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Creating Third Spaces at the Worcester Art Museum

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CREATING THIRD SPACES AT THE WORCESTER ART MUSEUM

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Abstract

The Worcester Art Museum (WAM) is undergoing a culture change. Contrasting the traditional visitor experience consisting of linearly walking through the galleries, the WAM strives to create areas where patrons feel welcome to linger and socialize. By conducting research of community spaces and gathering opinions of WAM staff and visitors, we formulated our recommendations. We delivered physical renderings of how certain rooms could be designed to be more communal, and specific ideas for events to gain interest from the community.
Executive Summary

Museums serve a crucial role in the community in which they reside. Museums serve as educational institutions, as well as creating an identity for the culture they preserve and maintain (Hein, George E. Routledge, 1998). The Worcester Art Museum, or WAM, is currently an excellent model for the role of a museum within the community. Home to over 35,000 pieces of art from over 50 centuries, the WAM houses classics such as Monet, while preserving precious Knight’s artifacts from medieval times just a few galleries over (WAM Annual Report, 2013).

The WAM is in an exciting era where the very culture of visiting an art museum is being challenged, and museums are doing what they can to remain relevant and well-trafficked. Traditionally, visiting an art museum was a very linear, structured experience. Visitors would systematically work their way through the galleries, reading the artwork’s description on a sign, and moving on until they reached the end. In contrast to traditional audience engagement, the WAM desires to change that visitor experience for the entire museum to be a much more communal place, one where the visitor can relax, socialize or do some work and be inspired by the priceless artifacts that surround them. The WAM is looking for a way to not just preserve old cultures, but foster new ones as well.

A specific way the WAM could become a cultural hub and community gathering place is to develop a “third space” for the Worcester community. Third spaces are areas where people can relax, socialize and re-energize from their lives in their first place, their homes, and their second space, their job (Oldenburg, 1999). Third spaces are prominent in European culture. Examples include the Piazzas of Italy and the street side cafés of France. While all third spaces do not have identical characteristics, they all serve the
purpose of adding meaning and variety to the lives of their patrons, as well as being centers for the community (Ibid).

Figure 1: Third Space French Sidewalk Café


I. Methodology

Our project goal was to help the WAM develop a successful blueprint for uses of its various rooms and areas as third spaces. In completing the following objectives, we were able to achieve that goal and leave the WAM with supported visions for how certain rooms could be developed into traditional third spaces.

Objective 1: Identified Characteristics of Traditional Third Spaces.

Objective 2: Determined the potential of WAM to create traditional third spaces.
Objective 3: Created an assessment of which areas at the WAM could become Traditional Third spaces.

Objective 4: Delivered recommendations to the WAM about where to create traditional third spaces, and what characteristics these spaces should have.

Before any field research was done, our group conducted a thorough literature review, which was essential in getting some expertise in the realm of third spaces, what different forms they take, and why they are important to people. Specifically, we read the book *The Great Good Place*, by Ray Oldenburg, which was an enormous help in grasping the concept of third space, and specific ways that they are successful.

In order to further understand what characteristics create a successful third space, we visited third spaces in Boston, Massachusetts and Portsmouth, New Hampshire. While in New Hampshire we interviewed the owners of a successful third space called the Portsmouth Book and Bar.

We also conducted interviews and focus groups with a variety of staff members at the WAM. In those interviews and focus groups, we learned a lot about the passion that each staff member has for the museum, and their individual thoughts and ideas for how the museum could develop a third space, and what barriers to development were currently in place. At this point, we had a solid foundation for understanding the characteristics of a traditional third space, and how the WAM staff felt about the idea of developing a third space.

In light of our data from the museum staff, we then went on to survey patrons of the museum in person, as well as numerous followers of the WAM online via the WAM
Facebook page. We received 122 survey responses, which provided us with opinions of college students and adults from the community.

II. Findings

Our research revealed that traditional third spaces should have the characteristics of free admission, Wi-Fi access, as well as accessibility to food and drink.

This finding was informed by survey data shown in Figure 2, which is a weighted average of the results of all of our surveys, focus group data and interviews with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and bar.

![Weighted Average Rating of Third Space Characteristics Based on 122 Responses](image)

*Figure 2: Third Space Characteristics*

The specific areas within the WAM that had the most potential to become a third space were found to be the Courtyard, the Lancaster Lobby and The Museum Café. These places were rated on a 1 to 5 scale on our surveys, with 5 being the most potential to become a third space, and 1 indicating the space had no potential. Besides the survey, WAM employees and the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar also expressed the most potential for the Courtyard, Lancaster Lobby and Museum Café to become
traditional third spaces. Figure 3 shows the weighted average score each space in the museum got on our survey of 122 respondents.

![Weighted Average Rating of Each WAM Space Based on 122 Responses]

**Figure 3: WAM Room Ratings**

It came as no coincidence that the three top rated rooms by our survey also matched the characteristics that we identified as essential in any traditional third space, Wi-Fi, free admission, and food and drink. Also noted from our interviews and focus groups with the WAM staff, the lower rated rooms had many barriers to becoming third spaces. The Renaissance Court, Salisbury Hall and gallery spaces are all within the paid areas of the museum, and our talks with the staff revealed that the admission cost could be a huge barrier, as well as concerns about the safety of the artwork if food and drink were allowed inside the museum.

From our findings we were able to make some final recommendations for the WAM as to how they could use the above characteristics of a third space, and the viable locations at WAM to develop a traditional third space.
III. Recommendations

A. WAM Third Space Designs

We recommend that any traditional third space the WAM develops should have free admission, Wi-Fi and food and drink accessibility.

We believe that these are the most important characteristics of traditional third spaces.

We recommend the following designs for the spaces within the WAM that we determined to have the most potential to become traditional third spaces: the Courtyard, the Lancaster Lobby and The Museum Café.

Some sample pictures of these renderings are below.

![Figure 4: Courtyard Before](image-url)

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Figure 5: Courtyard After

Figure 6: Lancaster Lobby Before
Figure 7: Lancaster Lobby After

Figure 8: Cafe Before
B. Events

We recommend that the Museum bring more events to the WAM that engage the community.

Specifically, the WAM staff noted that an event called Third Thursdays used to be a big hit, typically having live music, alcohol tastings, and special art showings. Not limited to just Third Thursdays, we recommended that generally special events are an excellent way to engage the community, and that live music is a cheap and popular way to absorb the interest of the visitors.

C. Future Research Recommendations

We recommend that the WAM do three things to further the goals of this project. The first is to conduct a demographic specific quantitative survey to verify the results of our exploratory data. In order to move forward, we believe that the WAM needs more evidence to justify any investment in creating traditional third spaces.

Next we recommend that the WAM perform a cost analysis of the designs that our group proposes.
The museum should ensure that any plans that it moves forward with are cost effective. Lastly, we recommend that the WAM explore non-traditional third spaces and how to make visitors more comfortable within the galleries. Our project focused specifically on traditional third spaces, and we believe that it is important for the museum to consider other types of third spaces.

IV. Conclusions

We found that the WAM has great potential to create traditional third spaces for the community of Worcester, Massachusetts. In order to accomplish this goal, the WAM should focus on developing its Courtyard, Lancaster Lobby and Café. These spaces should all offer free admission, Wi-Fi and food and drink, and these rooms should also host events. Our designs for the spaces provide some guidance as to how the WAM could develop these spaces, but before making any investments, the museum should make sure that these designs or any modified designs are cost effective.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Sometimes, people need places to go where they can relax, socialize and re-energize. In his 1999 Book, *The Great Good Place*, Ray Oldenburg defined these relaxing public or semi-public spaces as third spaces (Oldenburg, 1999). For a variety of cultural reasons, Oldenburg indicates that third spaces have become elusive in America. Without third spaces, many Americans shuffle between home and work every day and often struggle to feel as though they are part of a community.

Third spaces can come in many forms, but regardless of their structure, they serve important roles in the lives of those who frequent them. European cities are renowned for their successful third spaces; Paris has its street side cafés, London features quaint local taverns, Berlin is known for its Bier-Gartens, and Florence is dominated by open air piazzas (Oldenburg, 1999). While these spaces represent many different environments, they all share a common ability to create comfortable centers of community life that serve as respite from everyday stressors. In essence, third places add meaning to the lives of their patrons. Despite the value of third spaces, they can be difficult to create due to the elusive nature of their commonly held characteristics.

The Worcester Art Museum, or WAM, is an important part of the community and has been an important part of the history of the city of Worcester, Massachusetts. Over its long history, the WAM has proven itself as a world-class institution; it was the first art museum in the United States to display artwork by Claude Monet and it currently is home to upwards of 35,000 pieces of art (Worcester Art Museum, 2013).
The WAM is currently in a phase of transition, during which it hopes to challenge the very notion of what an art museum can be and through this process it hopes to develop inviting third spaces to engage more completely with the community. Because the WAM is an institution that is well respected within the community and offers ample public space, it believes that it will be able to create a third space for the local community. In doing so, the WAM hopes to attract new visitors who may not otherwise visit the museum.

Aside from the development of third spaces, the WAM is moving forward with other initiatives to engage with the community. After the 2013 closing of the Higgins Armory Museum, the WAM acquired much of the Higgins’ collection of medieval relics (Worcester Art Museum, 2013). In addition to its collections, the WAM also offers student and adult classes on a variety of topics such as art history, painting and sculpting (Worcester Art Museum, 2013). The WAM’s vision is to integrate more fully with the community, and the development of third spaces is a critical component of this goal.

The WAM hopes that adding third spaces will attract new visitors and increase membership numbers. The museum has set a goal of reaching 200,000 annual visitors by the year 2020, but as of 2013, their annual visitors number had not yet reached 100,000 (Worcester Art Museum, 2013). The Audience Engagement division at the WAM has developed a plan to transform some of its areas into third spaces. WAM staff members hope that visitors will use these third spaces to relax, meet with friends or work, all while gaining a deep appreciation for the art within the museum. With the creation of third spaces as its goal, the WAM worked with our project team to move its plan forward.
The goal of this project was to make recommendations to the Audience Engagement Division at the WAM both as to what amenities would be important to third spaces at the WAM and what areas within the WAM should be used as third spaces. The project team first determined what amenities and events are present in third spaces by exploring the perspectives of staff members and museum visitors. With the help of staff and visitors, we then determined which rooms within the WAM would be the most popular areas to become third spaces. Finally we created a series of recommendations for the design and creation of third spaces at the WAM.

This proposal consists of six chapters: the Introduction, the Literature Review, the Methodology, the Findings, the Recommendations and the Conclusions. In chapter 2 we explain the background literature that is necessary to understand the scope of this project within context of the WAM. In chapter 2 we discuss the role of museums within the community, and the concept of third space and how it fits into museums. In chapter 3 we describe our methodological approach to the creation of third space recommendations. Also in chapter three, we introduce the objectives we worked to achieve holding interviews and focus groups with WAM staff, interviewing the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar and surveying customers at the WAM. In chapter 4 we discuss our findings about what amenities events and rooms would be popular in the creation of third spaces at the WAM. In chapter 5 we explain our recommendations and designs relating to how the WAM could create third spaces. Finally, in chapter 6 we explain the limitations of our project and offer future research recommendations for the WAM in their journey to create third spaces.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background information about third spaces that can be used to help the Worcester Art Museum, or WAM, create successful third spaces. In section I, we discuss the role of museums within the community as sources of education, cultural identity and political ideology. In section II we discuss the challenges that regional art museums face in attracting new visitors and maintaining funding. In section III, we explore the concept and definition of third space including some successful examples while also noting the challenges United States faces, specifically in the context of museums.

I. Role of Small and Medium Museums in the Community

A museum is an institution that collects artifacts of historical, artistic or political importance and then displays them to the public in the form of exhibits (Hein, George E. Routledge, 1998). Museums play various roles in the community; some seek to appeal to a wide audience, while others are more specific in purpose (Ibid). Generally, they serve the community by providing a forum for education, cultural identity and political ideology.

