

Excerpt

*Mobile American Spaces*

AMERICAN SPACES

Idea Book



Message from the Under Secretary

Message from the Program Director

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**Tara D. Sonenshine**

*Under Secretary for Public  
Diplomacy and Public Affairs*

In a rapidly changing world, powered by social media and instant information, the United States must continue to be part of the world's vibrant conversations. At a time when so many of our embassies are forced by necessity to protect our diplomats, it's critical that we can go outside our compounds to engage in what Edward R. Murrow called "the last three feet—one person talking to another."

I have prioritized American Spaces as one of the most effective and vibrant forums for our public diplomacy outreach. Since the beginning of my tenure as Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs I have seen exciting learning taking place in Information Resource Centers, American Centers, Bi-national Centers, and Corners where foreign audiences come to engage with us on matters of common interest.

Just as traditional libraries are evolving into dynamic community spaces, our American Spaces must be dynamic as well. Over the course of the last year many people have come together, from all over the world, to work on this idea of creating Model American spaces to showcase the types of dynamic learning centers we hope all our spaces will become.

Since we began this project our vision has been clear: to further develop American Spaces that engage audiences with compelling learning environments that reflect the dynamic nature of the United States and welcome spontaneous interaction, shared ideas and warm conversations. We have

made it our goal to provide what I call CARE for every Space: Content, Access, Resources, Evaluation and robust connectivity.

Working with experts from the Smithsonian, we have created an exciting partnership to realize that vision—and take it to the next level: advancing the role of American Spaces as symbols of meaningful relationships and commitments between the U.S. and host communities.

Through this Idea Book we will provide Posts the means to improve and standardize the quality of American Spaces and their core programs. Our aim is to provide the best multifunctional platform for public diplomacy programs to promote open dialogue, counteract negative preconceptions and build bridges of understanding. Bringing our partners and Smithsonian experts together we anticipated an explosion of ideas and practical solutions, and we had just that.

We hope you will use this Idea Book as a resource to invigorate your Spaces which are, now more than ever, one of our key platforms for advancing U.S. foreign policy through the lively sharing of information and ideas. Flexible spaces, welcoming environments and state-of-the-art technology can help create opportunities for learning about America, through participatory experience, casual exchanges, and social media, breaking down barriers around the world.



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# Message from the Under Secretary



**Elizabeth Duggal**

*Director, International Museum  
Professional Education Program,  
Smithsonian Institution*

*Photo Credit: James DiLoreto,  
Smithsonian Institution*

The Smithsonian is pleased to submit this Idea Book as the final deliverable of our American Spaces Assessment and Redesign Project. We hope it will serve as a guide for all American Spaces eager to refresh their facilities with a new look and new content for use by their visitors. The Idea Book contains design concepts, finishes and furnishings, and programming and IT/social media recommendations, supported by narratives explaining how our recommendations might be implemented in different types of American Spaces.

American Spaces, from my perspective, are terrific assets for this country and offer enormous opportunity. It is a great privilege for the Smithsonian to work with all of you on this important and vital project, particularly because our mission is the “increase and diffusion of knowledge.” We are passionate about engaging our visitors and our role in the world of cultural diplomacy.

