



PLACEMAKING FOR REALTOR® ASSOCIATIONS

Guide to Transform Public Spaces to Community Places

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OVERVIEW

Placemaking is a relatively new term, but it reflects a traditional and conventional concept. It is an old idea made new again. Placemaking is simply a way of creating a place in a community where people want to visit and be. These places are welcoming, safe, comfortable, aesthetically pleasing, usable, accessible and invite interaction. Placemaking is where a space is turned into a place where residents, and others, can connect with each other to meet, greet, gather, and come together as a community. A space becomes a place when there is a reason to go there.

Think of all the empty, vacant, unsafe, dysfunctional, uninviting, underused lots, squares, plazas, parks, bus stops, sidewalks, streets and waterfronts in your community. More than likely, they are avoided, bypassed and ignored. Placemaking can turn them around.



Underutilized lot on Centre Street in Trenton, New Jersey selected by the New Jersey REALTORS® for a placemaking project.



The underutilized is now an educational community garden at the Boys and Girls Club but accessible to everyone in the community. New Jersey REALTORS®

Placemaking is beneficial to a community. It can foster healthier, more social, and economically viable communities. Placemaking creates the kind of places where people feel a strong stake in their communities and a commitment to making things better.

When a vacant, unused or underused property is made useful again and encourages people to congregate in the space, it will help to support the neighborhood economy. It may help to reduce crime as more people will be visible and out and about.

Creating a place in one area may help to catalyze private investment and small-scale entrepreneurial activities in other areas in the surrounding community. As a place becomes desirable, properties around the place increase in value.



Turning a place from one that you can't wait to get through into one that you never want to leave.

FRED KENT Project for Public Spaces



OVERVIEW

Great places draw an ethnically, culturally and socially diverse population. A great place creates a sense of pride among residents and inspires them to do more.

Every community has a variety of public spaces, some of which are noticeable and others which may be hidden. Public places most recognized are parks, streets, boulevards, and plazas. But public spaces are also found in between private spaces such as alleys, neglected courtyards, and stairways. These could be a city's most underutilized and potentially valuable assets.

However, even noticeable public spaces in communities may be unused or underused because of safety concerns or because they have deteriorated — all of which can be improved to increase their usage and usefulness and to strengthen and enrich a community.

Placemaking can enhance a public space and make it come to life. You can help by identifying a public place and developing its positive potential so that whole community can benefit.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE

In evaluating thousands of public spaces around the world, the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) has found successful places have four key qualities in common: 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. PPS developed the Place Diagram as a tool to help people in judging any place, good or bad.



OVERVIEW

You can use the Place Diagram to evaluate places in your community to see if they meet PPS's great place standards and in your planning efforts to make a place better.

A great place offers a variety of things to do or see. These activities could be as simple as reading a newspaper, listening to music, sitting on the grass or a bench, eating lunch, etc.

The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) uses the "[Power of 10](#)," which it defines as the idea that any great place needs to have at least 10 things to do in it or 10 reasons to be there. The concept then expands to reflect the fact that a city shouldn't only have one great neighborhood but many, and a region should not only have one livable city but a collection of interesting communities. See a [Power of 10 example](#) applied to locations in Chicago.



Think about one of the best places in your neighborhood and try to describe 10 things that you could do in that place or in that neighborhood. Then imagine how these things can be transferred to other places in your community to make them great places, too.

PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

GET THINGS STARTED WITH A BETTER BLOCK

One way to initiate Placemaking could be with a [Better Block project](#), which is a tool where communities engage in a temporary, short-term (usually 1–2 days) build-out process to show the potential of a one to two block area in need of revitalization.

A Better Block project's focus is to bring back a neighborhood rapidly rather than developing a larger scale, more financially complex project that could take years. It can help people come together to create a community destination quickly.

Ideas for a Better Block project could include creating pop-up businesses, installing seating areas and planters, inviting local musicians to play and artists to paint, temporarily changing traffic patterns and parking, and making the block more people- and bike-friendly. Some of these temporary gathering spots could become permanent public spaces.

As part of a Better Block, you may also want to consider planning and organizing a tour of the vacant buildings. Deb Brown, Director of the Webster City, Iowa, Chamber of Commerce, looked at the empty store fronts downtown and other available buildings around town as opportunities. She and her team held a [Tour of Empty Buildings](#). They worked with local real estate professionals as point people on the tour to field questions about what businesses could be a good fit, square footage, cost, condition and so on. Deb notes that it is important to build relationships with members in your community and ask for their help. They may be able to be part of the tour and provide details about the history of the buildings.

Better Block started over a weekend in April 2010, when a few friends gathered to demonstrate what a revitalized commercial area would look like in Dallas, Texas. The group brought together resources from the community and converted the block into a walkable, bikeable neighborhood destination for people of all ages.

This initial project was developed to show the city how the block could be revived and improved if ordinances that restricted small business and multi-modal infrastructure were removed. Since that time, Better Block projects have been developed throughout the nation with many of the temporary infrastructure improvements and businesses made permanent.

PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES



If your Association implements a Better Block project, you may then want to advocate for zoning that would enable the temporary vision to become permanent. NAR's Land Use Initiative can provide an analysis of a pending local land-use regulation or ordinance, as well as help craft your association's response to a proposed local ordinance to support your efforts.

Here are some examples of Better Block projects:

- [The Better Block Project San Antonio](#)
- [Better Block Jefferson Park](#)
- [Norfolk Better Block](#)

Matchmaking between entrepreneurs, developers, potential gallery curators, real estate professionals, and the representatives of vacant properties happens in Better Block Projects. According to Andrew Howard of Team Better Block, real estate professionals associated with projects in Dallas, San Antonio, Fort Worth, Memphis, Norfolk, and elsewhere reported sales of long vacant buildings and/or new leases after a Build a Better block initiative.

The Better Block approach is gaining traction as a best practice for increasing community consensus on zoning changes, economic incentives and infrastructure projects. The [Better Block website](#) provides help for communities who wish to build their own Better Blocks, complete with news, tools, and other resources needed to help rapidly revitalize neighborhoods. Team Better Block provides consulting services, including workshop trainings and creation of a real time experience of a revitalized street.

