Powerful Placemaking; Collaborative Design at the intersection of Culture and the Built Environment

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What is Placemaking?

“the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work and play in.” - Robert Steuteville

AND / OR

“a people-centered approach to the planning, design, and management of public spaces” – Placemaking Chicago
Placemaking is a PROCESS that fosters the creation of vital destinations; the kind of places where people feel a strong stake in their community’s assets, inspiration, and potential.
The Project for Public Places View...

Placemaking IS
- Community-driven
- Visionary
- Function before form
- Adaptable
- Inclusive
- Focused on creating destinations
- Context-specific
- Dynamic
- Trans-disciplinary
- Transformative
- Flexible
- Collaborative
- Sociable

Placemaking IS NOT
- Top-down
- Reactionary
- Design-driven
- A blanket solution or quick fix
- Exclusionary
- Car-centric
- One-size-fits-all
- Static
- Discipline-driven
- One-dimensional
- Dependent on regulatory controls
- A cost/benefit analysis
- Project-focused
Placemaking requires us to think outside the box...
Placemaking is intersectional:

engages people in shared spaces within built and cultural environments
Placemaking = design | culture

A collaborative multidisciplinary design process that delivers quality buildings, locations, or spaces that possess a strong sense of place that people and businesses are drawn to.

A responsive approach to social, environmental, economic, and built contexts.
And....

Emphasizes people.

Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being.
Why embrace Placemaking?

◊ Economics

◊ Economic development tool
◊ Critical component of sustainable economies. *Towns and cities, neighborhoods and locations with QUALITY PLACES thrive.*

◊ Social cohesion (but not conformance)

◊ Drives community pride and social investment, *inspires stewardship and belonging.*
◊ Opportunity to build something together

◊ Quality Built Environment

◊ Creates distinctive environments in which we *enrich our experience.*
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. They are:

1. Safe
2. Connected (strong adjacencies)
3. Welcoming
4. Conducive to authentic experiences (not Disneyland)
5. Accessible; people can easily circulate within and to and from these locations
6. Comfortable; they are appropriate to the culture
7. Sociable; they have a physical fabric that encourages people to connect with one another
8. Able to promote and facilitate civic engagement.

Robert Steuteville’s “quality place”

Editor of Public Square: A CNU Journal and senior communications adviser for the Congress for the New Urbanism.
Characteristics of Quality Places

1. Mass, density, scale, texture, color, materials appropriate to place
2. Human scale – designed for people
3. Walkable – pedestrian oriented
4. Integrated with and responsive to physical, social, and economic contexts
5. Carry layers of meaning or creates the opportunity for meaning
Quality Place Design Considerations

- **People**
  - Users of the building/site AND adjacent users
  - Sociable; they have a physical fabric that encourages people to connect with one another
  - Able to promote and facilitate civic engagement.
  - Safe
  - Welcoming
  - Comfortable; they address cleanliness, character, and charm

- **Context**
  - Integrated with and responsive to physical, social, and economic contexts
  - Walkable – pedestrian oriented
  - Connected (strong adjacencies)
  - Accessible; people can easily circulate to and within these locations

- **Form**
  - Mass, density, scale, texture, color, materials appropriate to place
  - Conducive to authentic experiences (not Disneyland)
  - Carry layers of meaning or create the opportunity for meaning
What is a Quality Place?

Any location that contributes to a vibrant community.
THERENESS
over
ANYWHERENESS
INCLUSIVE

Over

EXCLUSIVE
Philadelphia City Hall, Dilworth Park, Philadelphia
David W. Dyer Federal Building, Miami
Tactical Placemaking
Creative Placemaking
Strategic Placemaking
Standard Placemaking

4 Types of Placemaking

Source: Steuteville, Wyckoff, and others
Tactical Placemaking

A process of creating quality places using a deliberate, phased approach to change through short-term, low-cost projects that target public spaces.

“Tactical Urbanism” and “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper”

Both seek to test new concepts through an action planning process that transforms underutilized spaces. These scaled-down and targeted efforts showcase the different possibilities and new uses for public spaces, and encourage experimentation before making any substantial political and economic commitments.

Projects: Road diets and other Complete Streets projects, or the construction of new forms of neighborhood dwellings such as a passive solar home.

Activities: Chair bombing, pop-up cafes, parking space conversions into parklets, guerilla gardening and a variety of other activities designed to reinvent public spaces.
Multiple Locations

- Temporary installations
- Help people see space in a new way
- Opportunity to test ideas and engage community
- AIA 2016 Emerging Professionals exhibit "It takes a Community" Crowdus Pop Up Park
- ASLA annual PARK(ing) Day
Creative Placemaking

Brings new life to public spaces by applying arts, culture and creative thinking to all aspects of the built environment in order to stimulate activity and reawaken underutilized spaces. Bringing these arts and cultural activities and experiences to the forefront helps shape community identity through increased social interaction and public engagement, while also strengthening the sense of pride and connectivity among community members.

Projects: Development that is built around and inclusive of the arts, such as museums, performance halls, public art displays or livework structures for local artists.

