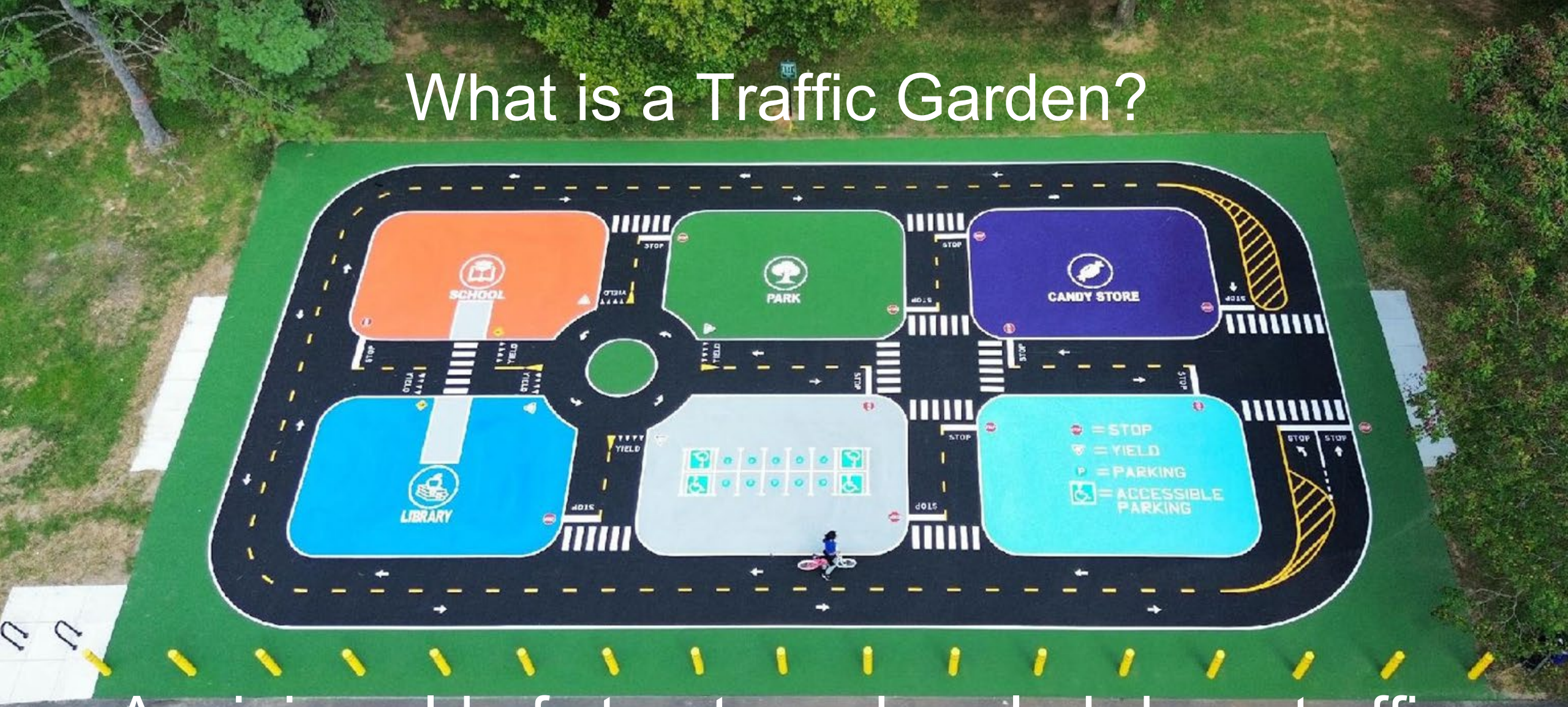


A WORLD OF TRAFFIC GARDENS

TRAFFIC GARDEN DESIGNS
by Finn Quinn

November 17, 2026

What is a Traffic Garden?



A mini-world of streets and scaled-down traffic elements that is free of cars to practice skills & have fun



I focus on 2D ‘painted’ version of real-world streets that repurpose and transform existing courts and paved spaces into a vibrant new amenity


TRAFFIC
FACT: KIDS LOVE TRAFFIC

Traffic Gardens Are a Community Amenity



Fills Bike Education Gaps: Many families lack time, resources, or safe spaces - traffic gardens provide community place to introduce safe biking & road skills.



