

Progressive Placemaking | Evolving the Space to a Place

Good public spaces don't happen overnight, and people don't have all the answers at the outset. The key is to provide for flexibility – to grow the space by experimenting, evaluating, and incorporating the lessons into the next steps...

Small-scale, inexpensive improvements can be more effective at drawing people into spaces than major, big-buck projects.

Inexpensive amenities such as landscaping; gardens beds with flowers, shrubs and trees, benches, or movable seating and umbrellas, outdoor café tables and chairs, or vending carts are relatively inexpensive and can get the ball rolling in creating a well-loved and well-supported public place.

Developing the ability to manage a space effectively is more critical to success than a large financial investment.

Management is the subject of our final principle, “You are never finished,” but it’s worth mentioning here that good management — for example, the ability to put out items such as movable furniture at a moment’s notice, to host a range of events, or to notice changes in the use of the space and to act on them — are all ways that build a place’s success more effectively and cost-effectively than just sinking in substantial capital.

If the community is a partner in the endeavour, people will come forward and naturally draw in others.

The community’s involvement will lead to a sense of ownership that will engender people’s support and contributions, which will in turn make a place grow and thrive. Such contributions are not necessarily monetary. They may come in the form of donated goods and services or volunteer labour, and consequently the cost of the project is diminished relative to the benefits received.

When the community’s vision is driving a project, success follows.

Projects perceived by the public as being too expensive often do not become a reality, because they have not evolved from a community’s vision. The most successful public space projects tend to use an incremental approach in which the place grows little by little; accordingly, people become more and more invested as it grows. Once a community backs a project with its voices and its hearts, success follows

Management is critical because good places are not static. *The use of public spaces changes daily,*

weekly, and seasonally. About 80% of the success of any public space can be attributed to its management. ***No matter how good the design of a space is, it will never become a true place***

unless it is cared for well. Given the certainty of change and the fluid nature of the use of a place at different times, the challenge is to develop the ability to respond effectively. ***A good management structure will provide that flexibility.***



Place of Interest
Attractors & Retainers

- a **great place** needs to have a variety of things to do in it
- several different reasons to be there
- a complementary range of things to attract and to retain people to a place in order it to be successful



Place of Connection
Public Art & Culture

- Public Art and cultural interpretation
- A sense of belonging
- emotional connection
- play a vital role in the public realm, defining and celebrating local culture and identity and contributing to the personality of a place



Place of Value
Economic Development

- Placemaking can provide a powerful catalyst to stimulate the local economy, attract investment and motivate local entrepreneurs
- activation of neglected and underperforming spaces
- encourages innovation labs



Place of Comfort
Urban & Streetscape Design

- A multidisciplinary approach is central to placemaking, bringing together design and technical expertise to work collaboratively with stakeholders to deliver outcomes in the built and natural environments



Place for People
-Movement & Accessibility

- Great public spaces are visible, easy to get to and are inclusive places
- People are at the heart and take precedent, not the movement and accommodation of cars.



Place of Action
Regulations & Compliance

- understanding and navigating the regulatory environment and minimising unnecessary bureaucratic red tape and facilitate fast action and encourage innovation

Five Essential Elements of a Placemaking Campaign

1.) Start with a vision—not a plan: If you want to create a great place, you'll need to involve as many people as possible. Your community is full of neighbours with interesting ideas and desires for what role local public spaces need to fill, and the resulting space can only reach its greatest potential if it can be responsive and useful for the broadest group of people. When you're getting started you'll need to have a vision of what the specific site you're working to transform could become, but it's important to remember that a truly **inclusive Placemaking process** might take things in a different direction than you had originally planned. Developing a *flexible* vision is an important first step.

2.) Use tools that help people find their voice: If architecture is frozen music, then urban planning is composition, and Placemaking is improvisational street performance. Many people intuitively understand when a public space is or isn't working, but decades of top-down planning have left them feeling dis-empowered, and inclined to leave the work of city-making to the professionals. Simple, straightforward tools like the **Power of 10** evaluation, or the **Place Audit**, validate observational and learned knowledge, and encourage participation from people who don't know the first thing about curb cuts or FAR. That's not to say that planners' input isn't important; just that it is no more or less important than input from the people who are intended to use a space that's being planned. To achieve the best outcomes, they have to be able to talk to each other.

3.) Remember to stretch: If you want to get the best results, you're going to have to reach out in new directions to get people to show up and speak up when you conduct workshops and ask for community input. Successful Placemaking requires the forging of unlikely partnerships; if you try to work with the same groups that you've always worked with, you'll keep getting the same results. If a place isn't already great, you limit its potential by sticking to your mailing list. Trying new tactics is important to the outreach strategy around a Placemaking process. Digital tools are one great way to reach a wider audience; using something like the **PlaceMap** platform gives you a way to reach out to younger and more technologically-savvy folks.