A. Education

Since the early 1980’s, museum professionals have become increasingly aware of the educational role of museums and have begun to re-evaluate the relationship between museums and their visitors (Hein, George E. Routledge, 1998). Museums can be helpful
resources for those interested in academic pursuits, since they possess the capacity for gathering fragments of knowledge together, which can then be shared with the public (Ibid). Museum exhibits can provide visitors unique opportunities to learn about new subjects.

Museums offer people an excellent opportunity to educate themselves with diverse exhibitions, which contain numerous historical pieces, such as coins or stamps as well as priceless works of art (Petrov, 2012). Moreover, museums have begun to shift from using static displays to more interactive exhibitions that directly engage visitors (Postel, 2002). These institutions can provide visitors a great learning experience (Ibid). For example, in the United Kingdom, museums have always been seen as an educational institution (Postel, 2002). To become a part of the educational community, United Kingdom museum professionals work closely with local educational institutions to make sure their exhibitions and programs supplement school curriculums (Postel, 2002). Without museums, communities could lose a substantial amount of rich information and resources.

B. Cultural Identity

Museums are not only useful for gathering knowledge, but they also play an important role in shaping cultural identity. Museums are cultural experiments; they are often founded during periods of cultural transformation (Healy, Chris 2006). Museums can serve to generate cultural impressions to visitors of a city (David E. Finley, 1946).

Aesthetically, museums may also use period architecture in structural design as a way of expressing cultural identity. (Barnes-Gelt, Susan, 2004). For example, the Denver Art Museum was constructed as a visual representation of contemporary art (Ibid).
Before building the museum, architects conducted research on the overview of the site in the context of the city (Ibid). Designers of the museums noted that urban culture tends to influence architecture (Ibid).

**C. Politics and Social Issues**

From a political perspective, museums could serve as ideological battlegrounds. They “invoke ideals, recast realities, and manufacture meanings” writes Timothy W. Luke, a professor of political science at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Luke, 2002). Exhibitions can attempt to stimulate deep and reflective thoughts about controversial political topics (Postel, 2002). As a result, visitors often leave a museum with a deepened or changed perspective of a particular historical or political event (Luke, 2002).

For example, the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. seeks not only to educate visitors about the horrors of the Holocaust, but to use the history of the Holocaust as a way of shaping political beliefs (Carbonell, 2004). Upon entry, visitors are all given a historical character who suffered during the Holocaust (Ibid). A tour guide then brings visitors through the museum and at the end, visitors discover whether or not their character survived the Holocaust (Ibid). The museum uses this emotional narrative as a tool to inspire a political disdain for genocide (Ibid). Museums can also use cafés and other open areas of their building to engage the patrons and overall upgrade their visitor experience.

In our next section we explore how regional art museums face challenges in engaging their audiences and maintaining relevance in their communities.
II. Challenges at Regional Art Museums

In a time of cell phones, laptops, and numerous other advancing technologies, art museums are faced with many issues that will help them stay relevant to the culture that they are trying to preserve. Art museums are concerned with where they will get funding and how they will get visitors through the doors. Funding is a perpetual concern for most art museums, because they never know what their revenue stream is going to be, or if they may lose a large contributor (Skinner et al 2009). Between 1993 and 1998 the budget for the National Endowment for the Arts was cut by 50%, affecting art museums nationwide (Hughes et al 1999). This federal funding is extremely important because it was estimated that for every $1.00 the government gives, the museum will get $10.88 from private supporters. Another source of funding is the income earned from the museum, which is related to the amount of visitors the museum can attract (Hughes et al 1999).

Museums also struggle to bring in visitors for many reasons including location and their building setup. The Barnes Museum was located in a quiet neighborhood outside of Philadelphia, but after struggling with attendance and income, they chose to move the museum to a more active location in downtown Philadelphia to increase attendance and income (Byrnes, 2012). The Museum of Contemporary Arts in Cleveland also moved to a downtown location where they will be located in a $27.3 million building built by a world-renowned architect. The new gem-shaped museum was built to compete with museums in bigger wealthier cities (Byrnes, 2012).

Museums all over the country are facing the problem of maintaining their role in the community. Specifically, our project was focused on the WAM and how its role in
the city can grow in numerous ways. One of the ways we believe the WAM could increase engagement with the community is by providing “third spaces” to their patrons and members of the Worcester community. In the next section we describe the idea of third space and how it can be incorporated at the WAM.

III. What is a Third Space?

Third spaces are community-gathering spots that serve as a relief from the everyday lifestyle of going from homes (first space) and work or school (second space) and back to homes (Ekroth, 2005; Oldenburg, 1999).

Third spaces serve as a perfect and necessary mediator for people who inevitably get bogged down from time to time from the monotony of a two-space life (Oldenburg, 1999). The ability to visit a third space that does not simply treat the individual as a customer, but rather an equal member is a simple yet vital part of individuals leading healthy, balanced lives (Ibid). This idea of third space was embedded in American culture from the very beginning, but with the rise of suburbs and automobile dependence, third spaces have dwindled into a thing of the past, and the typical life now revolves around a “two-stop model”, one at work, and one at home (Ibid).

In this section we explore the importance of third spaces to society and provide examples of various third spaces and their diverse settings and uses. Furthermore, in this section we analyze how the culture and present layout of towns and cities in the US presents a challenge to create third spaces. Next, we examine museums and their ability to provide third spaces to communities. Finally, we explain how the city of Worcester, Massachusetts struggles with providing third spaces, what steps are being made to
improve the situation, and how the Worcester Art Museum can play an important role in aiding that process.

A. Why Third Space is Important

Third spaces serve an important reprieve from the boredom of everyday life (Oldenburg, 1999). Ray Oldenburg argues in his book *The Great Good Place* that in order to live a fulfilling and peaceful life, balance must be achieved in “three realms of experience” (Ibid). Those three realms are represented by home, work and that third space where communities come to meet and gather in a social setting free of structure and the requirement to spend money. The importance of third places is illustrated all over the world. An example of an important community third space is the Piazza Navona District in Rome, which serves as an open-air public gathering place full of cafés and markets that engage with pedestrians and allow the community to relax (Oldenburg, 1999; Warner, Talbot, Bennison, 2012).

![Figure 10: Piazza Navona in Rome, Italy](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Piazza_Navona_0016.JPG)

Policy makers in recent years have emphasized the importance of third space culture, recognizing that the existence of thriving community spaces in a town are extremely important to residents’ quality of life and happiness (Warner, Talbot, Bennison, 2012). Communities that have more outlets for relaxation tend to be full of happier and healthier residents.

While there are not strict criteria for what constitutes a third space, there are numerous examples of successful third spaces in communities across many cultures. These spaces are successful because they add balance to people’s lives. In the next section we provide a variety of examples of third spaces as well as places that might seem like a third space, but really are not, and an explanation of the difference.

B. What does a Third Space look like?

The most obvious example of a third space is a typical café. Cafés most simply serve as easily available spots between public and private spaces (Warner, Talbot, Bennison 2012). While they are private businesses, they are open to everyone and allow for social interaction at any level the customer chooses; customers may choose to socialize in groups, or sit in isolation with a coffee and newspaper. Ray Oldenburg chose to focus on French sidewalk style cafés, which are found in similar styles all over Western Europe (Oldenburg, 1999). Oldenburg was extremely impressed with the French cafés encouragement of lengthy visits and saw them as “natural habitats” for people who can spend entire days there (Ibid). What makes cafés stand out as prime examples of third spaces is their ability to create a home away from home atmosphere (Ibid). Their social comfort levels as well as the unspoken invitation to linger along food options allow for a
warm and generally relaxing atmosphere for people to get away from the stresses of their homes and workplaces (Oldenburg page 39, 1999; Warner, Talbot, Bennison, 2012).

![French Sidewalk Cafe](http://www.newurbanarchitect.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Sidewalk-Cafe-1.jpg)

*Figure 11: French Sidewalk Cafe*


The SolArt Gallery Café in Santa Ana, California illustrates how cafés embody the spirit of a community by providing a third space (Goldner, 2006). The SolArt Gallery Café is a non-profit café that holds art exhibits, live music and various events on a weekly basis to members of the predominantly Latin-American community (Ibid). During the week, it provides a public area for people to hold meetings and social gatherings (Ibid). The founder, Sali Heraldez, does not have cover charges for her gallery showings but due to the café’s rise in popularity, she frequently receives donations from
members of the community who want to see the café continue to be a successful neighborhood hub (Ibid).

Heraldez’s background as a social worker inspired her to allow this café to serve as a community gathering space for the Santa Ana neighborhood (Ibid). She has succeeded in her increasing her number patrons without any marketing efforts (Ibid). The SolArt Gallery Café shows how a simple café and public area in a neighborhood can garner rave reviews and even monetary support from patrons who unconditionally enjoy the space as a place to enjoy local art and music and get better connected to their neighborhood.

The Grove, in San Francisco, California is another example of a successful third space. The Grove is the prototypical neighborhood diner that serves as a third space for hundreds of customers every day (Della Cava, 2006). The Grove attributes part of its success to its location within San Francisco, which is the second most walkable city in the United States (Florida, 2012). Walkability is an integral factor to the success of third spaces and the lives of individuals; we discuss the importance of walkability in more detail in the following section. The Grove primarily serves its third space purpose in aiding the “Kinko’s Generation”: professional employees who have migrated from their workspaces in the traditional office or cubicle, to anywhere they can access the Internet (Della Cava, 2006). The Grove offers wooden benches and tables with ample amounts of outlets for its customers. These easy outlet access seats are popular seating spots for customers who utilize the space to work without the politics, pressures and mayhem of a standard office (Ibid).
The Grove also has a social component as the relaxing feel promotes a casual social feel among the patrons that makes small talk and friendly encounters easy (della Cava, 2006). Additionally, with the continuing technological advances of cloud computing and communication, places like The Grove will undoubtedly append the Kinko’s Generation at a fast rate as employees become less dependent on physical office space (Ibid). The Grove further proves how third spaces can be versatile in their uses and serve a purpose for anyone. Whether it is work, social or just a get-away, third spaces function in many different ways and are utilized in a plethora of different ways.

The diversity of third spaces can also be found in an example that is not built on the model of a café. Piazzas in Europe, such as the previously referenced Piazza Navona,
have been natural third spaces for Europeans for centuries. A Piazza is a city square where visitors can relax, socialize, and spend time with others in the community (Oldenburg, 1999; Dinnie, 2005). These ancient city squares normally contain many shops, restaurants, and other buildings and are filled with beautiful statues and fountains that add an aesthetic layer of beauty to an already attractive community area (Ibid). Piazzas are also normally located close to public transportation, but they are not a place for cars to drive through. Piazzas are a pedestrian dominant area where people can feel safe from the automobile traffic, noise, and other problems that come with proximity to vehicles. Piazzas are great community-building places that make excellent third spaces, despite not having the same characteristics as a simple café (Ibid).

These are just three of a myriad of examples of possible third spaces. They serve as resources for showing the diversity of third spaces and their various uses. The SolArt Gallery Café and The Grove create relaxing environments in a café setting, while piazzas in Europe are outdoor spaces, where pedestrians are encouraged to sightsee and linger. However, they all allow for escape from people’s “two-stop model” lives where boredom and isolation encourage depressive moods and lifestyles (Oldenburg, 1999). That being said, they do not cover all possibilities for third spaces. Other common third spaces can be found in bars, taverns, bowling alleys, small-town general stores, college campus centers and barbershops (Ibid).