Reverses Decline in Bike Skills: With biking rates down precipitously over last 15 years, they help rebuild early mobility and independence.

Safe, Hands-On Learning: Traffic gardens offer safe, engaging spaces to build real-world biking and navigation skills through programs and engaging play.

Easy to Install & Scale: Existing paved areas in schools, parks, & other underused spaces make traffic gardens straightforward to set up in many locations

Boosts Health and Community: They promote active play, STEM learning, and serve as hubs for play, programs, and family events.





Kids build confidence, risk awareness, & well-being through playful movement





Traffic Gardens are Growing Nationally


FOREGROUND / NOW

BELOW
The concept behind traffic gardens, which are imported from Copenhagen, is to reproduce urban conditions to teach kids bike and pedestrian safety.

STREETS

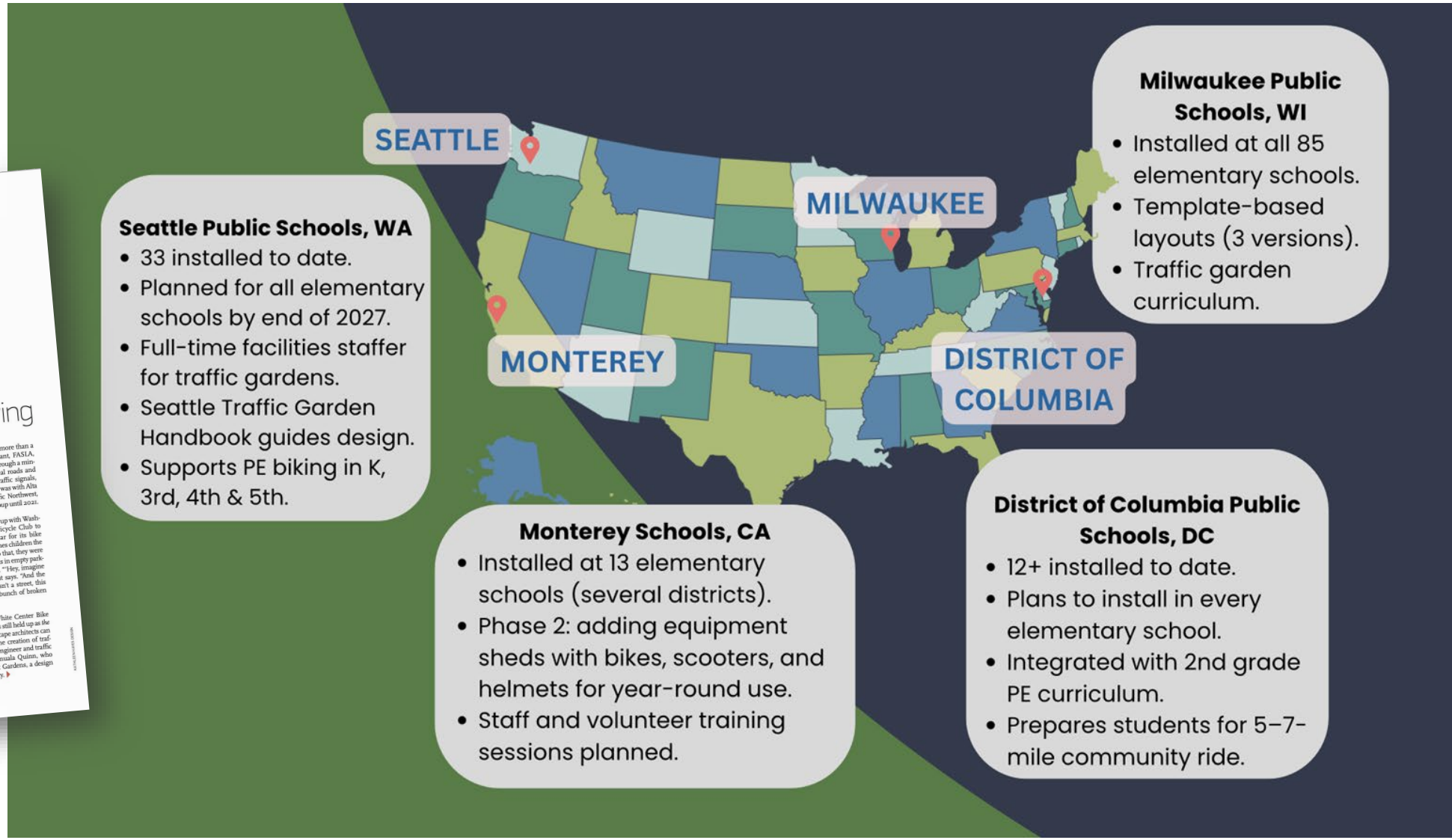
Traffic Gardens Are Growing

On a trip to Copenhagen more than a decade ago, Steve Durrant, FASLA, saw children riding bikes through a miniature urban cityscape. "Real roads and real crosswalks and real traffic signals, even," recalls Durrant, who was with Alta Planning + Design's Pacific Northwest, Midwest, and Canadian group until 2021.

Inspired, Durrant teamed up with Washington state's Cascade Bicycle Club to design something similar for its bike safety course, which teaches children the rules of the road. Prior to that, they were placing halved tennis balls in empty parking lots and telling kids, "Hey, imagine this is a street," Durrant says. "And the kids are saying, 'This isn't a street, this is a parking lot with a bunch of broken tennis balls.'"

Ten years later, the White Center Bike Playground in Seattle is still held up as the example of how landscape architects can become involved in the creation of traffic gardens, says the engineer and traffic garden planner Fionnuala Quinn, who runs Discover Traffic Gardens, a design and build consultancy.