See [Better Block Guide for Associations](#).

PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

BEFORE



Boise Regional REALTORS® conducted a Walkable Community Workshop to create a more pedestrian-friendly and livable Orchard Street.

AFTER



As part of the Workshop, the consultants created a photo-vision of how the area could be transformed.



Is there a block(s) in your community that is run-down, gets little or no foot traffic and where buildings are not leased? You may want to work with partners in your community to plan a Build a Better Block project.

“

Real estate professionals are finding Better Block is an innovative way to showcase the potential for revitalization in areas that have long been vacant or underutilized. The weekend transformations have resulted in property sales, new leases and a revived attitude toward the marketability of overlooked blocks.

ANDREW HOWARD *Team Better Block*

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PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

LIGHTER, QUICKER, CHEAPER

Lighter Quicker Cheaper (LQC) is a concept developed by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS.) It is a “do-it-yourself approach to Placemaking based on taking incremental steps, trying low-cost experiments, and tapping into local talents (e.g. citizens, entrepreneurs, developers, and city staff) to quickly translate a community’s vision into reality and build momentum for further improvements.”

Marisa Novara, Program Director for the Metropolitan Planning Council in Chicago, sees LQC as one way of dealing with the realities of vacant lots and open storefronts.

LQC may consist of several small projects in a neighborhood where, taken together, they will make the neighborhood a better place to live, work and play.



Images from the Michigan Association of REALTORS®' Lighter Quicker Cheaper Challenge reflecting Placemaking projects in Lansing, Michigan.

These hands-on projects can be proposed and finished in months or even weeks. They are low-cost and provide a tangible, beautiful benefit to the community.

Some examples of Lighter Quicker Cheaper projects include a community paint day, walking tour/maps, murals, seating, pedestrian havens, public art, butterfly or community gardens, bus shelters, parklets, banners, and a community toolshed. Challenge your members to come up with even more ideas.

Another use of the LQC concept is to transform transitional spaces waiting for development into low-cost, temporary uses.

“

When lenders aren't lending, when buyers aren't buying, when tax credit investors can't be found and the desired market doesn't yet exist, the question becomes what do we do with our unused, underused, misused, abandoned, or under construction public spaces? What do we do, in other words, in the meantime?

”

MARISA NOVARA Metropolitan Planning Council, Chicago

PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

The [Metropolitan Planning Council](#) acknowledges that the vacant spaces in Chicago, particularly in neighborhoods that bore the brunt of the recession, will take a while to achieve their ideal use. In the meantime, it has set out to create meaningful places to exist between a vacant space's current state and its ideal, finished state.

When Denver's Union Station underwent a long-term redevelopment, the city issued an open call for artists to present ideas for livening up the massive construction fences that surrounded the site. A crew of crocheters called the [Ladies Fancywork Society](#) received a small grant to "yarn bomb" the fence, turning it into a faux garden of crocheted flowers, butterflies and ladybugs that became a tourism draw in and of itself.



Putting vacant space to use in Denver.

In Washington, DC, the Office of Planning has developed a [Temporary Urbanism Initiative](#) to transform vacant spaces into vibrant destinations and animated showcases through unique uses. The project includes development of [art and culture temporiums](#) which transforms vacant storefronts or spaces into unique temporary retail shops for local entrepreneurs to exhibit and sell their work.



Is there a site under construction in your community? Is the area around your office in need of some tender loving care? You may want to implement a Lighter Quicker Cheaper project to spiff up the space and turn an eyesore into a place that is attractive and welcoming.



These smaller projects will energize the project as a whole. You must go through incremental steps first, and the best use of our resources was as a supplement to the larger projects.



KATHIE FELDPAUSCH SVP, Michigan Association of REALTORS®

PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

STREETS AND TRANSIT

Many communities are looking at creating transportation systems that enhance places. Rather than just designing roads to accommodate motor vehicles, Placemaking aims to balance all the users of a street — pedestrians, transit riders, motorists and bicyclists. Transit facilities, from a bus stop to a train station, and transportation corridors, from a main street to a boulevard, can function as focal points for shopping, community, economic and social activities. Planning should address how these facilities connect to the surrounding districts and public spaces and make these areas more economically stable, safe and productive.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health created [Streets for People](#) (S4P) to transform rights of way such as traffic islands and other underused spots into attractive public spaces. Using design elements such as rows of planters and bistro tables and chairs, they are using this as a model to create green spaces around Los Angeles.

[San Francisco's Pavement to Parks Program](#) facilitates the conversion of utilitarian and often underused spaces in the street into publicly accessible open spaces available for all to enjoy. The program includes the [Parklet Program](#) designed to create parklets which repurpose part of a street into a public space for people. Parklets provide amenities like seating, plantings, bike parking, and art.



This welcoming bus stop is becoming one of the most visited tourist attractions in Shetland, Great Britain.

Bus stops are places that can be enhanced and made more welcoming and comfortable by developing a bus stop area plan, which can include adding bus shelters with benches, planting trees, installing/enhancing street lights, hanging banners, installing kiosks, and redesigning streets to be more pedestrian-friendly. Revitalizing adjacent vacant lots by transforming them into parks and community gathering spots improves the value of the bus stops as places.

PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

Many main thoroughfares in a community could be turned into pedestrian-friendly places by increasing the width of sidewalks, enabling parking on both sides of the street, emphasizing bike lanes, installing decorative light fixtures, planters, paver-block sidewalks and crosswalks, benches, trash containers and other amenities.

TRAFFIC-CALMING

Traffic calming measures are design and management strategies to balance street traffic with other uses to help create and preserve a sense of place so that people can safely walk, stroll, meet, play, and shop along and near streets.

While we typically associate traffic calming with speed humps or curb extensions that narrow a roadway, creative use of paint or decorative plantings can also make streets safer, as well as enhancing the street space and make it appealing.

These projects can help to reduce speeding along residential streets and help remind people they are in a neighborhood full of people — playing children, pets, dog-walkers, bicyclists, and individuals. Street paintings and other unusual visuals and activities — painting on the street, boulevard gardens, sidewalk chalking designs — can create cues that tell drivers to slow down and drive more attentively.



