

**PROJECT IDENTITY:** Tysons Corner Plaza / **PROJECT LOCATION:** Tysons Corner, VA

**PURPOSE OF PROJECT:**

Tysons Corner Plaza is an elevated 1.5 acre open space in the heart of a changing Tysons Corner, Virginia. The new plaza is part of a master plan for the Tysons Corner Center that has transformed acres of mall parking lots into a transit-oriented, mixed-use center, complete with a light rail station, hotel, residential tower, and office tower. Fundamentally, the plaza is a piece of infrastructure: a bridge providing a pedestrian connection from the new Metro station to the 3 towers over the roadway 32 feet below. But, the design transforms it to become the focal point of a new urban center.

To support this new community, the project provides amenities for the changing needs and scales of use found in the daily life in an urban center. These include an event plaza, an active recreation lawn, passive seating areas, and activities for children such as a play area and water feature. The design connects to the site's: the area's history as a peach orchard informs the overall site's shape, patterns, and color palette. Two interlocking ellipses—one hardscaped, the other a man-made meadow—formally reference peach baskets and define large spaces for program elements. These elliptical geometries contrast with the orthogonal nature of the surrounding development, increasing the plaza's visibility and prominence. To express the elliptical form, the edges of the bridging piece of the plaza taper towards the road and are clad with patterned, colored panels that reference a basketweave. Custom, curved lighting poles w/ integrated canopies deepen the read of the curving form at plaza level, and line key circulation paths to assist wayfinding.

The plaza sits atop ballrooms for the adjacent hotel and provides a large, flexible space for community events such as concerts, seasonal ice rinks and holiday markets. During daily use, designed elements provide more intimately scaled spaces for people. Patterned paving breaks down the scale of the space and provides interest for the towers above. A flush, circular skylight is integrated into the pattern to provide light access down to street level. Custom, removable canopies create shade and focal points on the plaza, and a curvaceous, custom-designed modular seating system reinforces the geometry of the hardscaped oval and create "eddy" spaces for smaller scale gathering. The system's modularity allows it to be transformed into new arrangements as the plaza is programmed or removed entirely for larger scale events.

The grassy meadow floats over the main roadway, serving as a soft refuge for daily pastimes as well as a community green. Residents use it to play games and hold morning exercise classes, and when needed, it becomes a venue for community experiences such as outdoor movies. Precast benches emerge from the outer paving ring to accentuate the elliptical form and provide places for reading, resting, and relaxing. A sinuous water feature creates a space for play and reflection off the main path.

Enveloping the ellipses are smaller scale programs including outdoor dining, a children's play area, and seating areas. More orthogonal bands of paving and seasonally-changing grasses and flowering plants create a soft, rhythmic element that heightens the edges of both ellipses.

**ROLE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:**

The landscape architect was the lead designer for the plaza, directing the look and feel of the plaza and the bridge components. To achieve this complex technical project, the landscape architect collaborated immensely with the project team to connect each component of the plaza to its context while suspending it over 30 feet in the air. This included coordination between different architects for each tower, and with the structural engineer to create a highly shaped bridge with the capacity to support planting and events within the plaza. The landscape architect also collaborated closely with fabricators to create the canopies and modular furniture system.