Given these examples, one might wonder why shopping malls and other commercial spaces that are perpetually full of people do not typically serve as community third spaces. The answer lies in the heart of a third space, which allows it to be the hub for its community, its soul and unique connection to the people who visit it are the
distinguishing factor (Ibid). Places with standardized awnings and endless commercial shops serve as artificial gatherings for people. Shopping malls, are only serving people in order to make a business transaction, and the service is often put on as a “performance of friendliness”, as opposed to genuine third spaces where “conversation [is] the main activity” (Oldenburg page 26, 1999; della Cava, 2006; Simpson, 2008).

Cafés, bars, and barbershops are some of the most common and traditional third spaces that have held up through many generations; however, many of these third spaces have been lost over time through the changing layout of cities and towns that we addressed in the following section.

C. Challenges of Creating Third Spaces in the United States

The United States struggles with the concept of Third Spaces for many reasons. The biggest obstacle America faces is its layout of communities (Oldenburg 1999). Unlike many other countries, America has a large amount of suburban communities (Ibid). These suburban areas served a great purpose for America after World War II because they gave the veterans a safe and relaxing place to live while also giving American industry a market that was not dependent on being at war (Ibid). Suburbs served a very practical purpose and attracted many people because they appeared to be a blend between rural and urban lifestyles, but the biggest issue suburban residents face is the lack of interaction within many communities (Marsh, 1977; Oldenburg, 1999). Despite the desire to socialize, the lack of pedestrian friendly community gathering spaces in suburbs can often keep residents isolated. One American student wrote, “A man works in one place, sleeps in another, shops somewhere else, finds pleasure or companionship where he can, and cares about none of these places” (Oldenburg, 1999).
Good resources for Oldenburg’s explanation of the lack of Third Spaces in America were dual residents of the United States and European countries. One couple who resides in Los Angeles and Vienna state that they are much more involved in the community and are more likely to go out in Vienna because of the ease of doing so (Ibid). While in Los Angeles they feel they must put in far more effort, which makes it less likely for them to leave their homes (Ibid). This leads to another issue America has that hurts the development of Third Spaces, which is the domination of cars in society.

For the most part, cars dominate America and the use of foot traffic is limited even in major cities (Oldenburg, 1999; Goodyear, 2014). Communities that are driven by foot traffic instead of car traffic have strong correlations to more upward economic mobility, lower total cost of living, and less chances of diabetes and blood pressure problems (Goodyear, 2014). This shows that third spaces are not just outlets for people who are bored with a two-space lifestyle, but actually may serve as beneficial to quality of life and health. The United States has many suburbs that pose many obstacles for third spaces.
Unfortunately, American suburbs are not the only places that struggle with third spaces; surprisingly, many urban areas also have a tough time creating third spaces (Oldenburg, 1999). One issue that many cities have is the highway infrastructure going through them (Trancik, 1986). The United States launched a huge road-building program in the 1940’s and 1950’s to foster economic growth, but the amount of highways has increased over the years and has caused large voids in many cities (Ibid). In Los Angeles and Detroit, up to 80% of urban land is devoted to the storage and movement of automobiles (Ibid). These cities prioritize car traffic over foot traffic. The small amount of pedestrian areas makes it difficult to establish and develop third spaces because these spaces become difficult for pedestrians to reach. When pedestrians cannot reach third
spaces, large groups of people who do not own cars, such as children or those who cannot afford cars, are excluded from accessing them.

The urban planning and architectural habits of Americans have also caused problems for creating Third Spaces. From 1930 to about 1960 was the Modern Movement of architectural design, which focused on the abstract ideal of freestanding buildings (Trancik, 1986). The design of each particular building was so focused on the building itself that it ignored the areas around it. This caused huge wastes of space and created cavities in cities (Ibid). The design of individual buildings created no flow or continuity, while on the other hand the Piazza’s in Italy are the opposite. The buildings around them are designed to flow with the outdoor space that gives the spaces continuity (Ibid). As referenced earlier, The Piazza Navona District of Rome is an excellent example of Third Spaces, as the whole district relies on foot traffic and each building and structure have a meaning that coincide with the space as a whole (Trancik, 1986). Cities that plan construction and design on an urban level, rather than at the individual building level, can create more cohesive communities where third spaces are more likely to thrive.

America as a whole is continuing to struggle with development of third spaces and recover the community feel that was achieved by the small town communities of old. Museums provide a potentially thriving spot in communities that, if used correctly, could fill the void that residents in the United States are looking for and struggling to find.

**D. Museums and Third Spaces**

Museums unique abilities to preserve cultures and display the important stories of a community’s past present a unique opportunity for them to offer up strong community gathering spaces. Art museums in particular are caught up in a battle between preserving
public culture and ancient works of art but doing so in a way that engages all audiences by intriguing and inspiring them through the art they are surrounded by (Andermann, Arnold de-Simine, 2012). This is where museums have the opportunity to become community third spaces. People need relief from their first and second spaces, and art museums already have the culture everywhere one turns inside the doors. The challenging opportunity for art museums comes with attracting diverse audiences by creating true engagement with artwork, which is something that can be done by advocating for more social interactions and creating third space areas.

Museums potential for filling the void of missing third spaces may be most effective in the United States, where suburban culture and the dominance of cars has quickly eliminated third spaces (Oldenburg, 1999). As more third spaces have been lost to residents in the United States, our culture is developing a new appreciation for their importance.

The city of Worcester is a prime example of a city lacking in third space areas and availability at this point in time. In the next section we dove deeper into the opportunities that are available in Worcester for third spaces and specifically the Worcester Art Museum’s role in that process.

E. Worcester and the Role of the Worcester Art Museum

While Worcester’s population has declined from its peak in the 1950’s it still is home to approximately 180,000 people (Welcome to the City of Worcester, 2014). Located in the heart of Massachusetts, Worcester is central and accessible to the bustling metropolis of Boston, as well as Providence, Rhode Island (Ibid). All things considered, Worcester has the potential to be just as prolific as its peer cities in terms of social
attractiveness. Unfortunately the present condition does not represent that underlying potential. While the cost of living is low, and transportation ability is on the rise with the expansion of the airport and railways, the social aspect continues to lag especially in the realm of community spots and third spaces (Living & Working, 2014; Welcome to the City of Worcester, 2014). Some places in the city, such as the campuses of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Holy Cross and Assumption College are excellent at providing a third space to their campus community. Also, places like The Boynton and The Bean Counter serve as friendly neighborhood spots for a limited number of residents. But overall, Worcester residents are not well presented with options for more communal gatherings and third spaces in its downtown and other densely populated areas.

When one walks around Worcester, there are few, if any, areas that are free of automobile traffic which allow for free pedestrian roaming. Worcester’s downtown has been scarred by two failed shopping malls, which were unsuccessful largely because they split downtown in half and attempted to commercialize the city (McMorrow, 2013). Currently, the city has invested in a $585 million dollar project called CitySquare, which is intended to rebuild much of downtown, in line with the philosophy that businesses and culture will grow “organically” when people are brought there (McMorrow, 2013; Welcome to the City of Worcester, 2014). In addition to Worcester’s vision for a more traditional, bustling downtown, Governor Deval Patrick proposed a policy initiative in 2012 that required cities and municipalities to become more walkable, by making more homes for middle class families in a closer proximity to public spaces and public transportation (Benfield, 2012; Welcome to the City of Worcester, 2012). With both of those visions currently in their early years of their process, other places in the city can
seize the opportunity to advance that vision and promote more social and community areas that people have trouble finding in Worcester right now. Specifically, our group has identified the Worcester Art Museum as a golden opportunity for providing a third space.

![Worcester Art Museum Salisbury Street Entrance](image)

*Figure 14: Worcester Art Museum Salisbury Street Entrance*

In the early 1900’s, the WAM boasted over 200,000 annual visitors, but recently has not been able to reach 100,000 visitors (WAM Annual Report, 2013). With that being said, this calls for change in order to get back to its flourishing numbers of the days gone by; however since 2011, the WAM has increased its foot traffic by 70% (WAM Annual Report, 2013). Currently, in accordance with new leadership, the WAM is in a transitional phase that challenges the very fundamental idea behind the traditional art museums of the 19th and 20th centuries. With the new leadership enjoying success, the museum is caught between the old fashioned idea of a linear visitor experience: one where the visitor simply works their way through the galleries, from a start point to an
end point, and a new idea of making it a social experience with the ability to relax, take in
the art and hang out in an environment that is surrounded by 7,000 years of art (Goulding,
2000; WAM Annual Report, 2013). This transition phase is never ending, and there is no
right or wrong way to accomplish the new, social style of museum successfully, but
progress towards this alternative style museum is certainly necessary and will be a great
aid in gaining even more visitors to the WAM.

WAM’s open spaces also have the potential for success in numerous ways. Not
only do they serve as catalysts for the museum to transition into a social setting and away
from its original, linear visitor experience, but also can help to catalyze the city’s efforts
in becoming a place with numerous third space options for pedestrians.

Our research was focused on which spaces within the WAM would make the best
third spaces and what these spaces would need to include. Through background
information on third spaces, the role of museums across the world, and the context and
role of the WAM in Worcester, our project provided the staff at the WAM with a set of
recommendations as to how they could achieve a successful third space in their museum
and artistic renderings of our vision for third spaces at the WAM. Our next chapter shows
our methods of research in how we eventually decided on our specific recommendations
in chapter 5.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The Worcester Art Museum, or WAM, is in the process of developing traditional third spaces. The goal of this project is to help the WAM develop a successful blueprint for uses of its various rooms and areas as traditional third spaces. In this chapter, we explain the approach that we used to assist the WAM with development of third spaces. To achieve our project goal, we completed the following four objectives.

Objective 1: Identified characteristics of traditional third spaces.

Objective 2: Determined whether or not the WAM has the potential to create traditional third spaces.

Objective 3: Created an assessment of which areas at the WAM could become traditional third spaces.

Objective 4: Delivered recommendations to the WAM about where to create traditional third spaces, and what characteristics these spaces should have.

We discuss each objective in detail below.

I. Objective 1: Identified Characteristics of Traditional Third Spaces

The first step in our project was to explore the various characteristics of traditional third spaces across the region to determine what these spaces all have in common. Third spaces are used in a variety of contexts and the concept of third space can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Faced with this challenge, our group focused on the characteristics of traditional third spaces; from our research we identified spaces such as sidewalk cafés, plazas, public gathering places and taverns as traditional third spaces, and
we sought to understand what these types of spaces have in common (Oldenburg, 1999). Focusing on specific characteristics of traditional third spaces allowed our team to define the scope of our project around how the WAM could make use of traditional third spaces. Focusing on specific characteristics of traditional third spaces allowed our team to define the scope of our project around how the WAM could make use of traditional third spaces. We determined the characteristics of traditional third spaces by using the following five tactics: explored third spaces in Boston, MA; read The Great Good Place; interviewed the two owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar in Portsmouth, NH; held focus groups of staff members at the WAM; and conducted a survey of WAM visitors.

A. Explored Third Spaces in Boston, MA

On March 18, 2014, we visited different third traditional spaces in the city of Boston, Massachusetts. We knew that a third space could come in a variety of forms, and we believed that going to a large city with a European influence like Boston would allow us to understand more about different types of third spaces. Specifically, we visited Restoration Hardware, The Nespresso Store, The Apple Store, all of which are located in the Back Bay area of Boston. We also visited The Boston Public Gardens, located downtown, Quincy Market, located in the North End, and Whole Foods Market and the Museum of Fine Arts, both of which are located in the Fenway.

We planned this trip first by identifying Boston as a city that would be helpful to visit. We chose Boston over other cities because it has both a European influence and a large population that many other local cities do not have, and our research indicated that the European model of third space tends to be more successful than the American model
(Oldenburg, 1999). Boston was easily accessible to our team, and we felt that we could gain valuable insight from our visit.