Where is the most unwelcoming bus stop(s) in your community? Wouldn't it be great to transform that stop into a welcoming, fun, inviting place to wait for a bus?



A portion of the BoulevART 2012 Project, Highland Park, New York.

PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

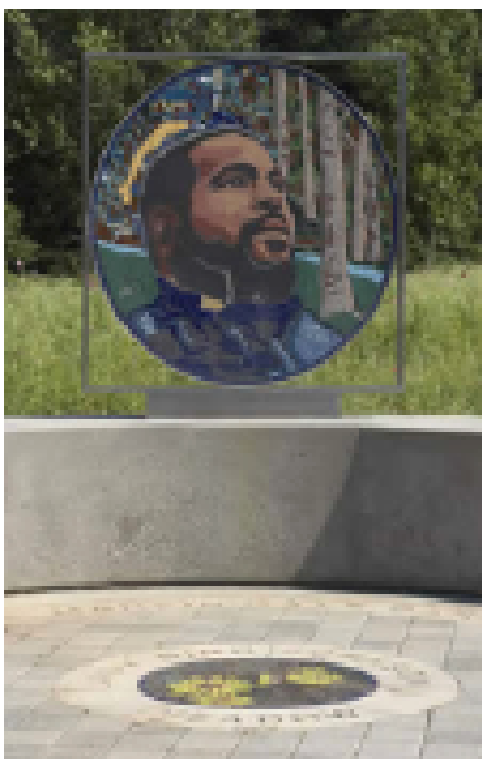
Communities across our nation are leveraging the arts and engaging design to make their communities more livable with enhanced quality of life, increased creative activity, a distinct sense of place, and vibrant local economies that together capitalize on their existing assets.

Artscape DIY identifies several components to creative Placemaking including cultural districts, creative and cultural industry clusters, mixed-use development, and public and community arts.

Many communities are integrating arts and cultural projects into larger Placemaking initiatives. Public art, which is one component of creative Placemaking, includes works such as large-scale sculptures, projections, mosaics, fountains, monuments, light installations or murals, which are displayed in the public realm to be enjoyed by all. Public art projects are a simple way to get started with creative Placemaking in your community.



Do you know of any local arts organizations that you can partner with to plan a project to create better places by installing works of art, or to work with local residents on a creative Placemaking activity?



As part of the renovation and beautification of [Marvin Gaye Park](#) (Washington, DC), City Arts created a mosaic medallion paying tribute to the park's namesake. The opposite side of the medallion highlights the wildlife and vegetation found in the Anacostia River environment. Other improvements at the park include a community stage, playground, plaza, seat wall, tables, shade and native trees, shrubs and ground covers in addition to the completion of a bicycle trail that runs throughout the park.

PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

MAIN STREET

Main Street America is an approach to revitalizing traditional commercial districts in a community. A Main Street approach can be considered Placemaking as the end result will enable people to come together to live, work and play in their community.

Main Street America believes a city or town's "main street" is the core of a community. They define Main Street® as three things: a proven strategy for revitalization, a powerful network of linked communities, and a national support program that leads the field. The Main Street Four-Point Approach® is a unique preservation-based economic development tool that enables communities to revitalize downtown and neighborhood business districts by leveraging local assets — from historic, cultural, and architectural resources to local enterprises and community pride.



Volunteers with [Quincy's Main Street program](#) and Quincy Preserves, the local preservation advocacy group, helped jumpstart the downtown's revival by stripping off "slipcovers" and calling attention to the downtown's spectacular commercial architecture.

Most states have their own Main Street programs and provide local Main Street organizations with training, tools, information, and networking. Some states, in turn, have regional and local Main Street programs. See a list of [Main Street programs in the U.S.](#)

A Main Street program will be more comprehensive than the other Placemaking projects mentioned above and, accordingly, will require more resources and support to plan and manage. Main Street America [provides recommendations](#), such as forming a working group and analyzing your commercial district, to generate the local support necessary to establish a Main Street revitalization initiative.

RESOURCE

[NAR's Smart Growth Grant](#) can be used to fund the planning of any of the strategies listed above.



Is there a town in your area that could benefit from analysis and revitalization of its main street? If so, you may want to follow in the footsteps of the [Medina County Board of REALTORS®](#).

TYPES OF PLACEMAKING PROJECTS

PARKLETS:

Convert curbside parking spaces into vibrant community spaces. Most parklets have incorporate seating, greenery, and/or bike racks and accommodate unmet demand for public space. See:

- [How to Create a Parklet](#)
- [Parklets: Spots for People, not Cars](#)
- [Bringing Parklets to Chicago](#)



Parklets: Capital Area REALTORS®



Parklets: Seattle King County REALTORS®

TYPES OF PLACEMAKING PROJECTS

POCKET PARKS:

Also known as minipark or vest-pocket parks, are urban open space at the very small scale. They are frequently created on small, irregular pieces of land or out of vacant lots or otherwise forgotten spaces. See:

- [Pocket Park — Big Mission!](#)
- [Uninviting Space to Welcoming Community Gathering Place](#)
- [Vacant Lot to an Educational Oasis](#)



Pocket Parks: Paducah Board of REALTORS®



Pocket Parks: Traverse Area Association of REALTORS®

TYPES OF PLACEMAKING PROJECTS

ALLEY ACTIVATIONS:

Improvements that convert an alley into a vibrant community space, enhance pedestrian circulation or enrich the quality fo the environment. See:

- [Meet Us in the Alley!](#)



Alley Activations: Northwest Oklahoma Association of REALTORS®



Alley Activations: South East Iowa Regional Board of REALTORS®

TYPES OF PLACEMAKING PROJECTS

TRAILS & PEDESTRIAN PATHS:

Create healthy recreation and transportation opportunities by providing people of all ages with attractive, safe, accessible and low- or no-cost places to cycle, walk, hike, jog or skate. See:

- [Our Story Walk Trail: A Place to Explore for Years to Come](#)
- [Storybook Trails: Where Kids Can Walk and Learn at the Same Time](#)
- [Building a Nation Connected by Trails](#)
- [Transit-Oriented Development to Trail-Oriented Development](#)
- [Trail Towns Grow Communities](#)