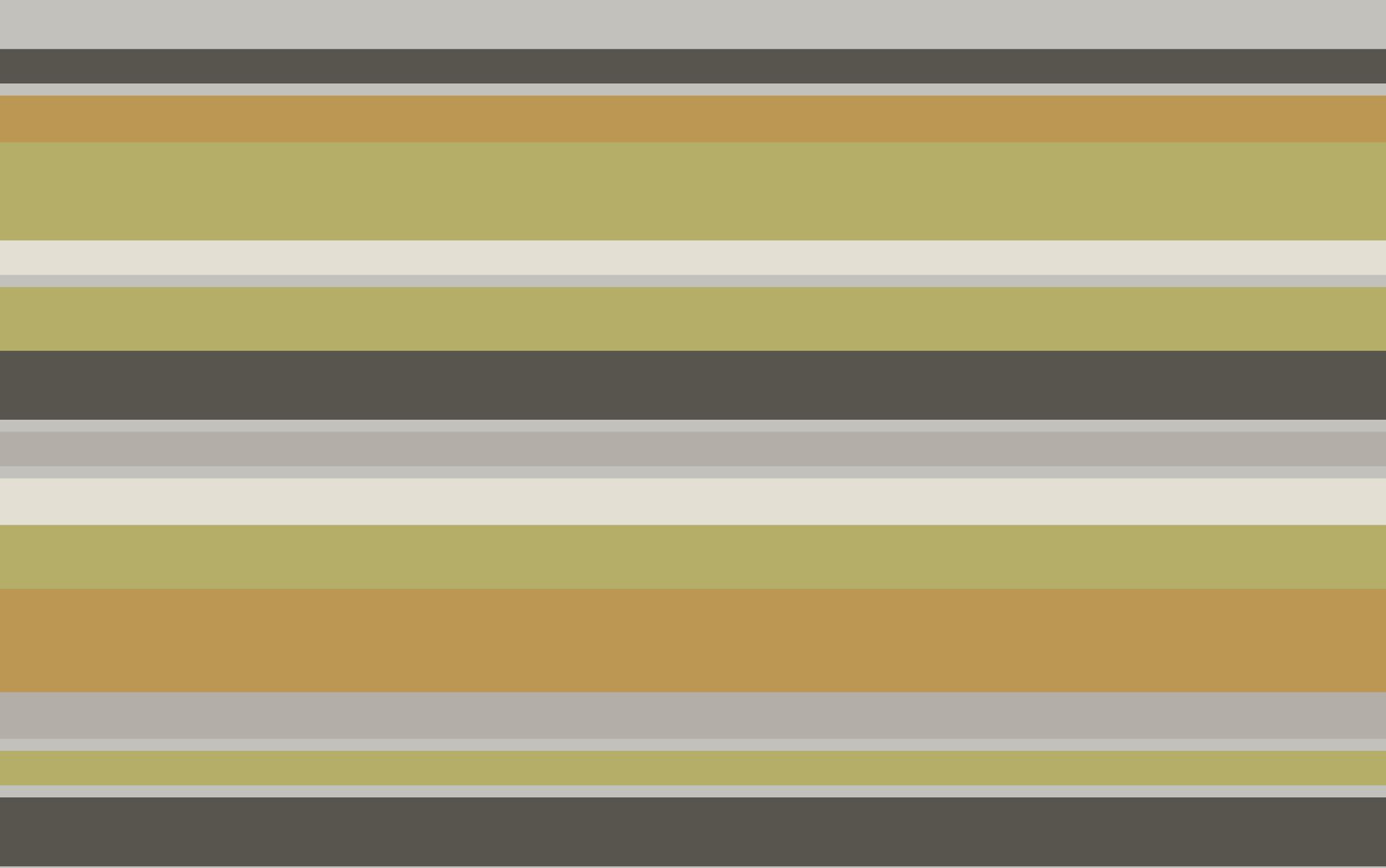
From the initial discussions with State to the team visits to the American Spaces, from the design efforts to the planning and convening of the project workshop, this has been a wonderful and rewarding partnership all around. Collaboration and shared commitment have been central to this project: when our delegations visited the American Spaces

and peer institutions around the world and met with Embassy and American Spaces staff, partners, and visitors, all were unstinting in their generous contributions to the project. All of these stakeholders are key to the success of this endeavor, and ownership of the final recommendations will be in the hands of the American Spaces themselves.

We have benefited greatly from the support of our State Department partners throughout. Our ideas have been strengthened through communication and feedback, and we have all learned so much from you. On behalf of the entire International Museum Professional Education Program team and the broader Smithsonian Institution, we want to thank the State Department—particularly the Bureau of International Information Programs—for the opportunity to work on this project. Members from several Smithsonian Institution units have enthusiastically participated in the program, drawing expertise from the National Museum of Natural History, the National Museum of American History, the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), and the Office of Facilities Engineering and Operations. We look forward to the possibilities ahead and to continuing this partnership and supporting you in any way we can.



# Message from the Program Director



Mobile American Spaces

As part of the American Spaces Assessment and Redesign Project, the State Department asked the Smithsonian to explore options for mobile American Spaces. Discussions between DoS and SI confirmed that mobile spaces are an attractive concept and could help IIP reach audiences never reached before and/or help reach existing audiences in new and exciting ways.