Activities: Outdoor town square concerts, sculpture loan programs, public art contests or movies and plays in the park.
Faulkton, SD
Pop 785
2018

Right people at the right time!

Existing and active Arts Council who spearheaded the project

“Aussie Dave” Hedt knew the work of muralist Guido Van Helton (who was from an adjacent town in Australia)

The Last Buffalo Hunt painted by Nigerian artists Jonathan Imafidor and Dotun Popoola, introduced to the town by John Lopez (they were working at his studio in Lemmon, SD)
Strategic Placemaking

This type focuses on creating quality places that talented workers want to live, work, play and learn in, thereby attracting further job creation and economic development opportunities to the community. These projects are typically targeted in downtowns and along key corridors in transect locations with dense urban populations, and result in quality, human scale, pedestrian-oriented environments that boast multiple housing, transportation and recreation options nearby.

Projects: Mixed-use developments in targeted locations, green pathways to parks and waterfronts, or other entertainment facilities and places for social gatherings around these key centers, nodes and corridors.

Activities: Cyclical events targeted to talented workers along with other arts, cultural, entertainment and recreational amenities that attract a wide range of users.
The High Line

2009

Community-driven Vision

City-supported

Public-Private Partnership
CSX Transportation-Friends of the High Line – City of New York

Multi-disciplinary collaboration
• James Corner Field Operations
• Diller Scofidio + Renfro
• Piet Oudolf
• Buro Happold / Robert Silman Associates
• NYC Dept. Of City Planning

Process
• Driven by two people, collaborated with each adjacent neighborhood

Product
• In 2014, the park had nearly five million visitors annually,
• By 2019, it had eight million visitors per year
• Adjacent gentrification
• Community Parks Initiative
An incremental way to improve the quality and vitality of a place with many separate projects and/or activities that may be pursued by public, non-profit and private sectors on a targeted basis over an extended period of time.

Standard Placemaking

Project Types: Street and facade improvements to buildings downtown, residential infill and rehabs, park improvements or other multi-use projects.

Activities: Events in public spaces such as downtown sidewalks, streets, civic buildings, parks and waterfronts.
Domino Sugar Factory

Collaboration between
Two Trees developers
SHoP Architects Master Plan
James Corner Field Operations

Stakeholders included
Grassroots orgs, Community Boards, Elected Officials
• Recreation space first, buildings second
  “Project success depends on success of public spaces”
    • New proposal that adds 60% more publicly-accessible open space on a new, highly accessible street grid
    • Provides for a new 24/7 mix of office, residential, neighborhood retail, community facilities while retaining original commitments for affordable housing (700+ AH units)
    • Introduces a new form of open architecture that connects the existing neighborhood to the new quarter-mile waterfront
• Protect historic site against natural disasters through innovative design of building infrastructure and a permeable waterfront park
Yeah, but how do you DO it?
MEET WITH THE COMMUNITY
IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

EVALUATE SPACE
IDENTIFY ISSUES

PLACE VISION

SHORT-TERM
EXPERIMENTS

ONGOING REEVALUATION & LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

DEFINE the problem

COLLECT information

BRAINSTORM AND ANALYZE ideas

DEVELOP solutions / build a test a model

IMPROVE on your design

present your ideas to others for FEEDBACK
New Role for Designers
The Conductor

- Connector
- Facilitator
- Designer / Expert
- Interpreter
- Coordinator | Collaborator
- Analyzer
- Educator
- Visionary
- Problem Solver
- Torch Carrier

Without the players....silence!
1. Placemaking Attitude

Placemaking is a PROCESS that fosters the creation of the kind of places where people feel a strong stake in their community’s assets, inspiration and potential.

- Be curious and listen
- Cultivate cultural competency
- Facilitate more inclusive meetings – asking vs telling
- Recognize when meetings / workshops are not enough
- Follow through! The process is ITERATIVE. Meet and meet again to confirm what you heard.
- Don’t be afraid of negative attitudes; they reveal important things about the place too. Listen to concerns empathetically and trust the process to winnow the results.

Remember – people know their own community best.
2. Meet People Where They ARE

- Identify stakeholders / stakeholding groups and GO TO THEM.
- Look for who is NOT at the table and ask WHY and WHO can get them to the table?
  - Build on community relationships
  - Take advantage of local ways of communicating
    - Weekly backpack notes
    - Social media
    - Community groups
    - Church bulletins
    - Community festivals
- Make them an offer they can’t refuse!
  - FOOD
  - SOMETHING EXCITING and UNUSUAL
3. Find the identity OR character of the Place

✧ Look to Context for Character
✧ Appropriate form / materials
✧ Existing community activities / festivals
✧ Who do they think they are?
✧ See what the community doesn’t see
✧ AND SHOW IT TO THEM
✧ Use lots of visuals - they push out preconceptions
✧ How to know when you’ve found IT
✧ Dot voting
✧ Reality check - spending money
✧ Online surveys if you really must
✧ In person gatherings
  ✧ Always have someone assigned to capturing the side comments
✧ Ask
✧ Reiterate - Ask Again!
4. Site and Context

- You CAN’T ignore context and succeed at Placemaking.
  - Human Context
  - Built Context
  - Natural Context
  - Political
  - Cultural
  - Social
- Identify Barriers in tandem with Program
- Many Eyes makes Clear Vision
  - Multi-disciplinary teams – leverage profession and personal expertise
  - Community groups
  - Municipalities
- Educate owner AND stakeholders of site constraints and opportunities

Find inspiration in the context
5. Understand Barriers

- Imagine and ASK!
  - Physical / Neurological
  - Psychological
  - Age
  - Access (transportation)
  - Language
  - Cultural and social
  - Economic
  - Temporary
  - Comfort

How do you meet the needs of all people who wish to use a space?
Universal Design

Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.