20 / LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE JAN 2024

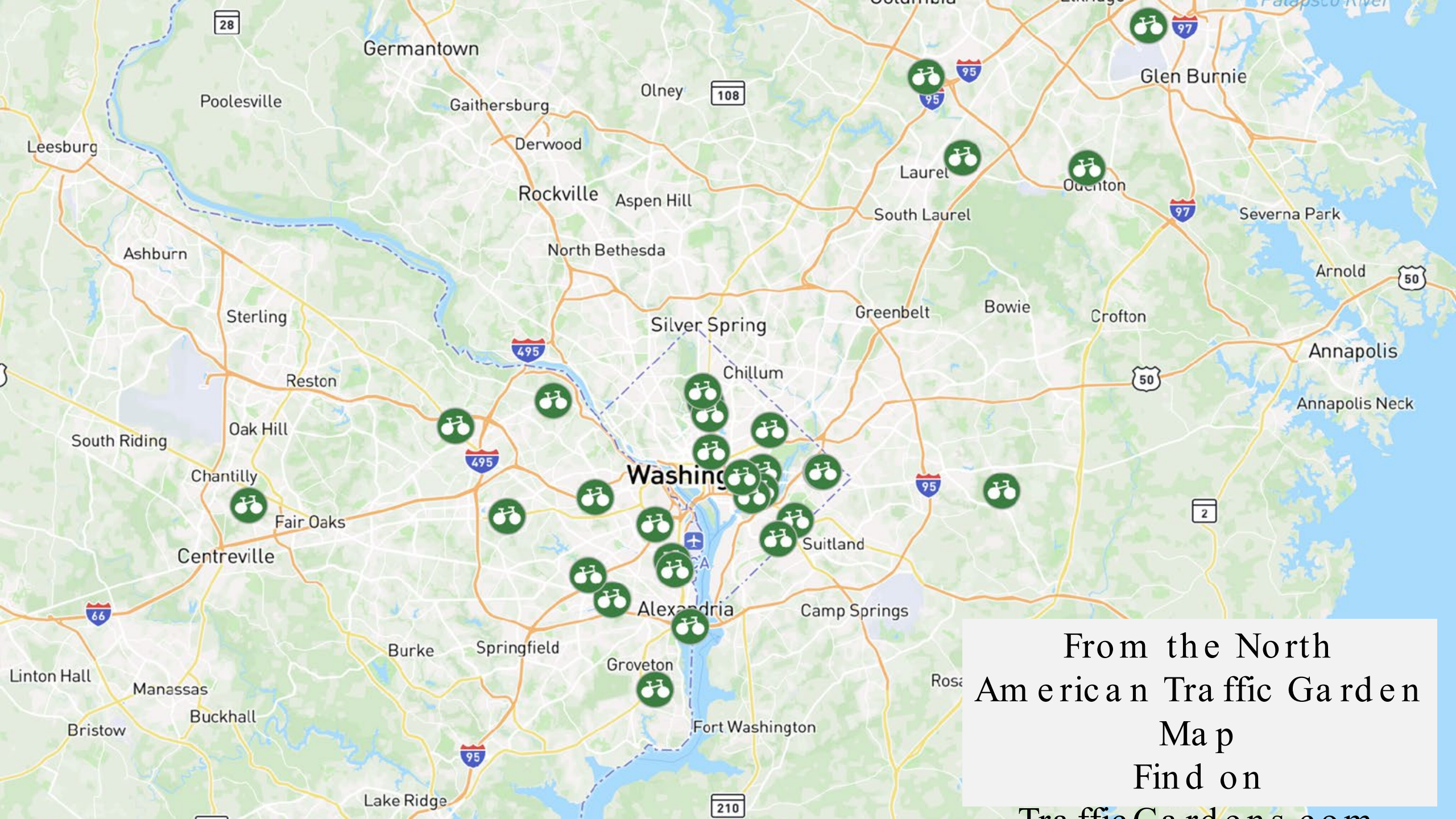


Seattle Public Schools, WA
- 33 installed to date.
- Planned for all elementary schools by end of 2027.
- Full-time facilities staffer for traffic gardens.