Trails & Pedestrian Paths: Greater Springfield Board of REALTORS®



Trails & Pedestrian Paths: Montgomery County Association of REALTORS®

TYPES OF PLACEMAKING PROJECTS

COMMUNITY, BUTTERFLY & POLLINATOR GARDENS:

Community gardens have the potential to beautify vacant lots, augment local food supplies and enhance the urban environment in a variety of ways. In addition to increasing the availability of fresh, healthy produce in city neighborhoods, community gardens also provide space for healthy recreation and community connections between citizens. A pollinator garden is one that attracts bees, butterflies, moths, hummingbirds or other beneficial creatures that transfer pollen from flower to flower, or in some cases, within flowers. See:

- [Spring has Sprung: Does your Neighborhood Need a Community Garden?](#)
- [Grow Your Neighborhood with a Community Garden](#)
- [REALTORS® Rescue a Garden on Their Way to Revitalizing a Neighborhood](#)
- [REALTORS® Plant Roots with the Boys and Girls Club of Trenton](#)



Three Rivers Association of REALTORS®



Community Gardens: Cape Fear REALTORS®

TYPES OF PLACEMAKING PROJECTS

PLAYGROUNDS & FITNESS AREAS:

Offer a multitude of benefits that go far beyond aesthetics and giving kids something fun to do. They are the heart of a community and an indispensable gathering space that can benefit everyone. See:

- [Turning an Eyesore into a Welcoming Kid-Friendly Place to Play](#)



Playgrounds & Fitness Areas: Helena Association of REALTORS®



Playgrounds & Fitness Areas: Cedar Rapids Area Association of REALTORS®

TYPES OF PLACEMAKING PROJECTS

DOG PARKS:

More than a just a place to walk a dog as they are also a place to make new friends, socialize, meet neighbors and spruce up a neighborhood. See:

- [Placemaking Goes to the Dogs](#)
- [Community Comes Together to Build a Place for Pooches — and People](#)
- [A Park is Now a Welcoming Spot for Pooches Too](#)
- [What Makes a Great Park for Dogs — and People](#)



Dog Parks: Greater Boston Association of REALTORS®



Dog Parks: West Hollywood Association of REALTORS®

RESOURCE

NAR's [Placemaking Grant](#) funds the creation of new public spaces and destinations in a community such as the ones listed above.

REALTORS® CAN TAKE THE LEAD

Placemaking can be undertaken by anyone in a community, but it may be a matter of getting someone like a REALTOR® Association or an individual REALTOR® to take the lead or initiative, to get the idea in motion, make a plan, and find partners and resources.

REALTOR® Associations, and their members, can initiate a Placemaking activity not only to create a place in a neighborhood to enhance and improve it, but also to help increase the value of homes in the community. A Placemaking activity may even help to enhance the image of your REALTORS® association and members.

Think of overlooked, unmanaged, underused and vacant spaces in your community. Beyond their discouraging appearance, many are associated with crime and depressed real estate values. How do these areas affect the value of homes around them? Are homes around these areas more difficult to sell?

Placemaking can be a catalyst to revitalize a neighborhood and make that neighborhood more desirable. It could be a way to re-create a community and to breathe new life into a struggling real estate industry.

Placemaking can also help to strengthen partnerships between REALTOR® associations and communities, organizations, and government. Vacant land is an opportunity for REALTOR® associations and REALTORS® in your community to make a difference by transforming a place where no one goes into one that is a destination.

For the Michigan Association of REALTORS®, the connection between real estate and Placemaking is clear. Placemaking strategies that include green spaces and cultural amenities can help drive demand in today's marketplace.

REALTOR® Gil White, a Placemaking proponent in Michigan, believes that REALTORS® can help to improve the value and quality of the built environment that either has been built, will be newly developed or adaptively re-used, by becoming involved in Placemaking in their community.

It makes sense for REALTOR® Associations to get involved in Placemaking, because Placemaking begins at the community level, and, "after all, REALTORS® are the eyes and ears of communities," says Kathie Feldpausch, senior vice president of the Michigan Association of REALTORS®.



Our role as REALTORS® is much greater than simply helping folks buy and sell houses. We owe it to our clients to help them find or keep their homes in cities, towns and rural communities that have appealing and sustainable plazas, efficient and convenient transportation, walkable main streets, green spaces, thriving shops and cultural amenities. Those are the qualities of Placemaking that are driving demand in today's real estate marketplace.



BETH FOLEY *President, Michigan Association of REALTORS®*

REALTORS® CAN TAKE THE LEAD

She believes “real estate is local” and that “REALTORS® are in the neighborhood all the time and are aware of or directly involved with the groups doing these projects. They sell place.”

REALTOR® Associations could also advocate for a change in policies such as lots sizes, road requirements, green spaces, mixed use zoning, etc., and coordinate Placemaking education sessions for members, local officials, developers and lenders. According to Feldpausch, her members are “eager to know more about things like the difference between a green space (park) and a green place (park with social activities).”

Another educational opportunity and a venue to discuss great places in communities could be at local MLS committee meetings. Can the qualities — walkability, parks and green spaces, arts and culture — for which some homebuyers are willing to pay more be incorporated into the listings so that real estate agents and their clients can be aware of them? MLS participants can be part of the process by contributing information.

The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) believes that real estate professionals can be natural placemakers because they are passionate about their communities and have the communication skills and initiative that can catalyze Placemaking. Ethan Kent, Vice President of PPS, says “REALTORS® are often among a community’s most engaged and concerned citizens. They can quickly see how a Placemaking approach can generate local commitment and investment, short-term, low-cost improvements and long-term sustainability and resilience.”

Many Placemaking activities are not that difficult to plan and organize, but it takes a champion, someone who recognizes the benefits of Placemaking and brings the right folks to the table. Someone has to get the ball rolling. That someone can be your association.

[Why Should REALTORS® Care About Placemaking?](#)

[Placemaking: The Role of and Value to REALTORS®](#)

[St. Louis City Community Park: A celebration of a special neighborhood and the REALTOR® spirit](#)

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REALTORS® spend a great deal of time selling ‘place.’ There is no other private sector group better situated to help inform and advance the discussion on Placemaking than the REALTOR® community. There is a positive correlation between Placemaking elements and local housing choices. Obviously places in higher demand can command higher prices.

