

A Guide to Neighborhood Placemaking in Chicago

*By Project for Public Spaces
and Metropolitan Planning Council*

 **PPS**
PROJECT for
PUBLIC SPACES



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL



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Foreword

The staff of Project for Public Spaces, Inc.

“Placemaking” is both an overarching idea and a hands-on tool for improving a neighborhood, city or region. It has the potential to be one of the most transformative ideas of this century.

When Project for Public Spaces (PPS) first started working with communities on their public spaces, it quickly became apparent no one knew more about a place and how it functioned than the people who lived and worked there. However, we also found planners and officials rarely asked people about the issues they had direct experience with, such as whether it was difficult or unsafe for them or their children to cross a street. Instead, the public was asked to provide feedback on proposed designs after the fact. Realizing this, PPS decided to develop a different process – one that is bottom up versus top down – which we call Placemaking. We have since found a Placemaking process is more economical, more efficient, and more fun for both people in communities and local officials. It also results in visible changes and has a far greater impact on the community.

Placemaking allows communities to see how their insight and knowledge fits into the broader process of making change. It allows them to become proactive versus reactive, and positive versus negative. Simply put, Placemaking allows regular people to make extraordinary improvements, both big and small, in their communities.

In order to begin to transform the process of creating places and building stronger communities in Chicago, PPS has embarked on a partnership with the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC). This allows PPS and MPC to highlight many of the important civic actions already underway in Chicago, and provides a framework for further improvements to the city’s public spaces.

A Guide to Neighborhood Placemaking in Chicago is the first product of this partnership. We hope the ideas and examples of Chicago Placemaking described in the following guide will inspire a ripple effect of neighbor interaction, community commitment, and civic action.

Placemaking is “making a Public Space a Living Space.” PPS member



About this Guidebook

This guide is written for anyone who has a stake in the improvement of neighborhoods. It also is for people who will be managing and coordinating a Placemaking process, whether for a small corner, community center, park, street, or an entire neighborhood. It describes the process and steps for developing a Placemaking program and engaging citizens from the beginning of the project through its implementation – while also bringing in public, professional and technical resources in a supportive and creative way.

The role of the project leader – or a leadership team – evolves during the course of a Placemaking project: at the outset, the leader's main goal is to get people involved and solicit as many ideas as possible. The leader then transitions into a planner, collaborating with a working group and professional resources to put together a program of achievable short and long-term projects. Once these projects are identified, the leader must oversee their implementation.

Finally, while the authors have tried to make this guide as clear as possible, they would like to emphasize Placemaking is not a rigid process; rather, it can and should be modified. Project for Public Spaces knows from its own work that the process is often adapted to fit into different community circumstances. As you gain experience, you will find ways to make Placemaking work better in your community.

The goal of this guidebook is to teach Placemaking participants how to:

- Define the basic elements that create a successful place.
- Understand the role that successful community places play in neighborhood revitalization.
- Recognize a successful place.
- Learn to analyze a specific site.
- Facilitate groups of local community leaders, residents and designers to work together on improving public spaces.
- Develop a plan of immediate, short-term, and long-term actions to improve a site.
- Approach place-related issues or problems differently in the future.

We encourage you to share your experiences with other Placemakers at www.placemakingchicago.com.



What Is Placemaking?

Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Put simply, it involves looking at, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work and play in a particular space, to discover their needs and aspirations. This information is then used to create a common vision for that place. The vision can evolve quickly into an implementation strategy, beginning with small-scale, do-able improvements that can immediately bring benefits to public spaces and the people who use them.

Placemaking can be used to improve all of the spaces that comprise the gathering places within a community – its streets, sidewalks, parks, buildings, and other public spaces – so they invite greater interaction between people and foster healthier, more social, and economically viable communities.

But Placemaking is not just the act of building or fixing up a space; it is a process that fosters the creation of vital public destinations – the kind of places where people feel a strong stake in their communities and commitment to making things better. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration and potential, creating good public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and economic well-being. As a PPS survey of its members suggests, this process is essential – even sacred – to people who care about the places in their lives.



Placemaking is the art of creating public 'places of the soul' that uplift and help us connect to each other. PPS member



11 Principles of Placemaking

PPS has developed 11 principles that can be used to evolve public spaces into “community places.” Although similar words, “spaces” and “places” have very different meanings. A space is a physical description of a piece of land, whereas a “place” connotes an emotional attachment to the piece of land.

1. The community is the expert.

People who use a public space regularly provide the most valuable perspective and insights into how the area functions. They also can help identify issues that are important to consider in improving the space. Uncovering and incorporating their ideas and talents is essential to creating a successful and vital community place.

2. You are creating a place, not a design.

Design is an important component of creating a place, but not the only factor. Providing access and creating active uses, economic opportunities, and programming are often more important than design.

3. You can't do it alone.

A good public space requires partners who contribute innovative ideas, financial or political support, and help plan activities. Partners also can also broaden the impact of a civic space by coordinating schedules for programming and improvement projects.

4. They'll always say, "It can't be done."

Every community has naysayers. When an idea stretches beyond the reach of an organization or its jurisdiction and an official says, “It can't be done,” it usually means: “We've never done things that way before.” Keep pushing. Identify leaders in the community who share your vision and build support. Talk to your alderman and get him or her engaged.