- Seattle Traffic Garden Handbook guides design.
- Supports PE biking in K, 3rd, 4th & 5th.

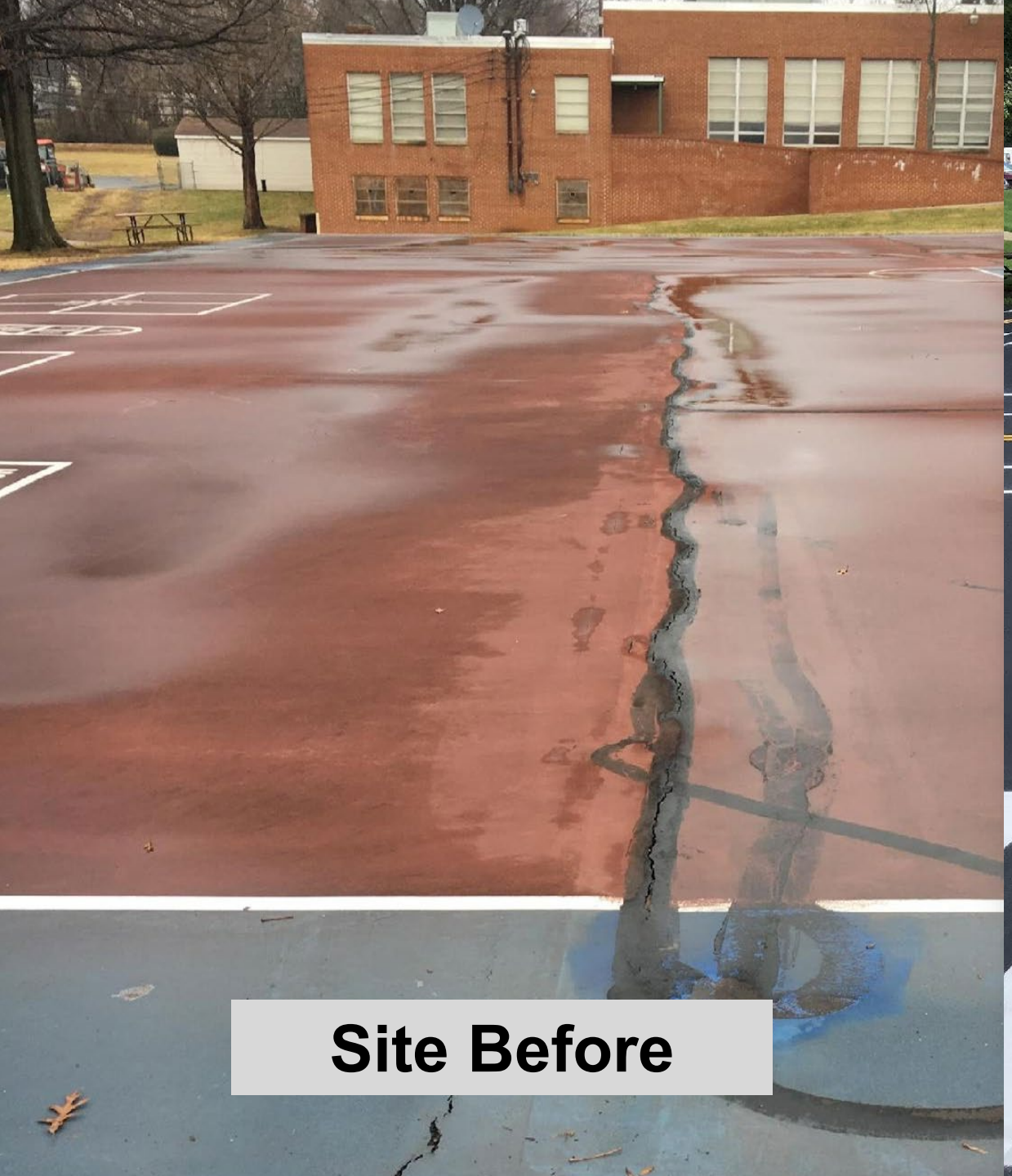
Milwaukee Public Schools, WI
- Installed at all 85 elementary schools.
- Template-based layouts (3 versions).
- Traffic garden curriculum.