After choosing to visit Boston, we chose the types of locations that we would visit based on the variety of third space usage possibilities. We included retail stores, marketplaces, cafés and public parks because our research indicated that these public environments could be used for third spaces (Oldenburg, 1999). We included an art museum to learn more about third spaces in the context of a museum.

Once we had narrowed down the types of locations that we would visit, we used information from our sponsor and our own personal experience to choose the specific locations. Our sponsor, Adam Rozan, recommended that we visit The Apple Store, The Museum of Fine Arts, Quincy Market and Whole Foods. One of our group members had used The Boston Public Gardens, The Nespresso Store and Restoration Hardware as a third space, so we also included these spaces in our visit to get more variety.

While in Boston, our primary research method was participant observation. We observed people using each of the spaces that we visited and noted the characteristics of each of the locations. We also experienced the locations ourselves; we had espresso at the Nespresso store, sat on the couches at Restoration Hardware, ate at Whole Foods and used computers at The Apple Store. This type of active participant observation was intended to help us gain an intimate understanding of the workings of each location.

Our research indicated that despite the different contexts of all of these traditional third spaces, we would anticipate finding they all had certain common characteristics. Understanding these commonalities enhanced our understanding of the essential components of a third space. We planned this trip because we believed that learning
about the similarities and differences together would enhance our understanding of what a traditional third space truly was and would provide insight as to how the WAM could develop traditional third spaces.

**B. Read The Great Good Place**

After actively observing third spaces in Boston, we read *The Great Good Place*, a book about traditional third spaces given to us by our project sponsor, Adam Rozan – Director of Audience Engagement at the WAM, as a way to learn more about the author’s view of third spaces. Ray Oldenburg was among the first to define the term third space, and his book, *The Great Good Place*, is cited in many academic discussions of third spaces (Oldenburg, 1999). For this reason combined with the fact that our sponsor recommended the book to us, we believed that reading this book was critical to our understanding of the notion of a traditional third space.

**C. Interviewed the Two Owners of The Portsmouth Book and Bar**

In order to gain a deeper understanding of a traditional third space, our team believed that it was important to interview someone who had successfully developed a traditional third space as this would provide deeper insight than participant observation alone. Our team chose to interview the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar in Portsmouth, New Hampshire because it was recommended to us by Adam Rozan, and because the owners of the Book and Bar had successfully created a third space with their business.

On March 9, 2014 we visited the Portsmouth Book and Bar and held a semi-structured interview with the owners. We then compared the information that we
gathered from this interview to our findings from the third spaces we visited in Boston. All questions from this interview are located in Appendix A.

D. Held Focus Groups of Staff Members at the WAM

We held four focus groups with groups of WAM employees representing all departments at the museum since Adam envisioned that it would provide a solid starting point in our search for an understanding of traditional third spaces. Between all focus groups, we were able to meet with 14 staff members. The goal of the focus groups was to discuss the concept of a traditional third space and to identify the characteristics of third spaces that WAM staff members feel are important. We included employees from the Marketing Department, the Visitor Services department, the Curatorial Department, the Facilities Department, the Finance Department, the Audience Engagement Department and the Library Department. The members of our focus groups were suggested to us by our Co-Sponsor, Laura Riach, The Manager of Visitor and Volunteer Services. Taken together, we believed that insights from all departments within the museum would provide a well-developed staff perspective of the characteristics of traditional third spaces.

After conducting the focus groups, we used the Scissor and Sort Method to analyze the data. We divided the data from the focus groups into topics and then sorted the responses from the focus groups into categories. We chose this method for data analysis because it was straightforward and we believed it was the simplest method available to us given the time constraints we faced. All topics posed to this focus group are located in Appendix B.
E. Surveyed WAM Visitors

Our team felt that when considering the characteristics of traditional third spaces, it was important to understand the perspective of WAM visitors. The purpose of the survey was to discern what characteristics of traditional third spaces were valued by WAM visitors. We believed that it was important to understand the perspective of visitors alongside WAM staff members and our participant observation in Boston. We began by conducting surveys in person at the WAM on April 11 and April 12, 2014. We conducted 50 surveys in person. We believed that face to face surveying was a great way to start because it would allow us to receive feedback in case we needed to alter the survey. We then conducted the same survey by posting a link to our survey on the Facebook page of the WAM. We used the WAM Facebook page for surveys because the WAM has approximate 10,000 “likes” on Facebook and as a result, posts from the WAM have the potential to reach a large audience. We received 72 survey responses from the Facebook post and the results were analyzed using Qualtrics. In total, we received 122 survey responses. Survey questions are located in Appendix C.

II. Objective 2: Determined Whether or Not WAM has the Potential to Create Traditional Third Spaces.

Once we understood what a traditional third space is, it was important for our team to determine whether or not the WAM had the potential to create traditional third spaces. We believed that it was important not only to understand what characteristics are found in a traditional third space, but whether or not the Worcester community would like to see the WAM create traditional third spaces.
In order to determine whether or not the WAM could create traditional third spaces, our team used the following three tactics: held focus groups of WAM employees; surveyed WAM visitors; interviewed the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar; and interviewed WAM executives.

A. **Held Focus Groups of Staff Members at the WAM**

The purpose of this portion of the focus groups was to determine whether or not staff members at the WAM believed that the museum could develop traditional third spaces. The focus groups are previously discussed in Objective 1. All questions posed to the focus groups are located in Appendix B.

B. **Surveyed WAM Visitors**

The purpose of this component of the survey was to determine whether or not visitors already have third spaces, if they would like to see the WAM offer traditional third spaces and how many hours per week they would use third spaces at the WAM. The survey is previously discussed in Objective 1. The full text of the survey is located in Appendix C.

C. **Interviewed the Two Owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar**

We included a discussion of the potential of the WAM to create traditional third spaces in our interview with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar. Based on the success of The Portsmouth Book and Bar, we felt that the owners would be able to provide valuable insight regarding whether or not the WAM could also create traditional third spaces. It was also convenient to discuss this topic in this interview so that the interview could help us to accomplish several objectives at the same time. This interview
is previously discussed in Objective 1. All questions from this interview are located in Appendix A.

D. Interviewed WAM Executives

Our team felt that it was important to interview museum executives in order to understand their vision about third spaces at the WAM. Because they hold prominent positions at the museum, many decisions about third space will be influenced by their opinions. Taking this into consideration, we felt that it was important to learn about what the future looked like for the WAM and third spaces to help us to determine whether or not the WAM could create traditional third spaces. Questions from this interview are located in Appendix D.

This data was analyzed concurrently with the data from WAM staff focus groups because the topics discussed closely overlapped. We again used the Scissor and Sort method for data analysis.

III. Objective 3: Created an assessment of which areas at the WAM could become traditional third spaces

Our first two objectives helped us to understand what traditional third spaces were and how they could be developed at the WAM, and this third objective sought to help the WAM determine which of its spaces would make the most effective third spaces. These assessments built on data gathered through Objectives 1 and 2. In order to make these assessments, our team used four tactics: surveyed visitors about third spaces; held focus groups of WAM employees; conducted an interview with the two owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar; and visited traditional third spaces in Boston, MA.
A. Surveyed WAM Visitors

Our team felt that when considering ways that the WAM could develop traditional third spaces, it was important to understand the perspective of visitors. The purpose of this section of the survey was to determine how WAM visitors perceived different areas within the museum. We believed that understanding the visitor perspective could help us to identify what areas within the WAM could become the most popular traditional third spaces. This survey was previously discussed in Objectives 1 and 2. Survey questions are located in Appendix C.

B. Held Focus Groups of Staff Members at the WAM

The purpose of this section of these focus groups was to brainstorm ideas for what areas would have the greatest potential to become traditional third spaces at the WAM. We believed that it was important to understand the perspective of WAM staff alongside visitors because staff members have an in depth understanding of the intricacies of spaces at the WAM. The focus groups are previously discussed in Objective 2. All questions posed to the focus groups are located in Appendix A.

C. Interviewed the Two Owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar

During our interview with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar we discussed the potential of different rooms within the WAM at becoming traditional third spaces. Because the owners of the Book and Bar are familiar with the WAM and its rooms and because they have had success at creating a traditional third space, we believed that they could help us to determine, along with opinions of visitors and WAM staff, which rooms within the WAM could be transformed into third spaces. It was also convenient to discuss this topic in this interview so that the interview could help us to
accomplish several objectives at the same time. This interview is previously discussed in Objectives 1 and 2. All questions from this interview are located in Appendix A.

D. Explored Third Spaces in Boston, MA

We believed that our trip to Boston, MA would be helpful in determining which spaces at the WAM could make the best third spaces. Visiting a variety of third spaces in Boston helped our team to understand not only the characteristics of third spaces, but also how the physical layout of a space affects its potential to become a traditional third space. Details of this visit to Boston, MA were previously discussed in Objective 1.

IV. Delivered Recommendations to the WAM about Where to Create Traditional Third Spaces, and what Characteristics these Spaces should Have

Once our team determined the common characteristics of traditional third spaces and assessed the potential for different spaces at the WAM to become traditional third spaces, our group made a series of recommendations to the WAM as to how to transform certain areas within the museum into traditional third spaces. Our group gained different types of data from each objective, and through the creation of these recommendations, we relied on information from each of our objectives. Our recommendations consist of the sharing the important characteristics of third spaces at the WAM and design plans for those spaces. Design plans were created in the architectural design computer program Revit. First floor-plans of the existing spaces were gathered and then the team made changes in accordance with the desired characteristics of traditional third spaces.
Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter we discuss four broad groups of findings: the characteristics of traditional third spaces; the potential for the Worcester Art Museum, or WAM, to create traditional third spaces; an assessment of the potential for various rooms within the WAM to serve as traditional third spaces; and the effects of the WAMs period of transition on museum employees. We also discuss the time limitations of our research.

Findings were synthesized through the collection of data from participant observation, background research, visitor surveys, WAM staff interviews and focus groups, and interviews with the two owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar. Each of these data collection tactics are explained in the Methodology Chapter and detailed information about the content of surveys, interviews and focus group topics can be found in the Appendices. We conducted focus groups with a total of 14 WAM staff members and we interviewed two museum executives. Survey data consists of 50 responses collected in person and 72 responses collected electronically, for a total of 122 responses. Figure 15 shows the breakdown of types of visitors who participated in the survey.
I. Characteristics of Traditional Third Spaces

Based on data collected from surveys, *The Great Good Place*, WAM staff focus groups, visiting third spaces in Boston, MA and interviews with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar, our team has made two determinations about characteristics of traditional third space: **the most important everyday components of a traditional third space are free admission, Wi-Fi and access to food and drink; and events are important to the success of traditional third spaces.**

A. Finding 1: Free Admission, Wi-Fi and Access to Food and Drink Are Important Characteristics of Traditional Third Spaces

In *The Great Good Place* Ray Oldenburg introduces a variety of traditional third spaces, ranging from sidewalk cafés to neighborhood taverns to public markets, but common among almost all of these spaces are the ability to enter and exit free of charge, the availability of Wi-Fi and the ability to eat and drink. Other characteristics such as alcohol service, quiet space and long hours are important to some third spaces, but these characteristics are not found in all third spaces (Oldenburg 1999). The importance of free
admission, Wi-Fi and access to food and drink were reinforced from our visit to Boston, MA third spaces, our survey data, interviews with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar and focus groups with WAM staff members. It is also important to note that our trip to Boston, MA helped us to understand the importance of comfortable seating to the success of traditional third spaces.

While our team was in Boston, MA, we visited The Nespresso Store, The Apple Store, The Boston Public Gardens, Restoration Hardware, Quincy Market and Whole Foods Market. Each of these traditional third spaces offered free admission, Wi-Fi and the ability to eat and drink. Out of these spaces, only Quincy Market has alcohol service and only the Public Gardens have long hours; all other third spaces we visited except for the Apple Store open early, and all except for the Public Gardens close before 11 P.M. Of all of these third spaces, during our visit the only quiet space was the Public Gardens, but this may be because the weather was quite cold during our visit.