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GILBERT WHITE *Gilbert M. White, REALTOR®*

STEPS TO GET STARTED

For REALTOR® associations, a Placemaking initiative can be like a Habitat for Humanity project, which many of you participate in, except that REALTORS® will help create a place, instead of a house, in their community. Your association can take the lead in a project or partner with other organizations to plan and organize a Placemaking activity or activities in your community.

Placemaking projects can range from small, simple projects like a community garden or walking tour (see projects from the [Michigan Association of REALTORS®' Lighter Quicker Cheaper Challenge](#)) to large, complex projects like development of waterfront parks or transit-oriented developments (see example of the Atlanta Commercial Board of REALTORS® Placemaking initiative in the Placemaking in Action section). Either way, REALTOR® associations and REALTORS® can play a role in helping to enhance their neighborhoods and making them more desirable places to live.

For small projects, such as a Lighter Quicker Cheaper project, you may want to take the lead and identify a space to improve, i.e., a public space around your office, or form a task force of local stakeholders and residents to target a place to enhance and transform.

For larger projects, you may want to participate in community and planning meetings or become a member of the planning committee or board governing a large development project. Also, for larger projects, you may want to participate in advocacy efforts, such as supporting zoning regulations or funding measures, to enable the project to move forward.

[I Found a Space. Now What?](#)

Whatever you choose, here are some steps to consider as you begin to plan a Placemaking project:

IDENTIFY A PLACE AND PARTNERS

You may want to start your Placemaking initiative with a review of the [11 Principles of Placemaking](#) developed by the Project for Public Spaces. One of the most important principles is that you can't do it alone: creating a good public space requires partners to contribute ideas, financial and political support and planning.

Potential partners could include your city's public officials and agencies, art, cultural, faith-based and civic organizations, chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, developers, schools and youth groups (think volunteers), institutions, museums, local businesses, neighborhood associations, business improvement districts (BIDs) and others.

STEPS TO GET STARTED

The first step is to identify a neighborhood and/or space to target. You may know of a place or you may want to ask your members and/or partners for suggestions. Is there a long neglected park that is in need of renovations and repairs? Is there an area downtown where people no longer go and store fronts are vacant? What about a vacant lot that could be turned into an ideal place for local residents to gather?

Regardless of the spot you pick, don't forget to include the local neighborhood residents and stakeholders in your planning and implementation activities. They are the experts, as they are the people who live and work in the community. Local stakeholders and community residents have an understanding of the area and can offer a historical perspective. You want to create a sense of community ownership, and to do so, you will need to get the participation of the community.



You may want to select several places, and have a competition among members to make the best place in their community. You can select a group from your partners to judge the places and perhaps give the place that wins an extra contribution to make it even better. This would be a good way to attract the involvement of your members and the communities they serve.

[See Step-by-Step Guide](#)

STEP 1: Assess public space challenges

STEP 2: Select a site

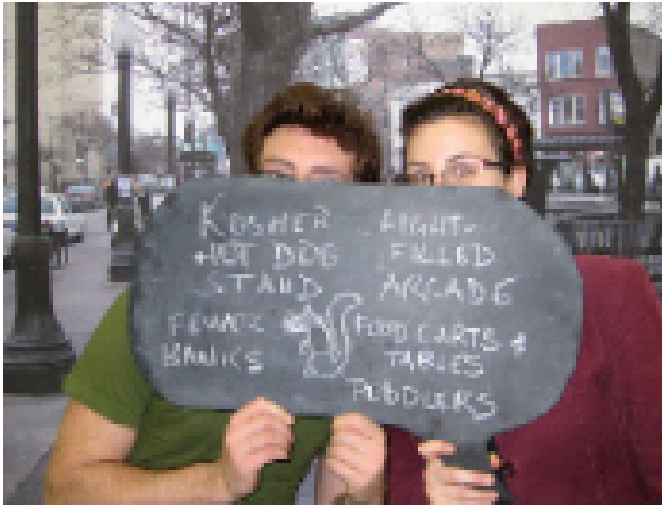
STEP 3: Identify key stakeholders

STEPS TO GET STARTED

ANALYZE THE SITE AND VISUALIZE A PLAN

Once an area has been identified, you'll need to decide how to make it a place where people will want to gather and return again and again.

To encourage the participation of residents and the local neighborhood, you might want to organize a workshop to introduce Placemaking and to get input from the community. The [Southeast Community Development Corporation](#) (Baltimore, Maryland) held a workshop to discuss improvements to a place considered as the “hub” of its Main Street district. The workshop included non-profit organizations, residents, merchants, and students and resulted in ten short-term (i.e., paint a bike lane, install a community chalkboard) and ten long term (i.e., install a water feature, connect all four corners with an art project) goals.



You will have to get the word out about the workshop. Along with social media (websites, email, Twitter, Facebook, etc.,) you can create and distribute flyers. See examples from the [West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission](#) and the [Center City Development Office](#) in San Antonio, Texas.

For larger projects, the [Project for Public Spaces \(PPS\)](#) offers [customized workshops](#) to help communities develop improvement agendas that encourage collaboration and provide a head start toward positive change.



PPS also uses several tools to assist with its Placemaking initiatives. One exercise they use in their workshops is to visualize what the place can become, simply by spending time in the area and observing how people use the space (or don't use it) and asking them what they like or don't like about the space.

“What a community wants” exercise at the Polish Triangle in Chicago

STEPS TO GET STARTED

To help with this exercise, PPS created the **“Place Game”** which involves looking at, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work and play in a particular space. Participants start to see the good and bad qualities of a place and start to come up with ideas of how to make the area a better place. The information from this exercise first leads to determining how a place can be improved, and then can be used to create a common vision for that place.



This can be a great activity to do as part of a member meeting. You can divide your members into groups and have each group look at a different section of the space and indicate what needs improvement and what could be done to improve the space and make it a better, more desirable place

Note: The ‘Placegame’ is copyrighted by PPS and cannot be used without formal, written permission by PPS.