Monterey Schools, CA
- Installed at 13 elementary schools (several districts).
- Phase 2: adding equipment sheds with bikes, scooters, and helmets for year-round use.
- Staff and volunteer training sessions planned.

District of Columbia Public Schools, DC
- 12+ installed to date.
- Plans to install in every elementary school.
- Integrated with 2nd grade PE curriculum.
- Prepares students for 5–7-mile community ride.



From the North American Traffic Garden Map
Find on
TrafficGardens.com


Site Before


STOP
Site After



Cora Kelly Elementary Traffic Garden, Alexandria, VA



Bailey's Upper Traffic Garden, Fairfax, VA



Bacontown Park Traffic Garden, Laurel,



Perrywood Community Center Traffic Garden, Upper Marlboro, MD



Dupont Heights Park Traffic Safety Park, MD

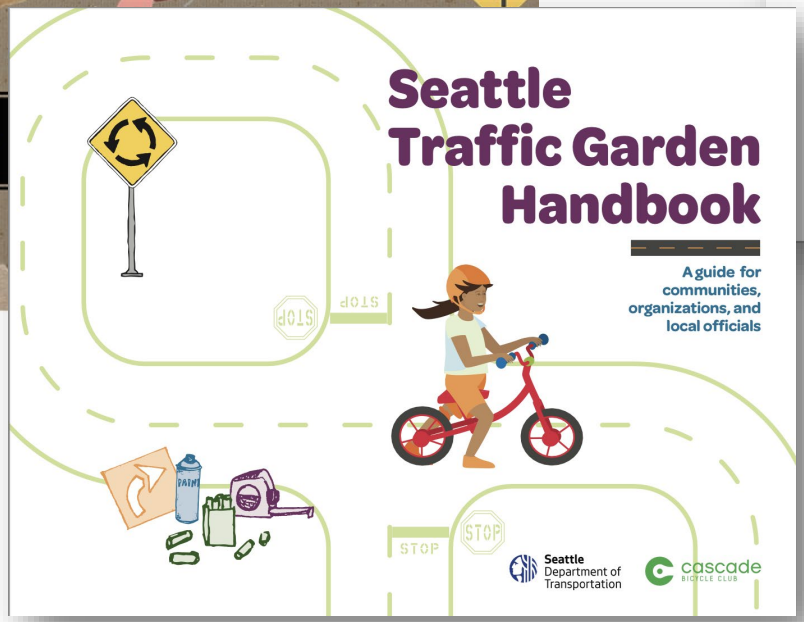


Huntington Park Bike Traffic Garden, Columbia, MD

Projects Now Easier with New Resources









One Traffic Garden at a Time Regional Guide



Created through a partnership between Arlington County & Prince George's County

Funded through $35K award from TPB's Regional Roadway Safety Program

Supports VZ goals to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries

Includes step-by-step instructions, design templates, local stories, checklists & activity sheets

A unique collaboration & the first cross-state partnership to create shared traffic garden guidance

Appendix O:

Design Checklists

Traffic garden drawing review checklist

Does the layout accommodate walking and bicycling activities?	Y/N
Are there clear walking and bicycling path and route options around the site?	
Do streets connect clearly and consistently to form a network?	
Can users change directions at several locations?	
Are signs and pavement markings shown at intersections?	
Are stops/starts close together? Short cross streets?	
Is there adequate space for multiple users to spread out?	
Are there different areas for users of varying skill levels and abilities?	
Are there options for users with mobility issues + added symbols?	
Does layout accommodate other aspects of operation?	**Y/N**
Are there well-located places for groups to assemble during programming	
Where will people arrive at the site?	
Upon arrival, how do users access the traffic garden?	
Are there suitable places for accompanying adults to sit and watch?	
Where do people park their bicycles?	
Is equipment storage readily accessible for the start and end of programs?	