A topic not covered by our survey or interviews was a discussion of the characteristic of comfortable seating. Our team considered asking respondents about comfortable seating, but struggled to define comfort in a universal way. Despite the fact that this information was not asked, we did observe that all third spaces that we visited in Boston, with the exception of the Apple Store, offer ample seating for visitors. Figure 7 shows a photo that we took in Restoration Hardware in Boston, MA. This location is full of comfortable furniture. Despite the fact that this was only observed through participant observation, we believe that comfortable seating is important to traditional third spaces.
One of the questions on our survey asked respondents to rank their preferences for characteristics of third spaces on a scale of 1: not interested to 5: completely interested; the results from the 122 respondents indicated that free admission, Wi-Fi and access to food and drink were the most important characteristics of traditional third spaces to the group of respondents. From the survey group, 53 of 122 respondents rated Wi-Fi with the top rating of 5 and a similar 52 gave a rating of 5 to free admission. Figure 17 shows the weighted average of the ratings of several third space characteristics. While the survey was exploratory in nature and not intended to represent a statistically significant quantitative sample, the results indicate that late night hours, quiet space, alcohol service and early morning hours were less valued by this group than free admission, Wi-Fi and access to food and drink.
During our interview with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar, we asked what they believed to be important third space characteristics. They told us that third spaces must not use price to keep people out because the most successful third spaces attract a wide variety of customers. Additionally, they emphasized their belief that food helps to create a comfortable environment for patrons. While neither of the owners mentioned Wi-Fi as critical, the Portsmouth Book and Bar offers Wi-Fi to customers.

Our focus groups with 14 WAM staff members revealed that all 14 believed that Wi-Fi was critical to third spaces, 10 felt that free admission was important and 13 believed that access to food and drink was important. Nine staff members said that they valued a quiet space, 6 believed that alcohol service was important and ten believed that late hours were important, but only on weekends.

Taken together all of our data supports the idea that free admission, Wi-Fi and access to food and drink are the most important characteristics of a traditional third space; we believe that these characteristics facilitate the creation of a third space environment by
encouraging visitors to relax and linger. Alcohol service, quiet spaces and flexible hours seem to be a nice touch, but are not necessary to the creation of a traditional third space.

B. Finding 2: Events Are Important to Third spaces

Our research indicated that while people are attracted to the everyday environment of third spaces, they also value events that third spaces can host (Oldenburg 1999). From our interview with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar, data from our survey and focus group data from WAM staff members, we learned that each of these groups feels that events are important to the success of third spaces. Furthermore, all of these data points indicated that the strongest events combine live music, food and alcohol, but that other events can help draw people to third spaces as well.

In our interview, the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar described how they use events to draw new customer groups to their business. They shared that they tend to gravitate towards events that feature local bands because it is often cheap to pay these bands and since followers of the bands will come to the events when they may not otherwise come to the Book and Bar. They also told us that music cannot exist alone and that their most successful events combine music with food and alcohol. However, the owners also emphasized that hosting events other than live music is important because it can help to target diverse groups of people. For example, the Book and Bar held a William Shatner Poetry Slam, which attracted visitors with this niche interest and many whose first experience with the Book and Bar was at that event are now regular patrons. This indicated to our group that while music, food and alcohol may draw the largest crowds, diverse events may help to draw in niche visitor groups.
One question from our survey of WAM visitors asked respondents to describe a type of event that they would be interested in attending in a third space. This question did not prompt respondents with particular answers, we allowed for open form answers to try and obtain a variety of perspectives. Of the 122 people surveyed, 99 answered this question. Fifty five respondents (55%) were interested in music or food and alcohol, while 45 (45%) were interested in other types of events. Figure 18 shows the breakdown of responses by type. We created the response category of “Other” because the responses that were not about food, alcohol and music were diverse and challenging to group together. This survey generated exploratory results, but from this data we were able to infer that the surveyed group has a strong preference for live music, food and alcohol, but that they are also interested in other types of events.

![WAM Visitor Survey Event Interest](image)

*Figure 18: WAM Visitor Survey Event Interest*

Our focus group with 14 WAM staff members revealed that all 14 were interested in events known as “Third Thursdays,” that used to be a regular event hosted by the museum. Third Thursdays were events held on the third Thursday of each month that
would bring local bands to the WAM. The WAM would stay open late and visitors who came for the Third Thursday event could also participate in guided tours of the museum. There was a time that these events also featured wine tastings and free appetizers, but due to budget restrictions, the food and wine was eventually cut from the events. One staff member remarked that “Third Thursdays used to draw huge crowds, sometimes hundreds of people, but as soon as we took away the food and wine, crowds dwindled. The museum still stays open late on Third Thursdays, but it is just a regular museum and there are no longer events to draw crowds.” WAM staff members were also all open to other types of events, but all seemed most enthusiastic about Third Thursdays.

The information that we gathered from each group revealed that events are important to the appeal of traditional third spaces. Survey data and the interview with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar revealed that people crave live music in combination with food and alcohol. WAM staff members revealed that the museum had the same philosophy surrounding events; Third Thursdays used to include food, alcohol and music together. Survey data and the interview with the owners of the Book and Bar also suggested that events other than live music can help to contribute to the success of traditional third spaces. Based on all of this information, we believe that events can help to bolster the success of traditional third spaces by drawing in large crowds, including diverse audiences who may not otherwise visit the space.

II. The WAM Could Be a Traditional Third Space

After identifying the important characteristics of traditional third spaces, our group learned that the majority of survey respondents, WAM staff members and the
owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar all believe that the WAM could serve as a traditional third space. **We concluded that the WAM could make a great traditional third space.**

The majority of the surveyed group currently have no third space, but would like to see the WAM become a third space. Out of 110 respondents who answered the question “Do you have a third space?” 70 said “no,” this is depicted in Figure 19. However, seventy three percent of 105 respondents would spend between 1 – 10 hours per week in a third space (Figure 20); this indicated to our team that even though more than half of our survey group has no third space, they would like to use a third space if one existed for them to go to.

![Figure 19: Do You Have a Third Space?](image)

**Figure 19: Do You Have a Third Space?**

41
How Many Hours Per Week Would You Use a Third Space?

![Bar Chart]

Figure 20: How Many Hours Per Week Would You Use a Third Space?

Once we understood that the majority of our survey group has no third space, but would make use of one, we believed it was important to ask whether or not they believed that the WAM could become their third space. Ninety five respondents, 89% of those who answered the question, responded “Yes” when asked if the WAM could be their third space. This result is depicted in Figure 21. While it is again important to note that the survey was qualitative in nature and not generalizable to a larger audience, this particular survey group showed an overwhelming favorable view as the WAM as a potential third space.
Could the WAM Be a Third Space?

Out of the 14 WAM staff members in our focus groups, 13 believed that the WAM has the potential to become a traditional third space. Both of the museum executives that we interviewed expressed similar feelings. While not included in our focus groups, our two sponsors, Adam Rozan and Laura Riach, also believe that the WAM could serve as a traditional third space. It appeared to our group that most WAM staff members were enthusiastic about the prospect of the WAM becoming a traditional third space.

Based on their experience with the WAM, the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar also expressed their belief that the WAM could become a traditional third space. They explained to our group that the WAM is uniquely positioned to become a third space because the museum has the ability to offer world-class artwork, a great collection of books to support the art, and the potential to use food and events as a way of drawing crowds. They also noted that Worcester, MA does not have many well-known third spaces, and this could also benefit the WAM because they would not have much competition.
Taken together, all of this data seemed to reinforce the idea that the WAM could make a great traditional third space for the Worcester area community. The support for the WAM as a third space was almost universal. By this point, our team understood what characteristics help make a traditional third space successful and had discovered that there is a lot of support for the WAM to create traditional third spaces. Next, we quantified the ability of different spaces within the WAM to become traditional third spaces.

III. The Courtyard, Lancaster Lobby and The Café Would Make the Best Traditional Third Spaces at the WAM

Based on data that we collected from surveys, WAM staff focus groups, interviews with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar and previous findings about the characteristics of traditional third spaces our team found that the Courtyard, Lancaster Lobby and the Café would make the best traditional third spaces at the WAM. We also found that The Renaissance Court, Salisbury Hall and museum galleries would not make good traditional third spaces because they do not contain the essential characteristics that our team identified, but these spaces have the potential to create other types of third space experiences that were outside the scope of this project. We discuss each of these six potential third spaces in depth in the next sections.

One of the questions from our survey asked “Rate the possibility of each space at the WAM at becoming a third space.” In order to assist respondents with answering this question, we brought the respondents to each space during the 50 in person surveys and we included photos of each space for the 72 online surveys. The photos used in each
space are included in the following sections that describe each space in more depth. Respondents were able to choose ratings between 1 and 5. 1 represented “no possibility of becoming a third space;” 2 represented “little possibility of becoming a third space;” 3 represented “possibility of becoming a third space” 4 represented “very possible for this space to become a third space;” and 5 represented “extremely possible for this space to become a third space.” We intended for survey respondents to rate their own personal feelings towards the possibility of each space at becoming a traditional third space. Ratings were then converted into a weighted average shown in Figure 22. We received 122 responses to this question. It is important to note in the analysis of survey responses in each of the following sections that surveys were exploratory in nature.

![Weighted Average Rating of Each WAM Space Based on 122 Responses](image)

*Figure 22: Weighted Average Rating of Each WAM Space*
1. **Courtyard**

*Figure 23: WAM Courtyard*

Based on our findings about the characteristics of a traditional third space, data collected from our surveys, information from WAM staff focus groups and interviews with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar, **we found that the Courtyard has strong potential to become a traditional third space at the WAM.**

The Courtyard at the WAM meets all of the characteristics that we found to be important to the success of a traditional third space. It offers the three most important characteristics: free admission, Wi-Fi and the ability to eat and drink, but it also has the characteristics of flexible hours, comfortable seating and it can also be a quiet space. Because it is the largest space at the WAM, it also has the greatest potential to host large live music events. The courtyard is a public space at the WAM, which means that it is open to everyone at all hours of the day, and it does not charge an entry fee; visitors to the WAM must pay to enter the galleries, but other spaces are free. The Courtyard has
Wi-Fi and tables and chairs where visitors can sit. While the Courtyard does not currently serve food, there are no restrictions to eating and drinking in the space. We believe that these characteristics of the Courtyard help to explain why it received popular ratings from our surveys, WAM staff focus groups and from the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar.

In our survey, the Courtyard received a weighted average rating of 4.2, the highest of any space in our survey. Eighty one percent of respondents rated the Courtyard as either a 4 or a 5 in the survey. The full breakdown of survey responses is shown below in Figure 24.

![Courtyard Rating](image)

**Figure 24: WAM Courtyard Rating**

WAM staff also revealed that they would like to see the Courtyard become a traditional third space. Out of 14 staff members who participated in the focus groups, 11 believed that the Courtyard could make a good traditional third space. Many of these staff
members emphasized that the Courtyard would make a good third space because it is free to enter. This overlapped with our findings about free admission as an important characteristic of a traditional third space.

Our interview with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar revealed that they also were interested in seeing the WAM develop the Courtyard into a potential third space. They told us that they feel that the Courtyard has the most potential out of any space because of its large size and natural beauty. They noted that the Courtyard is blocked from the public by a set of dumpsters, and suggested that the WAM open up the wall and remove the dumpsters to create a space that is more visible to the public. They also suggested that the Courtyard should build an outdoor bar and host routine events.