The goal is to develop a universal mobile American Space for broader application—for both interior spaces such as malls, and exterior spaces such as parks, residential neighborhoods, and school campuses. Mobile units could be stationed in a location for a period of time—one-month terms, for example—or be used as pop-up locations.

*Benefits of a mobile American Space:*

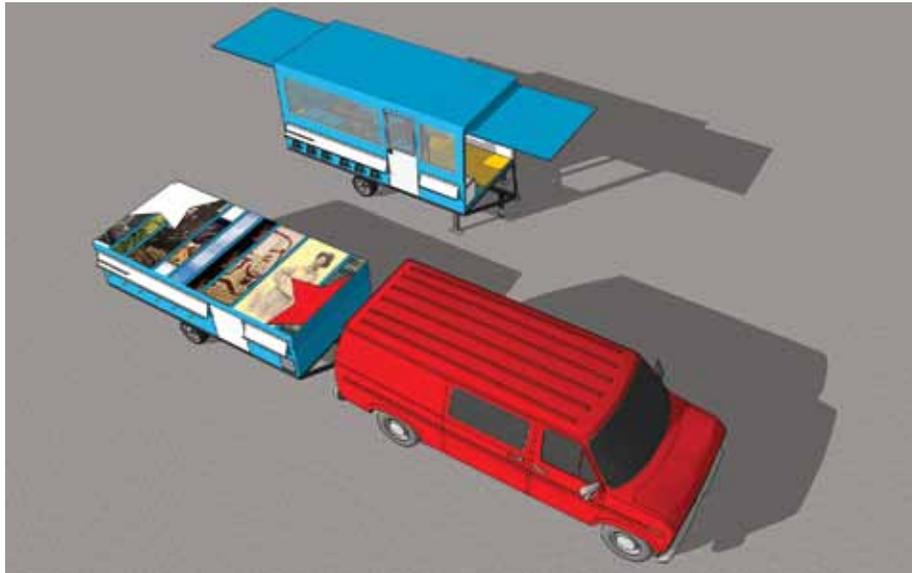
- Broader reach
- Democratizes the space—not in elite locations and could be less intimidating to “walk up” than to “walk in”
- Flexibility to change “personality” of space depending on where it goes—allow modules to swap in and out for different programs (ex. sports, cooking, reading, etc.)

We put forward here two ideas for mobile spaces—a Pop Up Camper model and an Airstream RV model.



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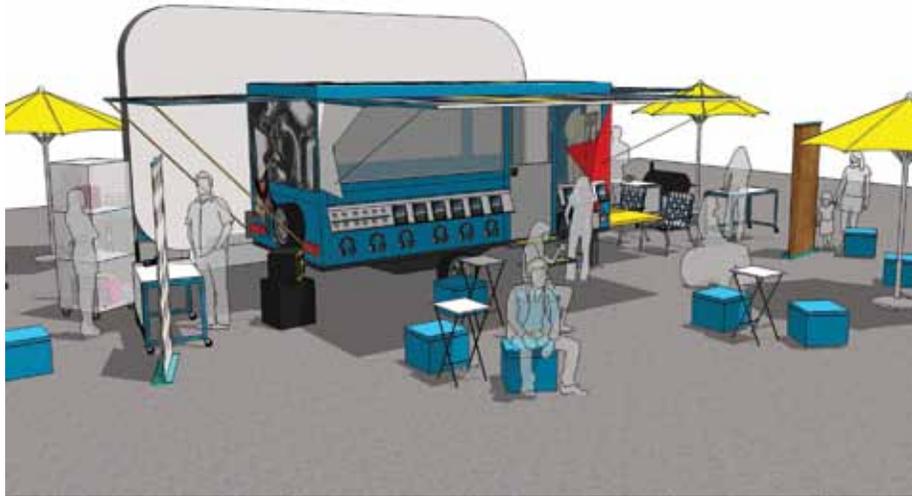
*Pop Up Camper shown closed (behind van) and open*



*The inflatable movie screen, perfect for movie nights, packs into a duffel bag for transport*