Planning for Other Aspects of the Traffic Garden

While the layout drawing is in progress, there are other elements of the traffic garden that need to be planned. Some or all of the following design choices may apply depending on the nature of your project:

- installation stencils: custom-sized stencils for adding pavement markings and features
- equipment: portable traffic sign set, bicycles, ancillary bike supplies (pumps, tools, helmets)
- storage: for signs, bicycles, and ancillary supplies
- amenities: benches, bicycle parking, and more
- surface repairs: crack repair, surface resealing, fixing any hazards
- adjustments to access: ADA fixes, removal of barriers
- new information: welcome/information signs, way-finding signs

Some of these items can be readily purchased, while others are specialty items that require advance preparation and notice to obtain.

Table 7. Traffic features checklist

TRAFFIC FEATURES:

Intersections

- ☐ stop intersection (4-way)
- ☐ stop intersection (3-way)
- ☐ roundabout (yield intersection)
- ☐ other yield intersection

Types of Crossings

- ☐ a pedestrian crossing (intersection)
- ☐ a pedestrian crossing (mid-block)
- ☐ railroad crossing

Types of Streets & Lanes

- ☐ one-way, single lane
- ☐ two-way, opposing lanes
- ☐ bicycle lane
- ☐ bike box

Street Pavement Symbols or Markings

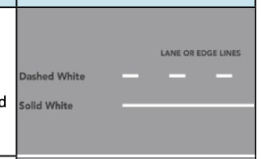
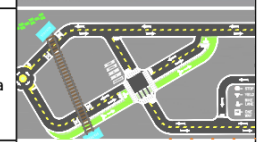
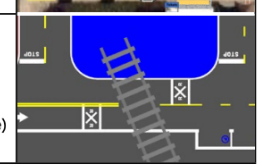
- ☐ pedestrian crossing
- ☐ "Stop" word
- ☐ stop bar
- ☐ "Yield" word
- ☐ shark's teeth
- ☐ disabled parking
- ☐ parking
- ☐ bicycle
- ☐ directional arrows (straight)
- ☐ directional arrows (roundabout)
- ☐ directional arrows (left turn)
- ☐ railroad tracks
- ☐ railroad crossing ahead

Traffic Signs

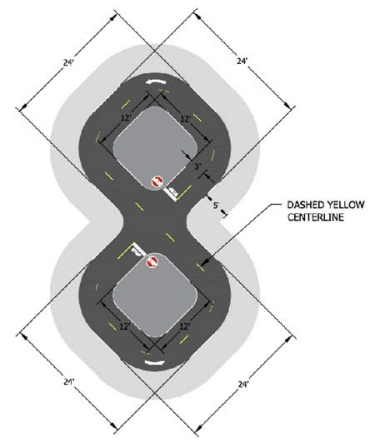
- ☐ Stop
- ☐ Yield
- ☐ railroad crossing
- ☐ school crossing (pedestrian)
- ☐ one-way
- ☐ roundabout
- ☐ stop here for pedestrian

Line striping and pavement markings should follow standard colors.

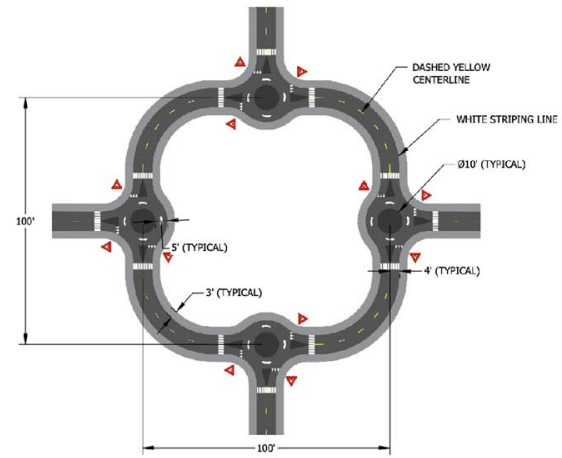
Table 6. Marking striping color standards and usage