Taken together, all of this data seemed to our group to support the idea that the Courtyard could make an excellent third space. We believe that the Courtyard has great potential to become a third space because it is free to enter, offers the ability to eat and drink, has Wi-Fi, comfortable seating and has the ability to host events due to its large outdoor location.
2. Lancaster Lobby

![Image of Lancaster Lobby]

*Figure 25: Lancaster Lobby*

Based on our findings about the characteristics of a traditional third space, data collected from our surveys, information from WAM staff focus groups and interviews with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar, **we found that Lancaster Lobby has strong potential to become a traditional third space at the WAM.**

Lancaster Lobby at the WAM meets most of the characteristics that we found to be important to the success of a traditional third space. It offers the three most important characteristics: free admission, Wi-Fi and the ability to eat and drink. Additionally it has the characteristics of flexible hours and comfortable seating. One negative trait of Lancaster Lobby is that WAM staff revealed that it has poor acoustics, and likely would not be a great place for hosting events. Like the Courtyard, Lancaster Lobby is a public space that does not charge an entry fee. Lancaster Lobby has Wi-Fi and tables and chairs where visitors can sit, though they are not necessarily comfortable. Lancaster Lobby also
has a small bar known as the Sip Cart, which serves lunch and coffee during the day. We believe that these characteristics of Lancaster Lobby help to explain why it received popular ratings from our surveys, WAM staff focus groups and from the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar.

In our survey, Lancaster Lobby received the second highest weighted average rating of any space at the WAM. Fifty eight percent of respondents rated the space a 4 or above on the survey, likely because of the characteristics of the space. All ratings for Lancaster Lobby are displayed in Figure 26.

![Lancaster Lobby Rating](image)

*Figure 26: Lancaster Lobby Rating*

WAM staff revealed during focus groups that they were enthusiastic about the potential for Lancaster Lobby to be a third space, but less so than for the Courtyard. Ten staff members felt that the lobby could be a great third space, two staff members were neutral and two expressed concerns. Members of the Education Department at the WAM
were particularly worried about turning Lancaster Lobby into a third space because it is currently the place where group museum tours begin; these employees worried that due to the confluence of tour groups, the lobby may not be the greatest third space. Staff members also revealed that the seating in Lancaster Lobby is not currently suited for a third space. “We bought the chairs with no backs because they were uncomfortable, so that people would not linger for long periods of time.” Because third spaces encourage lingering, the backless chairs are an obstacle for the lobby.

Our interview with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar revealed that Lancaster Lobby has the potential to become a third space, but that it would need to undergo major changes. They feel that the space should serve food and be visible from the street to help draw in pedestrians. Right now there is a concrete wall facing the street, so it is difficult for a passerby to notice the existence of a museum entrance. They suggested that the concrete wall be replaced with a welcoming glass wall. Additionally, they expressed that the space can be cold in the winter due to sliding doors that open and suggested to replace these doors with revolving doors to keep the space a more comfortable temperature during the cold weather.
3. Museum Café

Based on our findings about the characteristics of a traditional third space, data collected from our surveys, information from WAM staff focus groups and interviews with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar, **we found that the Café has potential to become a traditional third space at the WAM.**

The Café at the WAM meets many of the characteristics that we found to be important to the success of a traditional third space. It offers the three most important characteristics: free admission, Wi-Fi and the ability to eat and drink. Additionally it has the characteristics of flexible hours and comfortable seating. Indoor corporate events are frequently hosted in the Café. The café is a public space that does not charge an entry fee. The Café has Wi-Fi and tables and chairs where visitors can sit and relax. The café was rated as a popular third space in survey results and by the owners of the Portsmouth Book
and Bar, but due to conflicts of interest with how the space should be used at the WAM, it was less popular with WAM staff members.

The WAM café was the third highest rated potential third space in our survey with a rating of 3.74. Sixty three percent of respondents rated the space as a 4 or above. One possible reason for the high ratings of the café among survey respondents is that it actively serves food and drink, while spaces such as the Courtyard and Lancaster Lobby only serve food and drinks occasionally; it could be easier for visitors to imagine eating in the Café than in Lancaster Lobby. The full results of the Café rating are located in Figure 28.

![Museum Café Rating](image)

Figure 28: WAM Café Rating

The owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar expressed interest in using the Café as a third space, but they noted that there is a lot of waste currently associated with the space. The Café currently operates between 11:30 A.M. – 2:00 P.M. Wednesday –
Saturday; the rest of the time the Café is empty. The Book and Bar owners expressed that the “Café is not a Café, it is really a restaurant, but it would be more successful if we were really a Café.” The Café serves food using table service and does not, in the options of the owners of Book and Bar, allow customers to sit and relax. Additionally, they shared with us that the Café is in a great location because it is located right next to the galleries. They believe that if people are sitting in the Café and see the galleries, they may be likely to pay to enter. One suggestion they shared was that one way to draw people into the gallery would be to incorporate artwork into the Café. They believe that the space has potential, but that it should be turned into a traditional café.

Of the 14 staff members included in our focus groups, 6 expressed hesitancy to change the current format of the Café. They explained to us that different groups within the WAM would like to use the Café for a variety of purposes. Corporate events make use of the Café during some evening hours, the Café operates as a restaurant during lunch time and due to the limited space available for staff meetings, many meetings are held within the Café. It seems to be one of the only large multi-purpose spaces within the museum and converting the space into a single use space would negatively affect certain staff member groups.

Based on all of this data we believe that the Café could become a third space at the WAM, but it does not have quite as much potential as the Courtyard or Lancaster Lobby. It appears that visitors would be pleased to see the Café as a third space and offers many important traditional third space characteristics.
4. Renaissance Court

![Image of Renaissance Court](image)

*Figure 29: WAM Renaissance Court*

Based on the characteristics that we identified of traditional third spaces, data from our focus groups with WAM staff members, interviews with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar, and survey data, we found that the Renaissance Court might have the potential to be a third space, but does not have the potential to become a traditional third space as defined by the scope of this project.

While the Renaissance Court has many wonderful features and impressive architectural design, it does not offer some of the characteristics that our team identified as essential to the creation of a traditional third space. Our team initially found that the most important characteristics of a traditional third space are free admission, Wi-Fi and access to food and drink; of those characteristics, the Renaissance Court only offers Wi-Fi. In order to enter the Renaissance Court, visitors must pay admission at one of the two entrances to the WAM; unlike the Courtyard, Lancaster Lobby or Café, the Renaissance Court is located within the paid portion of the museum.
The three WAM curators in our focus groups all expressed that the Renaissance Court cannot allow routine access to food and drink and cannot offer hours that extend beyond the hours of the rest of the museum. WAM curators told us that the main reason that the Renaissance Court cannot allow food and drink is due to the fact that the entire room is a work of art. “The material used to build the Renaissance Court are extremely expensive and could easily be damaged by spilled food or drinks; turning the Court into a space where people could always have food and drink would pose a huge risk for the museum.” Five WAM staff members also remarked that even if the Renaissance Court could allow food and drink, extra security staff would be needed to make sure people did not leave the room and enter another gallery; this would be particularly challenging in the Renaissance Court because there are 8 points of entry and exit from the room. One staff member remarked “if we needed to hire all of those extra guards it would be expensive and it would give visitors mixed messages like we want you to sit here and eat but we will have many guards watching you. That’s not going to make anyone feel comfortable.” The need for security staff in the space also ties the hours of the Renaissance Court to those of the rest of the museum: 10:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.

The final staff concern was relating to the fact that the Renaissance Court could be a great space for events, except for the mosaic in the center of the room. As shown in Figure 20, there is a large floor mosaic in the center of the room that cuts the room into two small sections. According to two staff members, during events the mosaic takes up valuable floor space. One WAM staff member expressed “we [the WAM] want to cover up the mosaic, but it is prohibitively expensive. We want people to be able to walk on it the way that they would have in ancient times,
but it may cost several million dollars to cover it appropriately with protective glass.”

Based on the current layout of the room and the mosaic, it would be challenging to routinely host events here.

The owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar expressed similar skeptical feelings towards using the Renaissance Court as a traditional third space. They expressed that the space is currently the most beautiful within the WAM and would make sense as a great third space, but that right now that goal is unrealistic because it is not free to enter and because the mosaic disrupts the room. The owners told us that if the space could offer free entry, serve food and cover the mosaic, it could be “the best third space around.” However, given the previously stated concerns of the WAM staff members, the changes needed to make the Renaissance Court into a traditional third space seem unrealistic for the WAM.

Finally, 122 survey respondents rated the Renaissance Court as an average of 3.13 out of 5. These results may reflect the fact that the Renaissance Court, unlike the Café or Lancaster Lobby, does not currently have many of the important characteristics of a traditional third space such as free entry or access to food. Perhaps it was challenging for survey respondents to imagine the room as a café style eatery because that image does not fit with the current usage of the room. If the Renaissance Court did serve food and visitors could enter for free, perhaps the room would have received higher ratings. However, our group felt that it was important to understand the gap between what the Renaissance Court could be and what it actually is today. Figure 30 shows the full set of ratings for the Renaissance Court.
Our group concluded that the Renaissance Court has the potential to be, in theory, the greatest third space within the WAM; however, we also believe that there are serious obstacles, such as the inability to offer free admission, the inability to cover the mosaic and the lack of access to food, as factors that prohibit the Renaissance Court from reaching its full potential. The Renaissance Court seems to have the potential to achieve great success as a traditional third space, but the costs associated with altering the space make such a transformation appear unrealistic.

*Figure 30: WAM Renaissance Court Rating*
5. Salisbury Hall

Figure 31: WAM Salisbury Hall

Based on the characteristics of a traditional third space that we identified, data collected from interviews with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar, WAM focus groups and survey data, we found that Salisbury Hall does not have the potential to become a traditional third space.

Similar to the Renaissance Court, our group found that Salisbury Hall does not meet the criteria that are essential to the creation of traditional third spaces. Because Salisbury Hall is within the paid portion of the museum, it cannot offer free admission, which we identified as the most important characteristic of a traditional third space. WAM curators again expressed concerns with allowing food and drink into this space due to the cost of the floor tiles and presence of artwork.
The owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar were unfamiliar with the current setup of Salisbury Hall; the hall has recently undergone a transition and neither of the two have seen the hall in its current form, which is important to note when considering the strength of their opinions about the space. However, both of the owners expressed two main concerns about Salisbury Hall, other than the fact that visitors cannot eat here and have to pay to enter. They believe it to be too small and too loud. Despite the fact that the owners of Book and Bar have not been into Salisbury Hall since it has been updated, the room is still the same size as it was before the renovation and likely has the same acoustic properties.

Out of the 14 WAM staff members included in focus groups, 12 believed that Salisbury Hall would not make a good third space and 2 were neutral about the space. For the same reasons as they were resistant to the idea of converting the Renaissance Court into a third space, the curators that we spoke with expressed the most resistance to Salisbury Hall. Additionally, 10 staff members expressed that the space is too small to be a third space. Seven WAM staff expressed that the wall color is too dark and 8 noted that the music that plays is disruptive.

“We can’t fit more than 15 people here at once. Star Wars music plays loudly and startles me every few minutes. Not to mention that it is very dark in here and everyone can hear everything that you are saying. Does this sound like a fun space to hang out? No,” (WAM staff member).

The small size of Salisbury Hall would make it challenging to host events here and staff members described the space as a transition space or hallway.

Survey data also provided little support for the usage of Salisbury Hall as a potential traditional third space. Forty five percent of respondents rated the space as a 2
or less and overall the space was the second lowest rated among survey respondents. The full set of survey responses is shown in Figure 32.