**Pop Up Camper**—*focus is on the spaces surrounding the trailer*

- Easily hitched to the back of a vehicle; all materials and furnishings travel within camper and van
- Compact installation that deploys wherever needed
- Four sides of trailer enable simultaneous activities for varying crowd sizes
  - » Long sides can focus on larger groups and function as “hang out” spaces
  - » Short sides useful for temporary demonstrations
- Interior offers privacy for smaller meetings or conversations (i.e. visa information, college application counseling)
- Retractable awnings on all sides provide shading
- Storage cubes for seating and foldable tables and chairs easily contained within
- Mobile tables can store content below

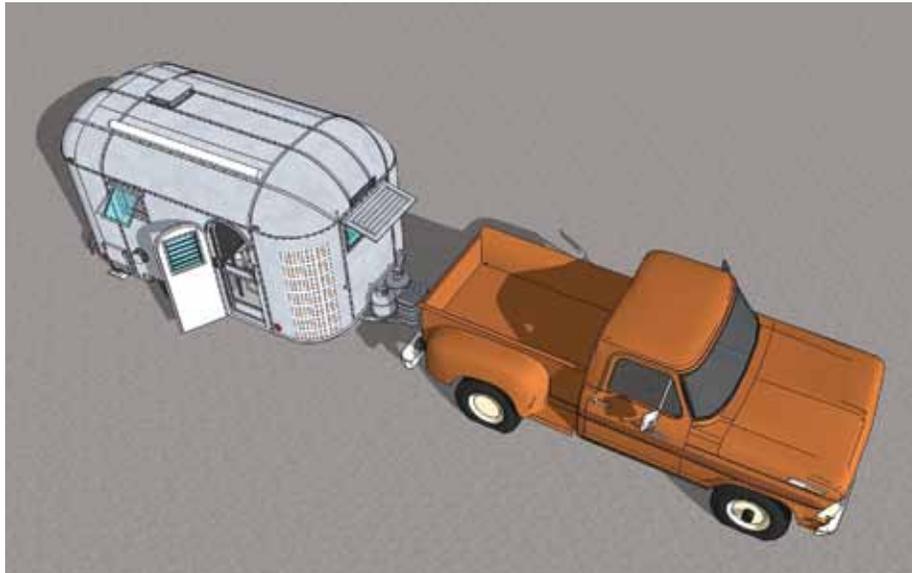


*Boxes for storing books, brochures, etc., double as seating*

*Awnings can be emblazoned with USA imagery*



Pop Up Camper *(continued)*



*Airstream Camper shown closed*



*Camper telescopes to provide added interior space*

**Airstream**—either a pull-out version or a hinged-end version

- Iconic image in itself—an American-made vehicle
- Telescoping metal frame expands interior space
- Four sides of trailer enable simultaneous activities for varying crowd sizes
  - » Long sides can focus on larger groups and function as “hang out” spaces
  - » Short sides useful for temporary demonstrations
- Interior offers privacy for smaller meetings or conversations (i.e. visa information, college application counseling)
- Retractable awnings on all sides provide shading
- Storage cubes for seating and foldable tables and chairs easily contained within
- Mobile tables can store content below
- Hinged version is same as the pull out version, but uses hinged mechanisms to open up the body of the Airstream



*Top left and right: telescopic version of Airstream provides additional interior space, closes compactly for travel*

*Bottom left and right: end of Airstream swings away in hinged version to provide greater access to interior*

The goal is to make these mobile spaces self-sufficient in operation. From containing seating to the “Grab-and-go” kits, these units can be set up relatively quickly and easily. We have placed emphasis on portability and flexibility, using lightweight materials that are easy to assemble and disassemble.

We understand that technology (ability to show video, wireless capabilities, sound equipment to engage large audiences, and mobile equipment, such as tablets or e-readers), furniture (chairs, tables, countertops) and easy storage (for program content, furniture, electrical materials) would be useful at most locations.

Programs for a mobile space could have a different character than those in existing American Spaces—taking advantage of the spectacle of bringing a cool, playful vehicle and a variety of programs to the public.

Staff for mobile American Spaces could include volunteers and alumni, managed by a permanent staff member.

*Program ideas:*

- Drive-in movie nights
- Evening events
- English language story readings
- Educational advising (similar to hosting “office hours”)
- On-the-road embassy services (ex. information sessions about visa processing)
- Focus on youth, since this is great way to reach them



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# Mobile Goals