Paint Color	Shade	How It's Used in Traffic Garden	Examples
White	• Traffic White • Federal standard 595 • Color FS 17875	• lane striping, between lanes, going the same direction, roadway arrows, crosswalk markings, "STOP" (word), "YIELD" (word), stop bar, yield markings, bike lane symbol, accessible parking symbol	
Yellow	• Traffic Yellow • Federal Standard 595 • Color FS 33538	• center line, island, median; central hatching to create a left-turn lane	
Green	• Bike Lane Green • Pantone 349 c	• bike box, colored bike lane, grass buffer between street and sidewalk, the central area of roundabout circles	
Blue	• Accessible Blue • Federal Standard 595 • Color FS 15180	• accessible parking square (symbol is applied on top)	
Red	• Adobe Red or Bus Lane Red	• may be used to create a "curb ramp" where the sidewalk intersects with the street's lane edge	
Gray	• Mix black and white	• represent sidewalks • railroad tracks and ties • cover over markings on asphalt (mix to match surface)	

Double Diamond



Magic Roundabout



LOCAL STORY

For the Cora Kelly STEM Elementary traffic garden project, 60 third-grade students participated in a design workshop where they met with city officials. While the city planner was explaining the concept of a traffic garden to the students, a girl excitedly exclaimed, "I had my birthday party at the Jefferson playground traffic garden!" The students subsequently visited the proposed site, adjacent to their school, and then attended a workshop where they prepared and submitted their layout concepts. At a subsequent workshop, city officials went through the 60 traffic garden layouts submitted, finalizing the design using elements from five of the third-grade students.



Figure 43. 3rd grade students at the Cora Kelly Elementary STEM workshop design the traffic garden for their school grounds and the adjacent playground.

LOCAL STORY

On August 23, 2022, the Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation, Perrywood Elementary School, Prince George's County Police Department Division II Community Engagement Unit, and Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission hosted a back-to-school safety event at the permanent Vision Zero Traffic Garden. The goal of the event was to teach children and their families how to "Be Seen, Be Alert and Be Safe" when walking and biking. Children recited the Vision Zero Safety Pledge with PGPD officers and received an instructional walk and ride around the traffic garden to learn about roadway features and traffic signs. The M-NCPPC traffic signage board, designed by County youth, educates viewers of all ages on traffic signs in a fun and engaging way. The children and their families took home high-visibility giveaways, activity books, and additional safety information for the new school year. They also promoted the PGC Bee Safe Team, which reminds residents to wear bright and reflective clothing, to eliminate distractions, and to look left, right, and left again before crossing the street.

VISIONZERO
prince george's
SAFE STREETS FOR EVERYONE

Be Seen Be Alert Be Safe

Figure 17. The Bee Safe Team mascot was designed by Andersen Longus, a talented young artist and resident of Prince George's County, Maryland.

LOCAL STORY

Although he didn't formally study mathematics, Marcellus S. discovered his natural spatial reasoning skills when he started working in the striping business. Now the co-owner and vice-president of operations for a DMV-based striping company, he has gone on to deploy his skills in laying out and laying down traffic garden pavement markings for D.C. Public Schools. The process involves transferring the information from 2-D drawings onto the surface at a larger scale, an exercise in applied geometry. Marcellus takes significant pride in his work and has imparted that love to his business partners. As a lifelong D.C. native, he is committed to being a force for good in his hometown and deploys his traffic garden skills on behalf of local students.