![Salisbury Hall Rating](image)

**Figure 32: WAM Salisbury Hall Rating**

Our team concluded that Salisbury Hall does not have the potential to become a traditional third space at the WAM. The space has many challenges including the inability to eat and drink, the inability to offer free entry as well as poor colors and a small size. Because the WAM has better options and cannot manipulate the size of Salisbury Hall, we believe it would not make a successful traditional third space.
6. **Galleries**

![WAM Gallery](image)

*Figure 33: WAM Gallery*

Based on the characteristics of a traditional third space that we identified, data collected from interviews with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar, WAM focus groups and survey data, **we found that WAM galleries do not have the potential to become a traditional third space.**

While there are many diverse galleries at the WAM, none of them meet the essential characteristics of traditional third spaces. For the same reasons as the Renaissance Court and Salisbury Hall, food and drink are not allowed in the galleries and visitors must pay to enter. Without these characteristics, it appears that galleries would not make successful traditional third spaces.

The owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar are in favor of making changes in the galleries to make them more interactive and fun for visitors, but they do not believe that galleries could be traditional third spaces. They believe that the galleries could help
create a nice experience for visitors, but that they “should not be used to people who just want to hang out because nobody wants to pay $14 to hang out; they will just go to Starbucks.”

All 14 staff members in focus groups were against the idea of using a gallery as a third space. One staff member told us that the only way to make a gallery into a third space would be to remove the artwork and redo the space, but that she was unwilling to see this occur because gallery space at the WAM had previously been repurposed into other uses. One staff member remarked “This is an art museum, we cannot put art in the galleries on the backburner.”

Survey data also revealed that visitors were not interested in using the galleries as a traditional third space. The galleries received an average rating of 2.58, the lowest of any space at the WAM. Full survey results are located in Figure 34.

Figure 34: WAM Gallery Rating
Galleries have many of the same challenges of the Renaissance Court and Salisbury Hall. The spaces cannot offer free admission, food and drink, alcohol service or flexible hours, but can offer Wi-Fi. The galleries also tend to be too small to host most types of events and seem to be universally unpopular as potential traditional third spaces.

IV. Findings About WAM Staff

As the inevitable by-product of any good research endeavor, we have some findings unrelated to the original project scope. We learned that all WAM staff members have an inspiring sense of dedication to the museum. In this section we describe some of these opportunities that are currently available to the WAM.

A. Strong Commitment to WAM Third Spaces

We found that all employees seem to have a very strong commitment to the future of the WAM and to creating third spaces for the community within the museum. From interviews and focus groups with staff members, it became clear to our team that they all deeply valued their work at the museum. All employees hoped to be able to move forward with creating third spaces at the museum and they all hoped to find spaces that could benefit all groups of employees and visitors.

Many employees provided our group with their specific ideas as to how to create third spaces at the WAM. One employee suggested having volunteers circulate the museum with iPads and interact with visitors to enhance their experience. Another suggested that the Courtyard could be decorated for the holiday season with trees and lights and that visitors could walk around outside and drink hot chocolate. Other
employees were so excited about the idea of hosting events at the WAM that they suggested they would like to plan events themselves by coordinating with local bands. While employees presented a variety of ideas, it was clear to our team that everyone felt a strong desire to contribute to the overall success of the WAM.

V. Time Limitations

In addition to the challenges that the museum faces, the project team also faced time limitations. This project spanned 7 weeks of planning and 7 weeks of actively working towards the completion of our project goals. During the first 7 weeks, our project was focused on creating a marketing plan for a sustainable café at the WAM and we conducted research surrounding this topic. During the second 7 week phase of our project, the focus shifted to creating third spaces at the WAM and so our team was limited by the fact that we had accomplish both our preparation and research for the project and the project itself in a seven week time-frame.
Chapter 5: Recommendations

In this chapter we discuss the specific recommendations that we believe can help the Worcester Art Museum, or WAM, create successful traditional third spaces. We open with a discussion about traditional third space characteristics that the WAM should offer and then discuss how the museum can incorporate events into its spaces. Next we show and explain our design plans for the Courtyard, Lancaster Lobby and Museum Café. We then provide the WAM with a recommendation to create a common vision for museum staff. We conclude this chapter with a discussion of how to further the goals of third space at the WAM through future research.

I. Third Space Characteristics

We recommend that any traditional third space at the WAM should offer free admission, Wi-Fi and access to food and drink. From our survey data, interviews with the owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar, focus groups with WAM staff members and background research, we learned that these characteristics are important to the success of traditional third spaces. Because the WAM wants to use some of its spaces as traditional third spaces, we believe that it is important for the museum to offer spaces that have all three of these characteristics. Some spaces within the WAM offer some of these characteristics, but the spaces that were most popular with visitors and staff members: the Courtyard, the Café and Lancaster Lobby, offer all three of these important characteristics. Based on information that we discussed in our Findings Chapter, we believe that the reason that the Courtyard, the Café and Lancaster Lobby can be envisioned as third spaces are because these spaces offer these characteristics.
II. Third Space Events

Our findings about events in third spaces support the need for the WAM to host events in their traditional third spaces. Museum staff, John from the Portsmouth Book and Bar and survey data all indicated that live music and alcohol tastings are the most important events to consider. **We recommend that the WAM pursue two different categories of events: Third Thursdays and Other Events.**

A. Third Thursdays

From our survey, interview and focus group data, we learned that events are important to successful third spaces and the most popular types of events include live music, alcohol and food. We also learned from WAM staff that the museum used to hold monthly events known as Third Thursdays where the museum stayed open late and offered types of live music, food and alcohol. These events were popular with WAM staff in our focus groups and we learned that they used to draw large crowds to the museum. We believe that the reason Third Thursdays were popular was due to the presence of food, alcohol and live music; Third Thursdays continue at the WAM, but without food, music or alcohol and they have declined in popularity. **Due to the fact that Third Thursdays used to be successful events and because they featured live music, alcohol and food, which we found to be the most popular event components, we recommend that the WAM brings food, live music and alcohol back to Third Thursdays.**

Based on our findings about which areas at the WAM would be the best to host events, **we recommend that Third Thursdays be held in the Courtyard during nice weather and in the Café during inclement weather.** We found that the Courtyard and Café are the largest spaces that have the potential to become traditional third spaces at the
WAM. Additionally, we found events to be critical to the success of traditional third spaces. In order to assist with the creation of traditional third spaces at the WAM, we believe that should be held in these two popular spaces. We believe that the Courtyard has the most potential to become a traditional third space and it is also the larger of the two spaces, so when possible, we believe that events should be held here. When weather does not permit outdoor events, we believe that the Café could provide a good space for Third Thursdays.

B. Other Events

Based on our findings about the importance of events to traditional third spaces, we understand that live music and alcohol tasting are not the only events that are important to successful third spaces. We learned that a wide variety of events can bring people to third spaces. We recommend that the WAM create “Event Boxes” at each entrance where visitors and staff members can offer suggestions as to what events the WAM should host. We recommend that once a month the WAM hosts the most popular and feasible event by counting the votes in the “Event Boxes.” We recommend that these events be held halfway between Third Thursday events during the first week of every month. As with Third Thursdays, we recommend that the Courtyard be used for these events during nice weather and the Café be used during inclement weather.

III. Design Plans for the Courtyard, Lancaster Lobby and Café

Our team learned about visitor and WAM staff perceptions of a variety of third spaces through Findings 10 – 16. In this section we first discuss recommendations for those spaces which were rated as unpopular: Salisbury Hall, The Renaissance Court and
Galleries, and then we discuss recommendations and design proposals for popular spaces: the Café, Lancaster Lobby and the Courtyard.

A. Courtyard

![Floorplan of Courtyard](image.png)

*Figure 35: Courtyard Floorplan*

The courtyard design is the biggest overhaul of the three spaces. It addresses concerns of the visitors and employees, while also implementing the characteristics of traditional third spaces.

The courtyard currently does not have a food and beverage area outside; the new design fixes that by building a small bar café similar to the one in the lobby. The bar area has 8 bar stools, but there is also plenty of room to eat and drink at the 5 patio tables.
situated next to the reflecting pond. The courtyard will remain free in the new design, and will be retrofitted with strong Wi-Fi throughout.

The courtyard has many characteristics of a traditional third space, specifically an Italian Piazza. The courtyard has four entrances to allow for high pedestrian traffic, the entrances are from the parking lot, the café, the office area of the education wing, and the classroom area of the education wing. The courtyard also resembles a Piazza with the centered statue fountain, and the reflecting pool in the corner. The courtyard design caters to different needs of a third space, along with the bar and patio tables for food and drink, the courtyard also has two large seating areas. In one corner of the courtyard there is a large fire pit with many seats for people when the weather is cold. The opposite corner of the courtyard has a set of day beds under a pergola for visitors to relax in the shade.

The biggest concern from the visitors and employees is that the courtyard lacks shade and covered areas. The new design offers many areas of shade for visitors. The patio tables near the reflecting pool all have a large umbrella, the bar area has a full roof, and the seating area with the day beds is covered by a pergola. This offers an ample amount of shaded areas for visitors to relax and escape the sun or precipitation.
Figure 36: Courtyard View 1 Before

Figure 37: Courtyard View 1 After
Figure 38: Courtyard View 2 Before

Figure 39: Courtyard View 2 After
Figure 40: Courtyard View 3 Before

Figure 41: Courtyard View 3 After
Figure 44: Courtyard View 5 Before

Figure 45: Courtyard View 5 After

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Figure 46: Courtyard View 6 Before

Figure 47: Courtyard View 6 After
The new design for the Worcester Art Museum’s lobby is aimed at creating a traditional third space. The design consists of many traditional third space characteristics while also addressing concerns that people had with the Lobby becoming a traditional third space.

The lobby already has food and drink, free admission, and Wi-Fi yet it still is not an effective third space. The food and drink options are currently very limited at the sip cart; the menu consists of coffee, bottled beverages, soup, and assorted snacks. The new design for the lobby consists of a full café bar similar to one at the Portsmouth Book and
Bar. This bar will serve assorted coffee, smoothies, beer, wine, pastries, fresh juices, and assorted lunch entrees. The Lobby will remain free in this new design while also increasing the Wi-Fi signal to better suit the expected increase in population.

![Figure 49: Portsmouth Book and Bar](image)

The new lobby has room for many people to enjoy the space in different ways. The lobby will now have an all glass entrance while also having a glass curtain wall going from the entrance to the start of the bar. The bar area has four tables that seat four people each, this is useful for families that want to sit down for lunch or for the person coming in to get some work done. The bar itself has room for 11 people to relax and order items without having to move to get them since the bar will not offer table service. There are also 8 more stools that overlook the courtyard where people can get the same style of seating but in a calmer environment. Next to these stools the lobby will contain a large couch along with two reading chairs for guests to relax, read, and appreciate the
space. This area is bordered by a bookshelf that helps funnel guests into the museum hallway while also keeping a large collection of books, magazines, and newspapers.

Some visitors and employees had concerns about the lobby having major temperature changes due to the big sliding doors and the space being too loud when large tour groups came in. The concern with the temperature changes was fixed by getting rid of the automatic sliding doors and installing a revolving door which helps keep the unwanted air out. The issue with the noise from the tour groups was addressed by moving the visitor’s desk out of the lobby and closer to the museum gallery entrance.

![Figure 50: Lobby View 1 Before](image)
Figure 51: Lobby View 1 After

Figure 52: Lobby View 2 Before
Figure 55: Lobby View 3 After

Figure 56: Lobby View 4 Before
The museum café will remain a table service café, but will be modeled in a different way to promote a community feel and the experience of a traditional third space. The new design starts with a hallway that goes from the lobby to the new desk at the entrance of the galleries. The hallway wall is a partial wall consisting of four feet drywall and the
other three feet are glass. This is to give the café guests a quiet environment but the glass still keeps the area feeling open. The large desk at the entrance to the museum galleries is now a combination of the visitor’s desk and the security podium. The area has sleek turnstiles to help control who is going into the gallery area. The café is in the same spot, but the layout now has a communal feel. There are three seating areas where visitors can sit. The areas are designed this way so people will socialize and enjoy each other’s company, although the areas are still big enough where visitors can sit in a secluded area if they please.