4.) Embrace debate: If you're doing things right, the process will be a bit messy. People are going to disagree about how public space should be used. Public life is all about debate, and our public spaces are concrete compromises that, at their best, reinforce the respect that neighbours have for each other in a strong community. When limited space is available, compromise is necessary. The Placemaking process facilitates debate so that people can identify impediments to success, and work together to find common ground. The discussion

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that happens also serves as a “team-building” style exercise for the community, building social capital and strengthening local connections.

5.) Teach through action: *Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper* interventions in public spaces allow you to get the ball rolling and generate interest in your long-term Placemaking goals. People often forget that underused or vacant spaces are even there, as they recede into the background of daily routines. If you want to turn a parking lot into a plaza, you have to change the way that people think about it before you can even start developing a real plan for action. Just doing some events or quick interventions (think PARKing Day) to change perceptions can shake neighbours out of their complacency, and help you rack up some quick wins to build support for larger changes.

Principles for Turning Public Spaces Into Civic Places

THE COMMUNITY IS THE EXPERT

To create any successful place, it is essential to find a way to uncover and incorporate people's talents. Tapping into the ideas and talents of a community – inviting into the process the people who have an interest or stake in a particular place, such as those who live or work there – is crucial in deciding what will be done to develop or improve a place.

These people know, from experience, provide perspective and valuable insights into how an area functions; overall, and have a unique understanding of the issues that are important.

The sooner the community becomes involved in the planning for a public space, the better; it is ideal that they join before any work has been done. They also should be encouraged to stay involved throughout the improvement effort so that they become owners or stewards of the place as it evolves.

YOU ARE CREATING A PLACE, NOT JUST A DESIGN

When people describe a place they enjoy, they use words like “safe,” “fun,” “beautiful,” and “welcoming.” These words describe the intangible qualities of a true place – the kind of place people talk about and return to over and over. Yet these “intangible” qualities can be measured quantitatively in a variety of ways, such as by using statistics or conducting research. Creating a place entails a broader view that goes beyond design; a successful public space possesses four key attributes: accessibility, activities, comfort, and sociability. These attributes depend on effective management and require the involvement of many different disciplines and interests.

- **Conduct a Place Performance Evaluation** with the community
 - Observe the place
 - Talk with people who use the place about their ideas
 - Identify issues
 - Identify opportunities for changes that could be made in the short term

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- **Define the community.** List all the client and tenant agencies in the buildings, as well as the public agencies that have jurisdiction over sites on or adjacent to the property (e.g. transit agencies, Departments of Public Works, Departments of Parks, et al.). Include agencies in neighbouring Federal properties, plus neighbouring businesses, institutions, and residents.
- **Survey tenants and client agencies** about what they would like to see take place in the public spaces inside and outside of the building. Include uses, activities, amenities, and programming.
- **Identify those issues of highest importance** to the tenants, client agencies, and others defined as the community.
- **Develop methods for expressing the mission** of the particular federal agency to its constituencies and general public.
- **Share this information with the project architects and designers** to help shape the design program and agenda.

Partners & Relationships

- **Identify the Stakeholders.** Stakeholders include a wide audience of people and organizations who may have a “stake” in the project.
- **Identify assets of the stakeholders** as well as skills that could be brought to the project.

Engagement & Observation

- **Convene a workshop of stakeholders, tenants, and client agencies and do the Place Performance Evaluation Game,** emphasizing the importance of looking at the existing area and what’s going on there.
- **Survey people who are using the space.** Ask them to rate its attractiveness, use, sociability and connections to other areas.

Develop a Vision

- **Identify and convene the stakeholders to discuss the broader, long-term goals** of each stakeholder and the township/space/place at large.
- **Brainstorm** areas of overlapping goals and opportunities for cooperation.
- **Identify issues that need to be resolved,** keeping in mind the larger, long-term goals of the collective effort.
- Help people to **imagine what the space could become and the activities that could go on there** by asking them to think about other places they have been to and enjoyed; talking about the activities that occur in those places and the physical elements

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that support them; and showing pictures of successful spaces (and even unsuccessful ones).

Documentation, Data Collection & Evaluation

- **Survey users and/or future users of the space** about their needs and preferences. These may include your building tenants/employees, as well as the adjacent community.
- **Conduct the Public Space Evaluation** to determine what is working currently and what needs to be improved. The Evaluation gives designers direction in terms of what issues to address both in the short-term and long run.
- **Develop a diagram** of the functions that are to occur in the space and describe with as much information as possible.
- **Locate the functions** onto a plan of the site.
- **Outline triangulation opportunities on a plan of the site.** Consider the location of various uses and activities that could be compatible and potentially work together.
- **List the potential partners** that could be brought into the process in order that the triangulation might be possible.

What Makes a SUCCESSFUL Place?

Great public spaces are those places where celebrations are held, social and economic exchanges occur, friends run into each other, and cultures mix. They are the “front porches” of our public institutions – libraries, field houses, schools – where we interact with each other and government. When these spaces work well, they serve as the stage for our public lives.