Whether the Placemaking project is small (a neighborhood park) or large (a city plaza), the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) outlines **four key attributes that make a place great:**

- **Accessible:** the place is accessible and well-connected to other places in the neighborhood
- **Comfortable:** the place offers comfort, safety, and looks inviting
- **Activities:** people can participate in activities in the place
- **Sociable:** people want to gather, meet neighbors, and come back

Another tool created by PPS is the **Place Diagram**, which was described earlier, and can be used to help determine what makes a great place. You might want to see how many of the qualities outlined in the Place Diagram you can incorporate into the vision for your place.

STEPS TO GET STARTED

In addition, the [Better Block project](#) encourages addressing four areas when developing a Better Block; these can be applied to other places, as well:

- **Safety:** Make sure the place is safe; a key to improving a place is addressing its perceived safety.
- **Shared Access:** Look at ways to bring more people into the area by various modes of transportation.
- **Stay Power:** Discuss features that will encourage people to visit the place, linger, invite their friends, and return.
- **8–80 Amenities:** Include amenities that would encourage people of all ages (8–80 years of age) to feel welcomed.

One particular amenity worth considering that makes just about any place a desirable gathering spot is seating. Turning a public space into a better place may include options such as moveable seating, benches, sitwalls and ledges (see [A Primer on Seating](#)).

N.B. Don't forget to take "before" and "after" photos! You can use them when you publicize your new place and to show others what they can do in their communities.



[See Step-by-Step Guide](#)

STEP 4: Collect data

STEP 5: Conduct place evaluation workshop

STEP 6: Translate ideas into action with a working group

STEP 7: Develop a visual concept plan

STEP 8: Create a summary report and presentation

TOOLS

Project for public spaces' "Place Game," and a listing of placemaking projects that may inspire you in the tools and resources section.

STEPS TO GET STARTED

IMPLEMENT AND FUND THE PROJECT

Once you have identified and analyzed a site, you should now have a vision, an idea, or a set of ideas of how to create a place on the site. Now it's time for the most important step: turning your plan/vision into action.

Short-term goals will be the easiest to implement. They don't require much funding and can energize participants for future activities.

Remember that when creating goals, you should include a timetable, how and by whom the goals are to be accomplished, and how much money each goal will cost to implement.

You will need to develop a budget and find ways to fund your plan. This is another reason to partner with others in your community. You may want to see if each partner can make a donation to the project. Local businesses may want to contribute since the project would, in turn, benefit them by enhancing the area around their businesses and encourage more foot traffic.

You may want to consider having a fundraiser to assist with the funding of your Placemaking project. If you have a local school or youth group involved, whose students or members can volunteer with the activities associated with your project, they may also want to have their own fundraiser to raise money for the project.

Your partners may know of other funding sources, including grants administered by local and state arts councils, non-profit organizations, and government agencies. This is another benefit of working with partners.

Yet another idea is crowdsourcing. As defined by [Mashable](#), crowdfunding (alternately crowd financing, equity crowdfunding, or hyper funding) describes the collective effort of individuals who network and pool their resources, usually via the Internet, to support efforts initiated by other people or organizations.

There are several crowdfunding platforms for community development and placemaking projects including [ioby.org](#) and [patroncity.org](#). [GoFundMe](#) is another web-based approach to fundraise online via a crowdfunding website. Crowdfunding can be an effective way to fund local community projects because you can target those with a vested interest in the community.

See [Crowdfunding For Community Projects](#).



[See Step-by-Step Guide](#)

STEP 9: Implement short-term actions

STEPS TO GET STARTED

CELEBRATE AND PROMOTE

Once you have created a great place, you and your team, should be proud of your work. You need to get the word out about your great place and present the fruits of your labor to members of the community and public officials.

You may want to contact the local media to see if they would like to do a story on the project. Don't forget to give them the before photos you took so they, too, can see what a great job you did.



Coastal Carolinas Association of REALTORS®

A ribbon-cutting ceremony or grand opening event is a great way to get the community and stakeholders to gather at the place and congratulate those who participated in the project. Be sure to invite members of the media, local chamber members, community organizations, VIPs, etc. Inviting local public officials and celebrities may encourage more people to attend. For additional ideas, see “[Tips for a successful ribbon cutting](#),” from giving people plenty of notice, to creating brochures with information about the project — yet another place to use those before and after photos.

MONITOR AND EVALUATE

After you have created a place in your community, you should continue to monitor it and see how, how often, and by whom, it is being used. Evaluating the space should be an ongoing process to ensure the place gets better and is able to continue to serve the needs of the community. Continued observation of your place will help you see how to evolve and manage it in years to come.

STEPS TO GET STARTED

You should have a plan in place to maintain the place and make enhancements. A management plan will help to keep your place safe, clean and lively. Resources may be needed to maintain a place; your partnerships with others in the community can be a source of funding for maintenance and upkeep.

For example, community gardens require careful planning, maintenance and ongoing support to be managed successfully, according to Eileen Horn, sustainability coordinator for Douglas County and the city of Lawrence, Kansas. In 2012, Eileen helped the City of Lawrence to create the [Common Ground Program](#), a community gardening and urban agriculture program, to transform vacant or under-utilized city properties into vibrant sites of healthy food production for its citizens.

You may want to watch the surrounding area to see if any other projects or developments spring up. This will show how your project spurred other community and economic development in the surrounding area.



[See Step-by-Step Guide](#)

STEP 10: Develop long-term design and management plans

STEP 11: Assess results and replicate

PLACEMAKING CASE STUDIES

REALTORS® IN ACTION

ST. LOUIS CITY COMMUNITY PARK

A celebration of a special neighborhood and the REALTOR® spirit — St. Louis REALTORS® and the organization's charitable arm — the St. Louis REALTORS® Foundation — transformed a vacant piece of land within the St. Louis Greater Ville neighborhood into a community park.



OUR STORY WALK TRAIL: A PLACE TO EXPLORE FOR YEARS TO COME

The President of the Coeur d'Alene Association of REALTORS® knew she wanted to do something on the behalf of the Association that would make an impact on a community and that would last into perpetuity. So, the Association decided to use NAR's placemaking grant to build a storybook trail.

COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER TO BUILD A PLACE FOR POOCHES — AND PEOPLE

The Space Coast Association of REALTORS® teamed up with the City of Melbourne and several other businesses to build the Eau Gallie Dog Park.



PLACEMAKING CASE STUDIES

REALTORS® IN ACTION

A COLLABORATE EFFORT FOR A NEW COMMUNITY GATHERING SPOT & MUCH MORE

The Henderson Audubon Board of REALTORS® used NAR's placemaking grants to transform a vacant lot into a beautiful gathering place for the entire community.



REALTORS® PLANT ROOTS WITH THE BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF TRENTON

What was once a vacant lot on Centre Street in Trenton, NJ is now an educational community garden for the Boys and Girls Club. The New Jersey REALTORS® Housing Opportunity Foundation donated \$5,000 towards the cause plus pursued a \$5,000 Placemaking Grant through NAR for a small library.



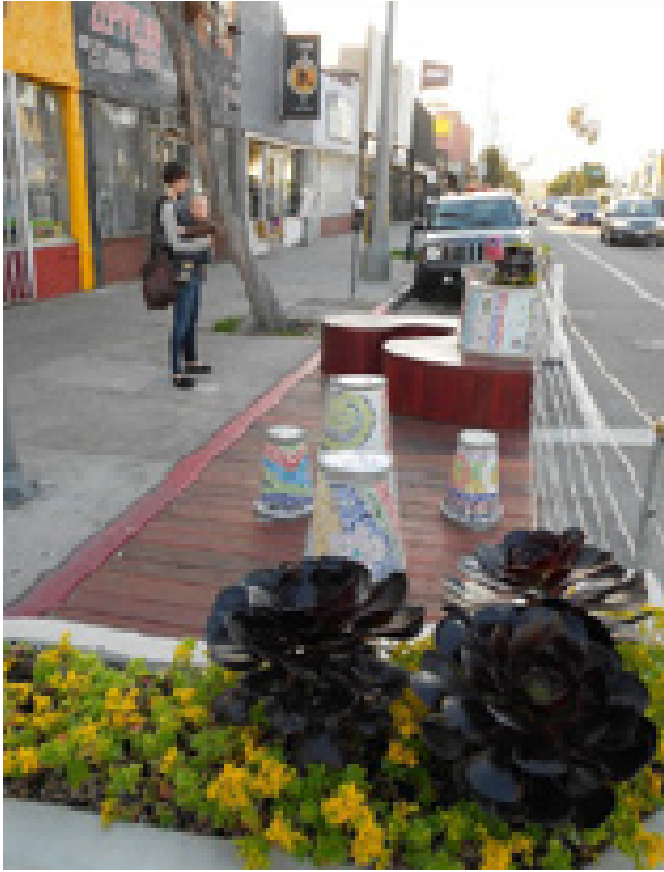
REALTORS® HELP WELCOME VISITORS AND TRAIL USERS

The Traverse Area Association of REALTORS®, along with their partners, transformed a once scruffy intersection into a trailhead pocket park, which includes Wi-Fi, a bike rack, and map of the town housed in an old phone booth, for users of the Leelanau Trail.



PLACEMAKING CASE STUDIES

COMMUNITY & PUBLIC/PRIVATE PLACEMAKING



“STREET PORCH” IN HIGHLAND PARK (Los Angeles, California)

York Boulevard’s Street Porch is part of the City of Los Angeles’ Parklet Pilot Program, which is helping to transform under-used areas of street into high-quality public spaces. During the community design process for the [York Boulevard pilot project](#) in Highland Park, community members working with Council District 14 and Green LA’s Living Streets team selected what will become the first “street porch” in the City of Los Angeles. Located on the shady side of the street on the most active block of York Boulevard, and intentionally not attached to any particular business, the street porch will provide community social space and support all nearby businesses.

CLAM RIVER GREENWAY (Cadillac, Michigan)

Citizens in the City of Cadillac transformed the inaccessible and long neglected Clam River into a beautiful, walkable “green” and “blue” space. The Greenway features a two-mile, ten-foot wide paved trail, boardwalks, and natural areas that runs through the heart of the city. The Clam River Greenway Project became a joint effort of the Cadillac Rotary Club, the City of Cadillac, the Visitor and Convention Bureau, the Cadillac Area Community Foundation, and the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy.



PLACEMAKING CASE STUDIES

COMMUNITY & PUBLIC/PRIVATE PLACEMAKING



“PEOPLE SPOT”

(Anderson, Illinois)

The [Chicago Department of Transportation](#) has started to create “people spots” (also known as “parklets”) which are temporary platforms adjacent to sidewalks, typically within existing parking lanes. By expanding the sidewalks, they create seasonal space for outdoor seating and dining. Much like a park, they are open to the public and allow for the free and organic flow of community activity. A “people spot” in Andersonville has an herb garden along the perimeter and a small grassy hill. A group of [Kickstarter](#) backers and nonprofit organizations chipped in to cover the \$15,000 price tag.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

(Lawrence, Kansas)

The [Common Ground Program](#) is a community gardening and urban agriculture program created by the City of Lawrence. The Program’s goal is to transform vacant or under-utilized city properties into vibrant sites of healthy food production. Seven pilot sites have been opened to the public through partnerships with neighborhood associations, nonprofit organizations and schools. The sites include neighborhood community gardens, a youth-focused garden in a city park, a community orchard for free picking, and a market farm coordinated by college and middle school students. In exchange for receiving a free license for use of city property, applicants created a community benefit plan for each project.



PLACEMAKING CASE STUDIES

COMMUNITY & PUBLIC/PRIVATE PLACEMAKING

PARKING LOT TO COMMUNITY GARDEN (Detroit, Michigan)

In 2012, General Motors, the Ideal Group, and Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision unveiled Cadillac Urban Gardens on Merritt, a community project in an abandoned parking lot where 315 shipping crates have been converted into raised garden beds. The project, located in Southwest Detroit, benefits nearby residents, providing them nutritious and locally grown food. Detroit Dirt provides the compost used in the community garden, sourced from local partners including Detroit Zoo animal manure, coffee grounds from a local coffee shop, and composted food scraps from GM's Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly Plant.

