

Placemaking.

Places make projects more valuable. In one sense, it's the old – location, location, location. But then, one has to determine what makes a great location...great locations are places; places that attract residents, businesses and/or visitors. Individual projects, properly designed and sited, collectively make a place; and then the place makes the project more valuable than if it stood alone.



Placemaking is a great value-added exercise. It is complex; it needs a combination of access, structures, a mix of activities, greenery and bike/ped systems. Think of the great places you have visited or wanted to visit. The individual buildings, shops and restaurants may be interesting and inviting, but the combination of buildings, activities, walkways and vistas makes the experience memorable.

Placemaking is the highest calling for urban designers and developers. Places create value: emotional value, community value and real estate value. The Project for Public Spaces and the CNU have spent considerable time describing and exhibiting places that have become valuable. Their links follow. Also, check out: *Creative Placemaking* from the Urban Land Institute at: <https://knowledge.uli.org/en/Reports/Research%20Reports/2020/Creative%20Placemaking>

MAKE PLACES.



FROM... **Project
for Public
Spaces**

What is Placemaking?

LINK: <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>

WHAT IF WE BUILT OUR COMMUNITIES AROUND PLACES?

As both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, **placemaking** inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community.

Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

With community-based participation at its center, an effective placemaking process capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, and it results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and well being.

When Project for Public Spaces surveyed people about what placemaking means to them, we found that it is a crucial and deeply-valued process for those who feel intimately connected to the places in their lives. Placemaking shows people just how powerful their collective vision can be. It helps them to re-imagine everyday spaces, and to see anew the potential of parks, downtowns, waterfronts, plazas, neighborhoods, streets, markets, campuses and public buildings.



Placemaking begins at the smallest scale.

Placemaking is not a new idea. Although Project for Public Spaces began consistently using the *term* "placemaking" in the mid-1990s to describe our approach, some of the thinking behind Placemaking gained traction in the 1960s, when our mentors like [Jane Jacobs](#) and [William H. Whyte](#) introduced groundbreaking ideas about designing cities for *people*, not just cars and shopping centers. Their work focuses on the social and cultural importance of lively neighborhoods and inviting public spaces: Jacobs encouraged everyday citizens to take ownership of streets through the now-famous idea of "eyes on the street," while Holly Whyte outlined key elements for creating vibrant social life in public spaces [[The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces](#) (1980)]. Applying the wisdom of these (and other) urban pioneers, since 1975 Project for Public Spaces has gradually developed a comprehensive Placemaking approach.

Throughout our experience working with over 3,500 communities—in all 50 U.S. states and in over 50 countries—Project for Public Spaces continues to show by example how adopting a collaborative community process is the most effective approach for creating and revitalizing public spaces. For us, placemaking is both a process and a philosophy. It is centered around observing, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work, and play in a particular space in order to understand their needs and aspirations for that space and for their community as a whole. With this knowledge, we can come together to create a common vision for that place. The vision can evolve quickly into an implementation strategy, beginning with small-scale "[Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper](#)" improvements that bring immediate benefits both to the spaces themselves and the people who use them.

WHEN YOU FOCUS ON PLACE, YOU DO EVERYTHING DIFFERENTLY

Unfortunately, the rigid planning processes of the 20th century have become so institutionalized that community stakeholders rarely have the chance to voice their own ideas and aspirations about the places they inhabit. Placemaking can break down these silos by showing planners, designers, and engineers the broad value of moving beyond the narrow focus of their own professions, disciplines, agendas. Experience has shown us that when developers and planners welcome this kind of grassroots involvement, they spare themselves a lot of headaches.

Common problems like traffic-dominated streets, little-used parks, and isolated or underperforming development projects can be addressed—or altogether avoided—by embracing a model of placemaking that views a place in its *entirety*, rather than zeroing in on isolated components.



Even though cities ultimately fail or succeed at the scale of "place," this is the scale that is so often overlooked.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF PLACEMAKING

The Project for Public Spaces placemaking approach can be a springboard for community revitalization. Emerging from forty years of practice, our [11 Principles of Placemaking](#) offer guidelines to help communities (1) integrate diverse opinions into a cohesive vision, (2) translate that vision into a plan and program of uses, and (3) ensure the sustainable implementation of the plan. Turning a shared vision into a reality—into a truly great place—means finding the patience to take small steps, to truly listen, and to see what works best in a particular context.

Just as community input is essential to the placemaking process, it is equally important to have a mutual understanding of the ways in which great places foster successful social networks and benefit multiple stakeholders and initiatives at once.

The 11 Principles, along with other tools we've developed for improving places (such as the Power of 10), have helped citizens bring immense changes to their communities—changes that are often far more extensive than the original vision had imagined.

LINK: <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>



From...

CNU

PUBLIC SQUARE

A CNU Journal

Four types of placemaking

[ROBERT STEUTEVILLE](#) OCT. 10, 2014

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LINK: <https://www.cnu.org/publicsquare/four-types-placemaking>

The many uses of the term “placemaking” are confusing and contradictory. This undermines the term’s ability to help neighborhoods and communities imagine and create a better future. The simplest definition is as follows: “Placemaking is the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play, and learn in.”

Placemaking is a process. It is a means to an end: the creation of Quality Places.

What exactly is a Quality Place? I would characterize it as a building, location, or space that possesses a strong sense of place. It is a structure or space where people, businesses, and institutions want to be. Such places often are alluring; they have pizzazz.