Public spaces to be successful generally share the following four qualities:

they are **accessible**; people are engaged in **activities** there; the space is **comfortable** and has a good image; and finally, it is a **sociable** place: one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit.

ACCESS & LINKAGES

You can judge the accessibility of a place by its connections to its surroundings, both visual and physical. A successful public space is easy to get to and get through; it is visible both from a distance and up close. The edges of a space are important as well: For instance, a row of shops along a street is more interesting and generally safer to walk by than a blank wall or empty lot. Accessible spaces have a high parking turnover and, ideally, are convenient to public transit.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ON ACCESS & LINKAGES:

- Can you see the space from a distance? Is its interior visible from the outside?
- Is there a good connection between the space and the adjacent built/land form, or is it surrounded by a blank and boring canvas? Do occupants of adjacent buildings use the space?
- Can people easily walk to the place? Do pathways lead to and from the adjacent areas?
- Do the roads and paths through the space take people where they actually want to go?
- Does the space function for people with special needs?
- Can people use a variety of transportation options – bus train, car, bicycle, etc. – to reach the place? Are transit stops conveniently located next to destinations?

COMFORT & IMAGE

Whether a space is comfortable and presents itself well – has a good image – is key to its success. Comfort includes perceptions about safety, cleanliness, and the

What Makes a SUCCESSFUL Place?

availability of places to sit – the importance of giving people the choice to sit where they want is generally underestimated.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ON COMFORT & IMAGE:

- Does the place make a good first impression?
- Is there diversity in members of the community using the place?
- Are there enough places to sit? Are seats conveniently located? Do people have a choice of places to sit, either in the sun or shade?
- Are spaces clean and free of litter? Who is responsible for maintenance? What do they do? When?
- Does the area feel safe?
- Are people taking pictures? Are there many photo opportunities available?
- Do vehicles dominate pedestrian use of the space, or prevent them from easily getting to the space?

USES & ACTIVITIES

Activities are the basic building blocks of a place. Having something to do gives people a reason to come to a place – and return. When there is nothing to do, a space will be empty and that generally means that something is wrong.

PRINCIPLES TO KEEP IN MIND IN EVALUATING THE USES AND ACTIVITIES OF A PLACE:

The more activities that are going and that people have an opportunity to participate in, the better.

- There is a good balance between men, women, children, elderly.
- People of different ages are using the space (retired people and people with young children can use a space during the day when others are working).
- The space is used throughout the day.

What Makes a SUCCESSFUL Place?

- A space that is used by both singles and people in groups is better than one that is just used by people alone because it means that there are places for people to sit with friends, there is more socializing, and it is more fun.
- The ultimate determinant of a place's success is how well it is managed.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ON USES & ACTIVITIES:

- Are people using the space or is it empty?
- Is it used by people of different ages?
- Are people in groups?
- How many different types of activities are occurring – people walking, eating, playing, relaxing, reading?
- Which parts of the space are used and which are not?
- Are there choices of things to do?
- Is there a management presence, or can you identify anyone is in charge of the space?

SOCIABILITY

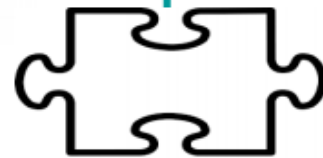
This is a difficult quality for a place to achieve, but once attained it becomes an unmistakable feature. When people see friends, meet and greet their neighbours, and feel comfortable interacting with strangers, they tend to feel a stronger sense of place or attachment to their community – and to the place that fosters these types of social activities.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ON SOCIABILITY:

- Is this a place where you would choose to meet your friends? Are others meeting friends here or running into them?
- Are people in groups? Are they talking with one another?
- Do people seem to know each other by face or by name?

What Makes a **SUCCESSFUL** Place?

- Do people bring their friends and relatives to see the place or do they point to one of its features with pride?
- Are people smiling? Do people make eye contact with each other?
- Do people use the place regularly and by choice?
- Does a mix of ages and ethnic groups that generally reflect the community at large?
- Do people tend to pick up litter when they see it?



Place Management

- **Vision** (strategy & tactics)
- **Governance** (Council +)
- **Stakeholder Relations / Partnerships**
- **Program Coordination** (Implementation, Action, Opportunistic)
- **Advocacy / Marketing / Communications**
- **Performance measurement** (Intelligence / Data / Statistics)

Physical Environment	Access & Movement	PEOPLE / Community / Relationships	Activity / Investment	Operations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Realm • Open Spaces • Facilities and Community Infrastructure • Infrastructure • Urban Design / Built form • Urban Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access & circulation • Traffic Management & Loading • Car parking • Walking / Cycling • Public Transport • Wayfinding / Info • Travel demand / behavior change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders , groups , partnerships, participation • Advocacy • Arts and culture, events • Community participation • Recreation and Leisure • Health and Wellbeing • Community Services • Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment & development facilitation • Business development and support • Advocacy • Place marketing & promotion • Events and Activation • Participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning / Waste • Safety and security • Local laws • Maintenance of public realm and infrastructure • Emergency response