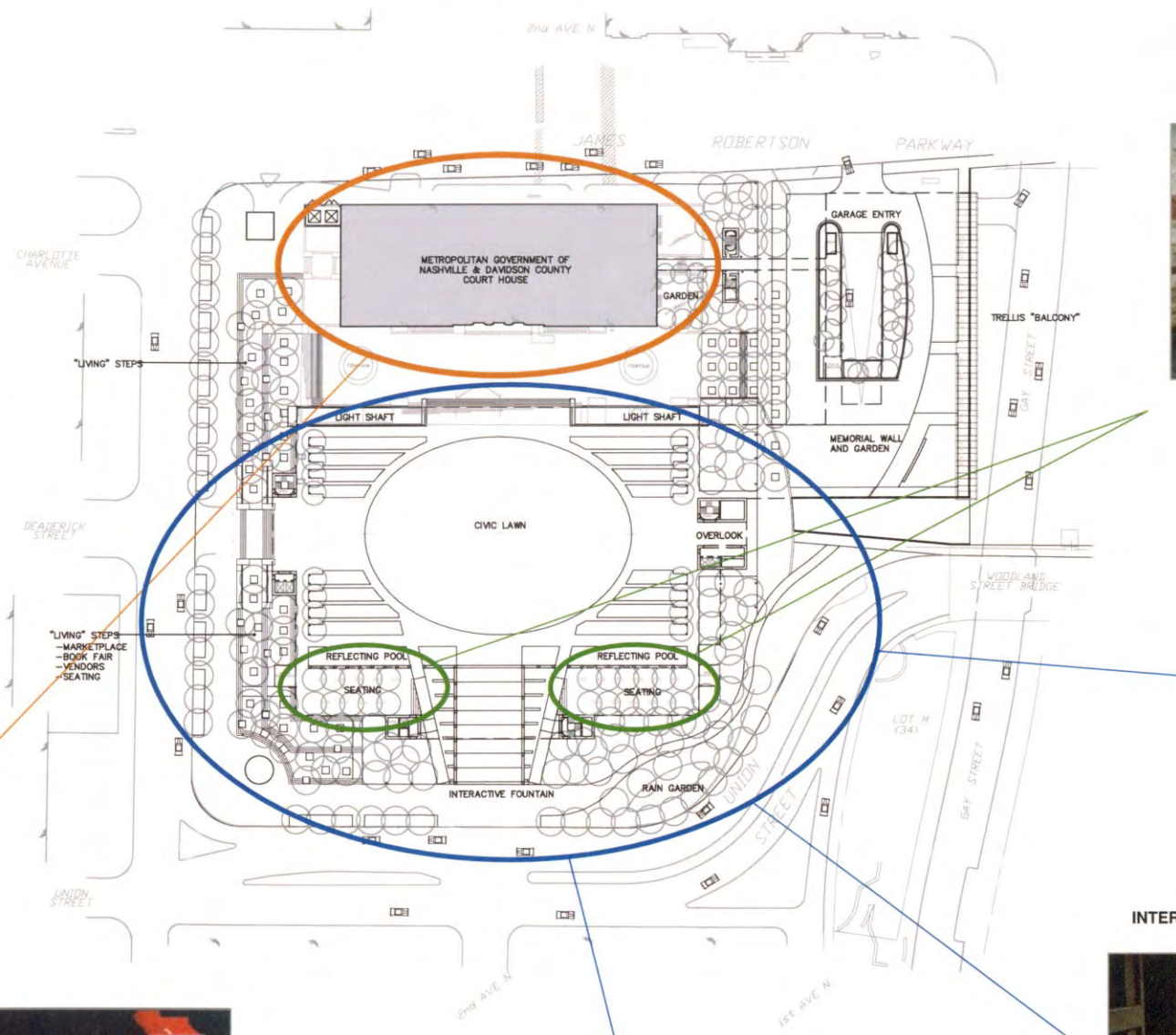
Anna Valentino Murch



Beliz Brother



Jeff Robbins & John Gierlich



EVOCATIVE SOUNDWORKS

THEMATIC SITTING AREAS



Jim Sanborn



Peter Reiquam

CREATIVE NIGHT LIGHTING IN THE PLAZA



Anna Valentino Murch & Doug Hollis



Barbara Grygulis

INTERACTIVE ARTWORK



Jack Mackie

COMMISSIONED ARTWORKS FOR VIDEO DISPLAY PANELS



Beliz Brother

PLAN OPTION B

METRO NASHVILLE DAVIDSON COUNTY PUBLIC SQUARE

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

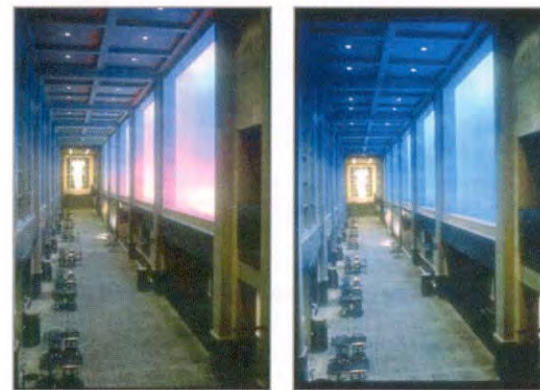


PREPARED BY:
BARGE, WAGGONER, SUMNER & CANNON, INC.
WALKER PARKING CONSULTANTS
WALLACE, ROBERTS & TODD, LLC
TUCK-HINTON ARCHITECTS
HAWKINS PARTNERS, INC.
CAROLYN LAW

LIGHTING A BUILDING FAÇADE



Jeff Robbins & John Gierlich



Anna Valentino Murch



WATER



Gloria Bornstein

INTERACTIVE SCATTERED ARTWORK



Jack Mackie



CREATIVE DAY/NIGHT SHIFT



Paul Sorey



Anna Valentino Murch & Doug Hollis



Jim Sanborn

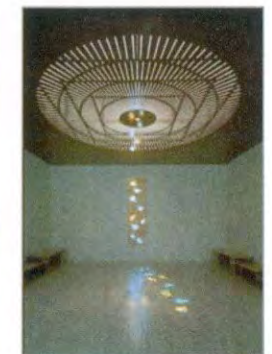


Barbara Grygutis

THEMATIC SEATING SPACES



Anna Valentino Murch



Jim Hirshfield & Sonya Iishi

METRO NASHVILLE DAVIDSON COUNTY
PUBLIC SQUARE

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE



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