Placemaking: Beyond the Basics

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TA Connect Placemaking Workshop
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#placemaking
What is Placemaking?

thoughts from the field…
Placemaking is the act of people coming together in their physical environment to deliberately design, plan, program and maintain public spaces to facilitate social interaction and improve quality of life.

Places in the Making, MIT 2013
Placemaking

What is it?

- Concerned with public spaces and places and privately owned “public” space
- Created collaboratively
- Creates change in the physical environment as well as:
  - Social
  - Political
- Changes can be temporary or permanent
- Typically iterative processes
- Community-based
- Proactive
- Needs strong leadership
- Depends on action and results...not simple a plan on paper
• Top-down
• Created from a rigid “playbook” or “rule book”
• Only about design
• Focused on form over function, on looks over practicality
• Dependent only on government or on money to get things done
• Only reactive
• Short sighted
Why is it Important?
In the long history of human settlement, public places have reflected the needs and cultures of community.
Communities lost the tradition and practice of having a local and active political voice.
Citizens should show humility in the face of expertise.

American Political Science Association, 1914
What began as a reaction against auto-centric planning, “top-down” interventions, and bad public spaces has grown into a movement that addresses much more.
build or improve public space          spark public discourse

create beauty and delight

engender civic pride

connect neighborhoods

support community health and safety

seek social justice

catalyze economic development

promote environmental sustainability

Support arts and culture

"
Placemaking

A Sample of Projects…

• Public Plazas
• Public amenities (boat launches, harborwalks, recreational paths)
• Farmers’ Markets
• Public Markets/Entrepreneur Commercial Kitchens
• Pop-Up Retail/Dining
• Innovation and incubator space and associate public spaces
• Open Space and Parks
• Streetscape improvements
• Bike Paths, Parklets, Traffic Calming
• Event spaces such as band shells, concert areas, outdoor theatres
• Other public space enhancements and activators
Types of Placemaking
1. Standard (basic permanent public realm improvements)
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2. Tactical Urbanism
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2. Tactical Urbanism
3. Creative Placemaking
1. Standard (basic permanent public realm improvements)
2. Tactical Urbanism
3. Creative Placemaking
4. Strategic Placemaking
Long-view of change
Broad public engagement over a prolonged period
Usually high capital cost or combined higher capital costs than other methods
More professionals involved
More regulation, approvals processes
Takes longer to implement, focus on incremental change or big catalytic projects
May start out temporary/tactical and become permanent after pilots, success demonstration, fundraising, building political will, etc.
Detroit Kitchen Connect's Kitchen Partner
Facility: Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church (Southwest)

Ss. Peter & Paul is a 654 square foot, shared-use commercial kitchen. There are four stainless steel workable prep stations (3 x 2' 6" x 8' & 1 x 2' 6" x 5') & a double stack convection oven, a 6 burner stove, a 3-door side-by-side refrigerator, along with a full range of commercial kitchen equipment. Other amenities include a 30" Fulgor commercial grade dishwasher, dry storage cases, rackable wire cages, and rolling pair racks. Tenants will have access to hourly rental of the facilities and the equipment once accepted into the program.
Placemaking

Tactical Urbanism

• Targeted to a very specific and focused end
• Most open to being led by lay persons, often no professionals are “officially” involved
• Often ignores rules, or openly seeks to break them
• Short term and temporary interventions, incremental change
• Small budgets, borrowed materials
• Low risk approach, flexible, changeable
• Lighter, cheaper, quicker
• Instant implementation
• Can sometimes lead to changes in regulatory frameworks, or to permanent physical changes
• Can serve as pilot projects, test runs for new ideas
• Uses arts and culture to effect positive change
• Often uses arts and cultural organizations for community engagement, exploration of ideas, implementation
• Can seek to speak to creative class/innovative industries
• Animates public space and public uses around cultural and arts
• Often incorporates public art, music/performance venues, artist housing, museums, cultural programming
THIS IS A PLACE TO THINK + DREAM + MAKE + DO.
Who would you chat with?

Bring your lunch and a chair, and someone to chat with!

(if only these chairs could swivel)

Odeon Alley (on Yates)
April 16 @ Noon
Strategic Placemaking

- Targets specific outcomes, usually tied to economic development, jobs
- May focus on community revitalization in a specific area
- Seeks to reposition cities or towns to attract workers and residents
- May focus on visitor economy initiatives
- Targets knowledge workers to shift local economies from industrial to knowledge/creative economies
Lack of Activities + Retail After 5 PM
- Tactical Urbanism at Federal Square
- Coordinated brand and marketing for Downtown District and Theatre District
- Density of food trucks to create destination for food

Not Enough Foot Traffic

Perceptions of High Crime + Feelings of Insecurity
- Actively program spaces when homeless seem most visible
- More foot traffic and more public space users will lessen negative perceptions of homeless as being overwhelming

Strong Dining Competition
- Food trucks can emphasize the changing nature of eating options in the District
- Market the uniqueness of the Theatre District – the Common, office workers, Theatre-goers

High Asking Rents
- First few months free of charge/reduced rent
- Coordinated effort with property owners to get spaces rented

Poor Curb Appeal
- Tactical urbanist approaches – wall murals, chair bombings, bottle walls, etc., to create interesting visual elements in inexpensive, quick ways
- Technical assistance and mentorship re: facades, interior design, logos, branding, marketing
- Façade improvement grants

High Risk Start-Up Venture With High Failure Rate
- Delayed/reduced rent for first months of leasing
- Financing and build-out cost grants from City and other entities
- Robust food truck program that supports entrepreneurs as “first step” testing of restaurant concepts and menus
- Technical assistance provided by TDI partnership
- Streamlined permitting
FOOD! IN THE THEATRE DISTRICT

**Asian Le's Soul Food**
520 (AIA 5th) Main Street

Family-owned soul food and fish bar serving BBQ in a relaxing environment.