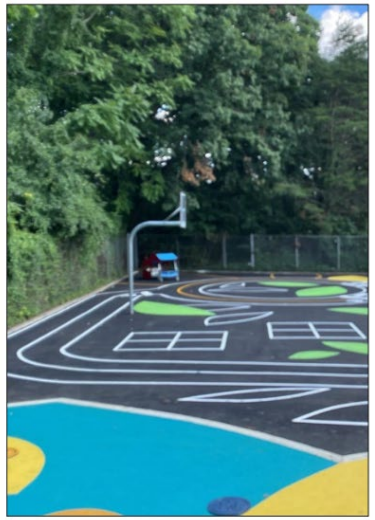


Figure 25. Striping at Anne Beers Elementary School Traffic Garden

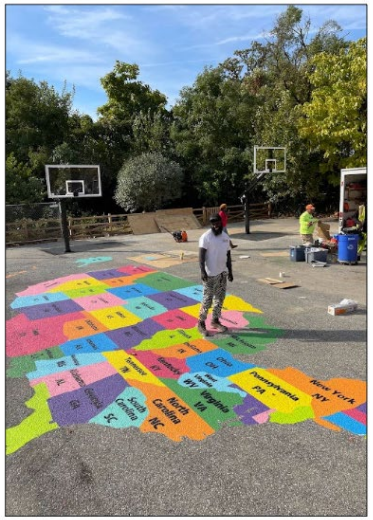


Figure 26. Marcellus at work

Acknowledgments

This guide was an exercise in partnership and cooperation by many. We extend a hearty thanks to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) for funding and supporting this project through its Regional Roadway Safety Program (RRSP), as well as to Janie Nham for serving as our MWCOG liaison.

The idea for this guide grew out of ongoing work that had been taking place in both Arlington County, VA, and Prince George's County, MD. The two counties created a joint application through local conversations in response to the RRSP process, working as partners every step of the way. We are particularly indebted to Sam Murrey of Arlington County and Andrea Lasker of Prince George's County for their guidance and assistance.

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Many others, by taking the time to share their insights and suggestions, helped make this guide a reality. Thanks to the following people who graciously contributed their perspectives to the project: Duwan Morris, Janis MacDonald, Lale Santelices, Lauren Hassel, Dr. Maryrose Mbinack, and Megan Bailiff of Equus Striping.

This guide also builds on previous traffic garden guidance documents from the District of Columbia, the City of Philadelphia, PA, and the Greater Portland METRO in the Portland, OR, region. We thank these entities for their expertise: you made the guidance in this document better.

Prepared for:

Arlington County, Virginia
Department of Environmental Services

Prince George's County, Maryland
Department of Public Works & Transportation

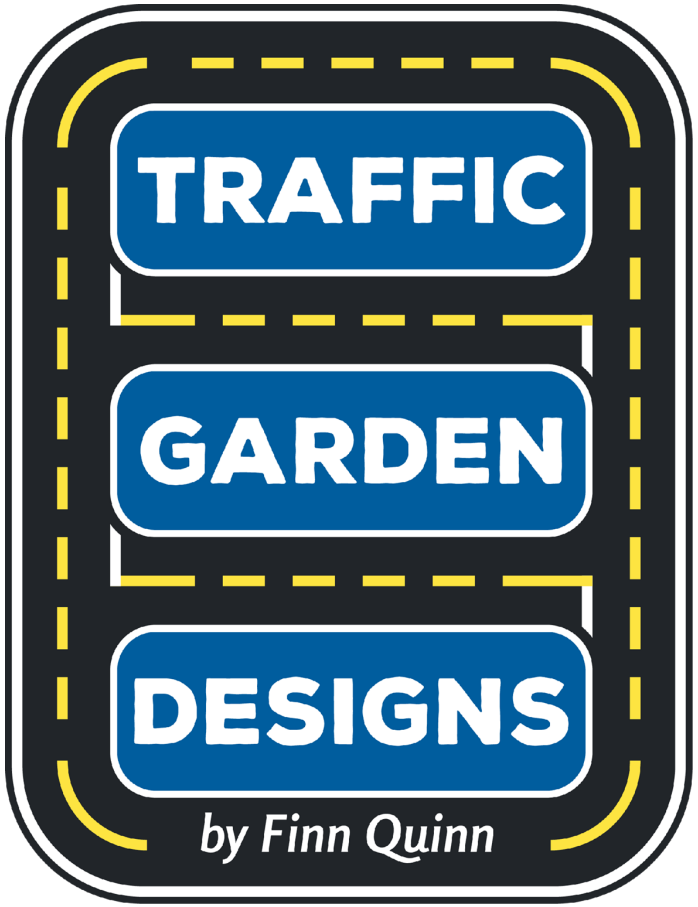
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The guide is available as a downloadable PDF from several websites, including the Arlington County website and TrafficGardensInfo.com.



QUESTIONS & Thank You

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