To date, in 2013, nearly 4,000 volunteer hours have been logged on this community project, and the surrounding neighborhood improvement project.



COLUMBIA HEIGHTS PLAZA (Washington, DC)

Columbia Heights Fountain Plaza, Washington, DC. Opened in 2009 as part of the redevelopment and redesign of the heart of Columbia Heights, an in-town neighborhood that has seen new growth, this plaza has become a popular gathering place for people of all ages. The District of Columbia's Department of Transportation worked closely with the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities to design and build the plaza. The plaza was part of a larger streetscape project that included signal and safety improvements, installation of pedestrian amenities, upgrades to the sidewalks, curbs and gutters, landscaping and street lighting. The fountain has become a big attraction, especially among small children drawn to play in the squirting water.

On Saturdays during the warmer months (with the water turned off!) a large farmers market is held on the plaza.



Columbia Heights Fountain Plaza (DC)

RESOURCES

NAR RESOURCES

[Placemaking Webinars](#)

Get more in-depth information on the various types of Placemaking and how REALTORS® are involved in Placemaking activities in their communities.

[Spaces to Places Blog](#)

See and learn about Placemaking projects in action across the country. Post includes ones written by REALTOR® Association staff who have received a placemaking grant.

[Placemaking Grant](#)

The Space Coast Association of REALTORS® teamed up with the City of Melbourne and several other businesses to build the Eau Gallie Dog Park.

[Smart Growth Grants](#)

Land-use and transportation-related activities that have an impact on public policies that support one or more of the [10 Smart Growth Principles](#). Can set the stage for a placemaking project or provide training on placemaking.

RESOURCES

PLACEMAKING TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Tools

[PPS' Place Game](#)

Exercises to rate a place and identify opportunities in a place.

[Do-it-Yourself Checklist](#)

A list to assess the most important places in your neighborhood.

[Behavior Mapping](#)

A form to study people's activities in a specific area for a predetermined amount of time.

[Interviews and Questions](#)

Resident survey sample questions.

General Placemaking Projects and Resources

[Project for Public Spaces](#)

A nonprofit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities.

- [Eleven Principles for Turning Public Spaces Into Civic Places](#)
- [Five Essential Elements of a Placemaking Campaign](#)

[Placemaking Chicago](#)

- [Step-by-Step Guide](#). Want to do something to improve a public space in your community? Read on to learn how to use the Placemaking process to make your neighborhood a better place.

[Principles of Community Placemaking and Making Places Special](#)

Professional Guide: an overview of key principles of community design for local officials, technical professionals and citizen planners involved in planning and development.

RESOURCES

PLACEMAKING TOOLS AND RESOURCES

General Placemaking Projects and Resources

[Northern Michigan Community Placemaking Guidebook](#)

A guidebook for anyone wishing to create a vibrant, prosperous community.

[City Repair](#)

City Repair is an organized group that educates and inspires communities and individuals to creatively transform the places where they live and facilitates artistic and ecologically-oriented Placemaking.

Gardens

[How to Create a Community Garden](#)

A few simple steps to follow when creating a community garden.

[Placemaking: Designing a Garden for the Community](#)

Designing for a community involves understanding five important steps.

Lighter Quicker Cheaper

[Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper: A Low-Cost, High-Impact Approach](#)

Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper is based on taking incremental steps, using low-cost experiments, and tapping into local talents (e.g. citizens, entrepreneurs, developers, and city staff).

[Michigan Association of REALTORS®' Lighter Quicker Cheaper Challenge](#)

Application form, examples and assessment matrix.

Creative Placemaking

[Creative Placemaking](#)

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.

[Creative Placemaking Strategies for Gateway City Growth and Renewal](#)

Four high-level takeaways from a Creative Placemaking Summit held in 2011.

RESOURCES

PLACEMAKING TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Build a Better Block

[The Better Block](#)

News and information on Better Block projects occurring around the world.

[How to Build Better Blocks in Your Community](#)

Ten steps to follow to build a better block.

Temporary Pop-ups

[No Vacancy! Guide](#)

A practical “how-to” for property owners and potential temporary space users.

[The Pop-Up Placemaking Tool Kit](#)

By AARP and the urban planning firm Team Better Block can help elected officials, planners, policymakers and involved residents use temporary projects to improve communities for people of all ages.

[A How-to for Creative Placemaking and Tactical Urbanism](#)

Streets and Transit

[Public Space Blog at StreetsBlog.org](#)

Streetsblog is a daily news source connecting people to information about sustainable transportation and livable communities.

[Traffic Calming 101](#)

Ideas on design and management strategies that aim to balance traffic on streets with other uses to help create and preserve a sense of place.

[Pavement to Parks \(Parklet\) Program Manual](#)

Guidelines for creating a parklet in San Francisco, also serving as a resource for those outside of San Francisco working to establish parklet programs in their own cities.

RESOURCES

PLACEMAKING TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Streets and Transit

[A Street You Go To, Not Just Through: Principles for Fostering Streets as Places](#)

[Actions for Streets as Places: How One Makes it Happen](#)

This is a re-post from the Project for Public Spaces (PPS). It gives you, as an individual and part of a community, some great ideas to create placemaking opportunities in your communities and to make your community more walkable.

[Bike Lanes: Build them and They will Come](#)

Bicycling, which is becoming an ever popular way of getting around, especially in urban areas, is one element of a Complete Streets policy. It improves mobility, livability and public health while reducing traffic congestion and CO2 emissions.

[Streets as Places Toolkit - Project for Public Spaces](#)

Streets as Places is about helping people begin to see streets in their entirety: not just their function in facilitating travel from one place to another. This toolkit highlights key [Streets as Places principles](#), actions ([individual](#), [community](#), and [government](#)), and tools, supported by real-life examples from around the world.

[Streeteries Are Exploding, Changing How Businesses Use Their Parking Real Estate](#)

The idea behind parklets is to create a spot that allows people to stop, sit, and rest while purposing former car-parking spaces for a community gathering place.