![Figure 59: Cafe View 1 Before](image_url)
Figure 60: Cafe View 1 After

Figure 61: Cafe View 2 Before
Figure 62: Cafe View 2 After

Figure 63: Cafe View 3 Before
Figure 64: Cafe View 3 After

Figure 65: Cafe View 4 Before
Figure 66: Cafe View 4 After
IV. Future Research Opportunities

At this stage, the work of this project has just begun and several more steps should be considered before the implementation of third spaces at the WAM. Our exploratory data should be verified quantitatively and the WAM should conduct a cost analysis of the proposed design and other recommendations.

A. Quantitative Demographic Surveys

In order to verify the accuracy of the data collected by our group, we recommend that the WAM conduct larger demographic surveys about third spaces. This should be done once the WAM has completed its branding process and has decided which demographic groups should be targeted. The purpose of demographic sampling in this case is to ensure that the Findings chapter of this report are in line with the needs of the target customers of the WAM.

The purpose of our project was to conduct exploratory research about the idea of creating traditional third spaces at the WAM. Our scope was large and we were able to identify some important exploratory information about how the WAM could use third spaces. Now that we have discovered that visitors want the WAM to become a traditional third space, we believe that it is important to detail more specifics of what a third space would be. In order to move forward with a specific plan for third spaces, we believe that our exploratory data should be reinforced with a quantitative demographic study. Having quantitative data about specific targeted groups can provide additional justification for the investments that would be required to create third spaces at the WAM.
B. Cost Analysis of Proposed Designs

Our team has proposed some designs and recommendations that are largely based on the desires of visitors and staff members at the WAM. We did not complete any cost analysis of our recommendations; however, despite its status as a non-profit, the WAM must assess the costs of these changes. Before moving forward with the implementation of design plans, the WAM should determine the costs and forecasted sales of any proposed change and compare those to the current state of operations.

C. Explore Non-Traditional Third Spaces

In the quest to create third spaces, the WAM has a variety of goals. Our project focused specifically on how the WAM could create traditional third spaces, but the museum has interests beyond traditional third spaces. The WAM is also interested in how to create third space experiences for visitors within the paid portion of the museum, experiences which fall outside the realm of traditional third spaces. We believe that this is a great goal for the WAM and that the museum will be most successful if they can create both traditional third spaces, as recommended in this project, and non-traditional third spaces. We recommend that the WAM continue to explore the idea of how it can create non-traditional third space experiences for visitors within its galleries.

The initial hope of our sponsors was for our team to be able to explore the usage of Salisbury Hall as a potential third space. It became clear to our team early in our project that there is an important distinction between traditional third spaces and non-traditional third spaces, such as what Salisbury Hall could be. Because our project was limited in time and resources, we were not able to explore the usage of spaces within the
paid portion of the museum as their ability to become non-traditional third space. However, part of the transition of the WAM is to create more interactive experiences for visitors who have paid to enter the galleries. The museum is in the process of rearranging artwork and incorporating books to stimulate patrons, but they hope to do a lot more. For example, the WAM may eventually have volunteers circulate the galleries with iPads to talk to visitors about their experiences at the museum. This is not a component of a traditional third space, but it could be something that the WAM could use to help position itself more fully as a world-class art museum. **We recommend that the WAM explore how to create non-traditional third spaces within the paid portion of the museum.**
Chapter 6: Conclusions

The Worcester Art Museum, or WAM, has the potential to become a community meeting place for residents of Worcester, Massachusetts and the surrounding areas by using some of its rooms to create comfortable third spaces for visitors. By 2020, the WAM hopes that this strategy will help it with its goal of ushering in 200,000 annual visitors.

Through this project, we found that the WAM could serve as a great traditional third space for the community. Through surveys, interviews, focus groups and background research, our team determined that free admission, Wi-Fi and access to food and drink are the most important characteristics of a successful traditional third space. We recommend that any traditional third space at the WAM offer these characteristics.

We found that events which combine live music, food and alcohol are important to the success of traditional third spaces. We also found that the WAM used to offer these types of events, which were known at the museum as Third Thursdays. We recommend that the WAM bring live music, food and alcohol back to Third Thursdays as a way of helping to create traditional third spaces.

We also found that the Courtyard, the Café and Lancaster Lobby would make the most popular traditional third spaces at the WAM. We created design proposals for each of these spaces as a way to help the WAM move forward with the process of creating third spaces. The designs incorporate the characteristics of traditional third spaces that our team identified as most important.

After completing this project, we believe that the WAM is uniquely positioned within the community to create successful traditional third spaces. Many people are
hopeful about the idea of having third spaces at the WAM, and we believe that with a few changes, the museum could offer excellent third spaces and become one step closer of reaching its visitor goal.
Electronic Projects Collection: http://www.wpi.edu/Pubs/E-project/Available/E-project-121713-171322/unrestricted/Final_IQP_Paper2.pdf


Façade & Awning Incentive Grant Program. (2014).


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Appendix A

Interview with the Owners of the Portsmouth Book and Bar

We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). We were hoping to talk to you about third spaces at the Worcester Art Museum (WAM). We hope that this information will help us create recommendations for the Museum on how to create usable third spaces within it. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. We would like your permission to be able to use the information collected from this interview publicly, but we can keep your answers anonymous if you wish. This is a collaborative project between the Worcester Art Museum and WPI, and your participation is greatly appreciated. If interested, a copy of our results can be provided at the conclusion of the study.

We are visiting the Book and Bar because we know that you have been in communication with our sponsor from the WAM, Adam Rozan. He suggested that you have a great business and that the WAM could learn a lot from your model.

1. Could you tell us about how you came up with the idea for Book and Bar?
2. What is your vision for the future of Book and Bar?
   a. What about this space is it that draws customers?
3. Can you tell us what third space means to you? Do you have any third spaces in your personal life? What qualities of a third space are important to you?
4. Do you feel that Book and Bar is a third space for the community? Why or why not?
5. What metrics do you use to measure the performance of Book and Bar as a third space?
   a. Do you think the WAM should use the same metrics? Why or why not?
6. Do you have a sense of what features of Book and Bar provide the greatest attraction for your customers?
7. Do you hold any special events at Book and Bar to increase community engagement?
   a. How frequent are these events?
   b. What are the associated costs?
8. Describe your typical customer at Book and Bar.

Thank you for your time.
Appendix B

Museum Staff Focus Group

We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). We were hoping to talk to you about third spaces at the Worcester Art Museum (WAM). We hope that this information will help us to create some recommendations as to how the museum can use Salisbury Hall as a third space. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Your identity will be kept confidential and your responses anonymous. This is a collaborative project between the Worcester Art Museum and WPI, and your participation is greatly appreciated. If interested, a copy of our results can be provided at the conclusion of the study.

1. What is your favorite thing about working at the WAM?
2. Is anyone familiar with the concept of “third space”? If people know about third space we can have a discussion about it, but if not, we will explain what third space is. Third space: A place where one can go to relax and feel a sense of community. Third spaces are generally public places and are separate from home and work. Examples of third spaces could be French cafés or Italian piazzas.
3. Do you have a third space or a place you go to besides your home or office? What characteristics of these places attract you to them?
4. The WAM wants to use Salisbury Hall as a third space for the Worcester community. Do you feel that it has the potential to become a third space? What would it need to get there? And are there any other areas in the museum that you think could also make a good third space?
5. Do you feel that Salisbury Hall or the museum itself has any current limitations that could prevent it from becoming a successful third space?
6. Are there any activities at the museum, either current or past, that you feel help to create a third space environment? Why?
7. We wanted to share some of our ideas about how to create third spaces with you and get some feedback. How do you feel about the following ideas?
   a. Having a local artist of the month’s work displayed in Salisbury Hall
   b. Having people with iPads in the exhibits to create an interactive customer experience
   c. Putting up signs to encourage people to connect to the Wifi network
   d. Bringing back events to Third Thursdays
   e. Local art contest between colleges

Thank you for your time. Do you have any recommendations as to who else we should interview?
Appendix C

WAM Survey Questions

We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute. We were hoping to talk to you about third spaces at the WAM. We hope that this information will help us to create some recommendations as to how the museum can use Salisbury Hall as a third space. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. We would like your permission to be able to use the information from this survey for our research, but your identity will remain anonymous. This is a collaborative project between the Worcester Art Museum and WPI, and your participation is greatly appreciated. If interested, a copy of our results can be provided at the conclusion of the

Third spaces are public or semi-public spaces open and accessible to members of the community to gather, socialize or work. Third spaces are third only to community members' first space, their home, and their second space, work or school. Some examples of third spaces include French cafes, Italian Piazzas and neighborhood taverns and cafes.

study.
1. How often do you visit the museum?
   a. First Time
   b. Occasional Visitor (less than once a month)
   c. Frequent Visitor (at least once a month)
   d. Member
   e. Docent
2. Do you currently have a third space?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I don’t know
3. If yes, briefly describe your third space?
4. If no, would you be interested in having a third space in your daily life?
   a. Yes
      i. If yes, for what purpose?
   b. No
      i. If no, why not?
   c. I don’t know
5. How many hours a week would you utilize a third space?
a. 0
b. 1-5 hours
c. 5-10 hours
d. 10 + hours
e. I don’t know

6. Check the box that applies to your interest in in each potential element of a third space.

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<th>1 (Not Interested)</th>
<th>2 (Somewhat interested)</th>
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<th>4 (Very Interested)</th>
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<td>Quiet Space</td>
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<td>Live Music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol Service</td>
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<td>Open until 11 PM</td>
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<td>Open at 8 AM</td>
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If you have any other interests, please specify here.

7. Are you more likely to visit a third space if you are allowed to have a bag such as a laptop bag or backpack?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I don’t know

8. Do you think the WAM could serve as a third space to the community?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I don’t know

9. Considering the following spaces at the Worcester Art Museum, rate the possibility of each area in becoming a third space.

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<th>2 (little possibility)</th>
<th>3 (Possible)</th>
<th>4 (very possible)</th>
<th>5 (extremely Possible)</th>
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<td>Courtyard</td>
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<td>Museum Café</td>
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<td>Lancaster Lobby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any Current Gallery</td>
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If any other spaces please specify them here:

10. Are there any specific events that would make you more likely to visit the museum?

__________________________
Appendix D

Interview with museum executives

We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute. We were hoping to talk to you about third spaces at the WAM. We hope that this information will help us to create some recommendations as to how the museum can use Salisbury Hall as a third space. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. We would like your permission to be able to use the information collected from this interview publicly. This is a collaborative project between the Worcester Art Museum and WPI, and your participation is greatly appreciated. If interested, a copy of our results can be provided at the conclusion of the study.

1. What is your vision for the future of the WAM?
2. Can you tell us what third space means to you? Do you have any third spaces in your personal life? What qualities of a third space are important to you?
3. What is your vision for third space at the WAM in general and specifically in Salisbury Hall?
4. From your previous experience in museums, have you been a part of any successful creations of third spaces? What worked best?
5. Do you feel that there are any limitations of Salisbury Hall or the WAM in the development of third spaces?
6. Are there any activities at the museum, either current or past, that you feel could help to create a third space environment? What/why?
7. We wanted to share some of our ideas about how to create third spaces with you and get some feedback. How do you feel about the following ideas?
   a. Having a local artist of the month’s work displayed in Salisbury Hall
   b. Having people with iPads in the exhibits to create an interactive customer experience
   c. Putting up signs to encourage people to connect to the Wifi network
   d. Bringing back events to Third Thursdays
   e. Local art contest between colleges
   f. Having a standard dress code
   g. Having food/wine tastings in some exhibit halls on Friday evenings

Thank you for your time. Do you have any recommendations as to who else we should interview?