An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it.

This is not a special requirement, for the benefit of only a minority of the population.

It is a fundamental condition of good design. If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits.

By considering the diverse needs and abilities of all throughout the design process, universal design creates products, services and environments that meet peoples’ needs.

Universal design is good design.²
Roundup, MT
Community Driven Placemaking
Project Narrative

Roundup, Montana is a town of 1,800 in southeastern Montana. It is the county seat of Musselshell County. The Musselshell River runs along the south edge of town and beyond that are the Bull Mountains. Roundup served as a place for cattlemen to "round up" their cattle along the Musselshell River. It was the trailhead in the Great Montana Cattle Drive and now drives happen annually. The area has coal mines, which combined with the agriculture, maintain the economy of the town. Roundup is a hub in Amazon.com’s supply chain with a growing industry of prep centers, or businesses that specialize in packing goods to meet the requirements of Amazon's highly automated warehouses. The population of Roundup has more or less remained steady varying by about 300 residents since 1970.

The local Arts Council is very active and would like to increase the town’s vibrancy through the arts. The City Council wants to preserve the town’s identity as a historic cattle town. In 2018 they completed a Downtown Master Plan with big ideas but they don’t have the money to start.
Typical downtowns that are healthy have a variety of components including a mix of uses, a walkable environment, gathering spaces and community events, indoor and outdoor public spaces, programmed events, and unique retail stores.

This Downtown Master Plan is an important step in coordinating efforts and creating a long-term strategy for the reinvention of downtown Roundup. The plan serves to communicate a level of understanding to the public of what the future goals of the City are in relation to growth and economic development.

To create a healthy downtown, the City must invest in policy changes that support economic development and enhance the physical conditions. This will increase confidence in business owners and investors, and will support efforts to create new businesses and enhance those that are existing. Residents and visitors will experience a unique sense of place and a better quality of life as a result of a strong local economy and community.
How do you turn a small town into a “Quality Place”
What would People-Focused statements be?

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Saatchi & Saatchi
Auckland, New Zealand
Owner Driven Placemaking
Project Narrative

The Saatchi & Saatchi building used to be surrounded by warehouses and parking lots. They were the first ones to repurpose one of the old warehouses into office space for creative firms. In the time since they invested in their building the surrounding area is fast becoming the Design District of Auckland. Adjacent to the Central Business District old warehouses are also quickly being redeveloped as multifamily housing, mainly attracting young professionals.

The design district lies between this new housing and the City’s famous rose garden, Parnell Baths, and Hobson Bay Marina and adjacent to what will continue to be a working seaport.

The City is instating a walkability program and the multinational design firm wants to pave the way in the design language of what will certainly be the next 100 years of redevelopment. They believe that using a Placemaking process will increase the longevity of the plan and help them attract world class talent to their firm.
Only the Curious Have Something to Find

We’re a crowd of curious thinkers, leaders and doers. We’re dog lovers, beach walkers, deep-fried devotees and boundary-pushers. We firmly believe that with a childish sense of wonder, the most cutting-edge technology and an openness to embrace the new, we can imagine the impossible and prove it is totally within our reach.
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The Old Strip Mall
Neighborhood Driven Placemaking
Project Narrative

The owner group of the strip mall sees an opportunity to capitalize on the encroaching redevelopment of the major arterial street. They’re not sure if they want to sell or redevelop.

The surrounding area is heavily residential and still affordable with stylish multi-family housing filling in the areas between the arterial commercial area and single-family residential areas.

A strong part of the neighborhood identity is the authentic food options available within walking distance, but they wish it looked better and was more walkable. Both homeowners and renters of the strip mall worry that if the area is fixed up too much rising rents will push them out of this unique socially connected and culturally vibrant neighborhood.

The City has a non-gentrification policy but also wants to clean up the street and make it more walkable.

Your firm has been asked by the Neighborhood Association to help them preserve the spirit of the community, make sure the restaurants can stay in place, and show how Placemaking can get to a win-win-win for all stakeholders.
University Hills Neighborhood

- University Hills North is distinct from the UH South
- 14.9% Foreign born
- Languages
  - Spanish
  - Arabic
  - Nepali
  - Russian
  - Amharic
  - French
- Strong Neighborhood association
- University of Colorado small area plan, but City has not done one
- Colorado Blvd. Plan
Can a strip mall be a “Quality Place”?
What is your process to find out?
Thank you!

Tanya Olson, PLA, ASLA

Tallgrass Landscape Architecture