Places of this sort have been around for centuries, responding to innate human needs and desires. But as technology advances and other aspects of life evolve, new facets are sometimes added.

The key elements of Quality Places today, I would argue, are these:

- A mix of uses
- Effective public spaces
- Broadband capability
- Multiple transportation options
- Multiple housing options
- Preservation of historic structures
- Respect community heritage
- Arts, culture, and creativity
- Recreation
- Green space
- Quiet, unless they are designed to be otherwise.

Quality Places are active and unique sites—interesting, visually attractive, and often incorporating public art and creative activities. They have pleasing façades and good building dimensions relative to the street, and are people-friendly.

Quality Places embody good form, which includes:

- Mass, density, and scale that are appropriate to their location on the rural-urban Transect
- Human scale
- Walkable and bikeable streets and trails.

These form characteristics result in Quality Places that are:

- Safe
- Connected
- Welcoming
- Conducive to authentic experiences
- Accessible; people can easily circulate within and to and from these locations
- Comfortable; they address cleanliness, character, and charm
- Sociable; they have a physical fabric that encourages people to connect with one another
- Able to promote and facilitate civic engagement.

Inherent in the above description is a simple formula: Proper physical form plus a mix of uses and functions plus a mix of social opportunity leads to positive activities and a strong sense of place.

A place analogy we use that resonates with many people is:

- Form creates the Stage
- Activity is the Play
- Response is how you Feel about the Play
- The Economic outcome is good if the Play makes Money (allowing nearby businesses to prosper)
- Sense of Place is strong if the above are true.

Types of Placemaking

Placemaking comes in more than one variety. In most instances, placemaking — what I would call “standard placemaking” — is an incremental method of improving a location over a long period of time through many separate small projects or activities. The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) has long been an advocate of this approach.

However, placemaking can also be called upon to create and implement larger-scale transformative projects and activities—converting a location in a short period of time into one that exudes a strong sense of place and serves as a magnet for people and new development. Complete streets, form-based coding, and New Urbanism foster this kind of placemaking.

There are three varieties of specialized placemaking:

- Strategic Placemaking (as advocated by Michigan’s MIplace Partnership Initiative).
- Creative Placemaking (as advocated by the National Endowment of the Arts, the US Conference of Mayors, and the American Architectural Foundation).
- Tactical Placemaking (as advocated by Street Plans Collaborative and PPS).

The three specialized types of placemaking focus on:

- Specific quality of life improvements
- Achieving outcomes at specific scales and time periods, or
- Ways to try some things out [test strategies] before committing significant money and other resources.

All forms of placemaking depend on broad engagement of stakeholders to design projects and activities. This requires engaging and empowering people to participate in the process. The types of projects include downtown street and façade improvements, neighborhood-based projects such as residential rehabilitation, residential infill, and mixed-use projects, and improvements to parks and public spaces.

Strategic placemaking is targeted to a particular goal in addition to creation of Quality Places. It may aim to develop places that are uniquely attractive to talented workers, that attract businesses, and that catalyze substantial job creation and income growth.

This adaptation of placemaking especially targets knowledge workers who, because of their skills, can choose to live anywhere and who tend to pick Quality Places offering certain amenities.

Strategic Placemaking is pursued collaboratively by public, nonprofit and private sectors over a period of 5 to 15 years, often in downtowns and at nodes along key corridors. The term was coined by the Land Policy Institute at Michigan State University based on research into why communities are gaining or losing population, jobs, and income.

Creative Placemaking was coined by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa in a 2010 report by that name for the National Endowment for the Arts. Creative Placemaking focuses on museums and orchestra halls and housing for artists and new cultural activities such as public art displays, outdoor concerts, movies in the park, and installations such as transit stations with art themes.

Markusen and Gadwa wrote:

“In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.”

Tactical placemaking brings together “Tactical Urbanism,” (described in books by the Street Plans Collaborative) and the PPS’s “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper” approach, which uses a term coined by Eric Reynolds of Urban Space Management.

Tactical Urbanism is described as “Incremental, small-scale improvements” employed to “stage more substantial investments.” This approach allows a host of local actors to test new concepts before making substantial political and financial commitments. Sometimes sanctioned, sometimes not, the actions are commonly referred to as “guerrilla urbanism,” “pop-up urbanism,” “city repair,” or “D.I.Y urbanism.”

Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper is described by PPS as a process to activate public spaces in a way that is “lower risk and lower cost, capitalizing on the creative energy of the community to efficiently generate new uses and revenue for places in transition. ... We often start with Amenities and Public Art, followed by Event and Intervention Projects, which lead to Light Development strategies for long-term change.”

This approach favors “use over design and comprehensive construction,” to “strike a balance between providing comfortable spaces for people to enjoy while generating the revenue necessary for maintenance and management.”

Tactical placemaking is a phased approach that can start quickly, often at low cost. It targets public spaces and can be implemented continuously in neighborhoods with a mix of stakeholders. Projects may include a temporary road diet using paint, the pilot construction of a new form of dwelling in a neighborhood, or temporary conversion of a storage facility into a business. Activities include parking space conversions, self-guided historic walks, and outdoor music events in town squares.

What type of placemaking to use

In an era of limited funds and resources, selecting the best placemaking approach for the community and situation is critical. The Table on page 7 offers problems, solutions, and payoffs for these approaches. Over time, a community may need to use all of the differing approaches. They can be implemented in combination or separately, simultaneously or sequentially, depending on particular objectives and opportunities.

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LINK: <https://www.cnu.org/publicsquare/four-types-placemaking>