**Crown Fried Chicken**
4 Main Street

Take-out chain specializing in fried foods including wings, chicken and sandwiches.

**Jadiney Coffee Shop**
32 Main Street

Coffee shop.

**Dunbar Donuts**
457 Main Street

Donuts, breakfast pastries, and a variety of coffee drinks.

Fancy's La Patisserie
72 Main St

A small, family-owned café with an assortment of French bakery and sweet pastries and fresh-baked offerings.

**Mathis Bros. Chocolates**
32 Main Street

Public library visit offering handmade chocolates (by Eric's Chocolatier) and all kinds of truffles.

**Food Truck Chronicles**
Located in the Center of the World. (Common Goal)

Every Tuesday at 5pm, a variety of local food trucks serve up a small taste of the globe.

**Great Wall Restaurant**
509 Main Street

Chinese Restaurant menu for all to try. It's a hit among locals.

The Sushi Chef
405 4th Street

Sushi shop serving fresh mountain seafood and sashimi.

**Lucy's Cafe at Millstone**

American style restaurant serving high end comfort food in a rustic themed atmosphere.

**The Muse**
529 Main Street

A well-crafted bar offering a selection of cocktails and American-style fare and a game room.

**Okura Japanese Restaurant**
8 Franklin Street

Sushi restaurant serving lunch, dinner, and late night.

**Saluté's**
10 Front Street

Gourmet Italian cuisine and wine serve it in the Urban Business District. Breakfast, lunch and dinner menu for two plus, hearty meals.

**Shanghai La Asian Restaurant and Bar**
52 Front Street

Casual setting with a menu of Asian & American Dishes.

**Tatiana's**
17th (AIA 20th) Main Street

Muffins, bagels, and sandwiches in a fast-casual setting.

**Theater Bar**
509 (AIA 5th) Main Street

Breakfast, sandwiches, and dinner served, open every day and customer specials before all Hanover Theater shows.

**Uma Pizza**
407 Main Street

Last buck happy hour serves up two courses (pizza and a drink) for $10.00.
A Guide to Making it Happen

...Answering six questions
#1: What makes a great place?

- A mix of uses
- Connectedness
  - Physically
  - Culturally
  - Virtually
- Programming
- Hard/soft spaces
- Comfort/Security
- User friendly
- Fun
WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?

PLACE

SOCIABILITY

USES & ACTIVITIES

ACCESS & LINKAGES

COMFORT & IMAGE

PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES
#2: What creates a good collaborative environment?

- Think strategically (benefits, contributions, needs, interests)
- Spread ownership (and credit)
- Create a community “watercooler
- Set things up for incremental change, goals, successes
- Know who has the power
#3: What is the role of government?

- Having no money is no longer an excuse
- “In-kind enabler” of positive change
- Use all the tools at government’s disposal
The Role of Government in Placemaking

While government intervention is important, “governments should act more adroitly, both in the selective use of their own resources, and in drawing upon the full range of their abilities to engage the much greater resource of private and institutional action…”

Mark Schuster, “Preserving the Built Heritage: Tools for Implementation”
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The Tools at Government’s Disposal

It’s not all about money; government as an “in-kind” enabler of placemaking:

Seven ways the City can support placemaking (and financial and civic investment):

1. Ownership, operation
2. Regulation
3. Incentives
4. Property rights
5. Information
6. Technical assistance

Adapted and expanded from “Preserving the Built Heritage: Tools for Implementation”
7. ...sometimes, by simply getting out of the way
#4: How do you get results with limited resources?

- What kind of placemaking is most appropriate for your current capacity?
- Spread ownership
- Engender excitement and delight
- Offer leadership in collaboration, in doing
- Set tangible, measurable goals
- Match the goals to the support available
- What are in-kind supports that could make a huge difference?
- Identify barriers that are about mindsets, not bank balances
Placemaking

#5: How do you measure success?

• Create tangible goals
• Success must be measurable
• Demonstrate effectiveness to the community, public officials, funders
The answer is never
A project has many parts...each with the ability to garner support, improve space, enhance success

#6: How do you know when the project is done?
The Virtuous Cycle of Placemaking

- Organize
- Deliberate
- Share
- Design
- Reflect
- Fund
- Evaluate
- Build/host event
- Maintain
- Program

Entry point for engagement—community, funders, partners, advocates, city officials, etc.
Today’s placemaking represents a comeback for community. The iterative actions and collaborations inherent in the making of places nourish communities and empower people.
This mutual stewardship of place and community is the **virtuous cycle of placemaking**.
In the mutual stewardship of place and community, communities transform places, which in turn transform communities, and so on...
The new model of placemaking emphasizes flexibility, shares information, and draws on unorthodox sources for influence. It empowers everyday users to become makers, to share ideas, and to form alliances.
Placemaking Basics

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