5. You can see a lot just by observing.

People will often go to extraordinary lengths to adapt a place to suit their needs. A raised curb can be used as a place to sit, sort mail, and even – believe it or not – cook clams. Observing a space allows you to learn how the space is used.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the 11 principles, see *How to Turn a Place Around*, available for purchase at www.pps.org (PPS, Inc., 2000).

6. *Develop a vision.*

A vision for a public space addresses its character, activities, uses, and meaning in the community. This vision should be defined by the people who live or work in or near the space.

7. *Form supports function.*

Too often, people think about how they will use a space only after it is built. Keeping in mind active uses when designing or rehabilitating a space can lower costs by discouraging unnecessary and expensive landscaping and monuments, as well as potentially eliminating the need to retrofit a poorly used public space.

8. *Triangulate.*

The concept of triangulation relates to locating elements next to each other in a way that fosters activity. For example, a bench, trash receptacle, and coffee kiosk placed near a bus stop create synergy because they are more convenient for waiting bus passengers and pedestrians than if they were isolated from each other.

9. *Start with the petunias.*

Simple, short-term actions such as planting flowers can be a way of testing ideas and encouraging people their ideas matter. These actions provide flexibility to expand the space by experimenting, evaluating and incorporating results into the next steps and long-range planning.



10. *Money is not the issue.*

A lack of money is often used as an excuse for doing nothing. Funds for pure public space improvements often are scarce, so it is important to remember the value of the public space itself to potential partners and search for creative solutions. The location, level of activity, and visibility of public spaces – combined with a willingness to work closely with local partners – can elicit resources from those involved to activate and enhance these spaces.



11. *You are never finished.*

About 80 percent of the success of any public space can be attributed to its management. This is because the use of good places changes daily, weekly and seasonally, which makes management critical. Given the certainty of change and 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.

Triangulation

Triangulation, as described in the 11 Principles, increases the chances of activity occurring around combined land uses. For example, in Lincoln Square, the library is located adjacent to Welles Park, which has a softball field, playground and food vendors, and is within walking distance of restaurants, the Davis Theatre and the Old Town School of Folk Music. This clustering ensures more activity will occur than if these facilities were sited separately.

Sometimes triangulation occurs spontaneously. For example, on a busy urban street corner there is something of interest – say, one of the life-size fiberglass cow sculptures painted by artists and set up on the streets of various cities as a public art project. The cows create an excuse for people who don't know each other to talk to one another. Farmers' markets also are good places to spot examples of triangulation: You can often find perfect strangers chatting about the attributes of and recipes for everything from sweet corn to Japanese eggplant to Jersey tomatoes.



A great place needs to have at least 10 things to do in it or 10 reasons to be there. But, don't get fixated on a particular number. It's really a matter of offering a variety of things to do in one spot – whose quality as a place then becomes more than the sum of its parts. We've listed 10 things to do at Navy Pier. Can you think of more?



Applying the **Power of 10**, can you think of other destinations to go from here?

The Power of 10

Why one great place in a neighborhood is not enough

The Power of 10 is a concept PPS uses to start off a Placemaking process. The idea is that it's not enough to have just one great place in a neighborhood – you need a number of them to create a truly lively city or town. It's not enough to have only one superior neighborhood in a city – you need to provide people all over town with close-to-home opportunities to take pleasure in public life. And, it's not enough to have one livable city or town in a region – you need a collection of interesting communities.

A great place needs to have at least 10 things to do in it or 10 reasons to be there. These could include, for instance, a place to sit, art to touch, music to hear, food to purchase, historic information to learn about, and books to read. Most of the uses and ideas have to come from the people who would use the space and hopefully be somewhat unique to that place. These 10 great places should also define people's experience of a city, and be dynamic enough to attract a range of user groups, keep people coming back, and continue evolving.

Instruct people to think about the special places in their communities. How many quality places are located in the community, and how connected are they? Are there places that should be more meaningful but aren't? Answering these questions can help Placemakers determine both individually and collectively where they need to focus their energies. This simple, common sense idea can be transformative for evaluating and strategi-

cally improving an entire city or region. It gets people really thinking and challenges them as never before.

Almost any Chicagoan could list 10 great places in the Loop – a series of destinations where tourists and residents alike could become immersed in the city for days at a time.

But what are the 10 best neighborhoods in the city? What are the 10 best places in each of those neighborhoods? Think about one of the best places in a neighborhood and try to describe 10 things that you could do in that place, in that neighborhood. When this exercise is successful, it means the city is full of good places. Every resident knows they have access to outstanding public spaces within walking distance of their own homes. That's the sort of goal we should set for Chicago, if we are serious about enhancing and revitalizing urban life.

Whether you're talking about places in a given neighborhood or great neighborhoods within a city, "10" can also refer to the ultimate goals of variety and choice. When we talk about the "Power of 10," we are stressing the fact that we should always think of how Placemaking can be accomplished at different scales.

Finally, the Power of 10 idea gets local citizens motivated and energized to turn their places around. It suggests that by starting efforts at the smallest scale you can steadily accomplish big changes. It also gives people something tangible to strive for and helps them visualize what it takes to make their community great.

Apply the "Power of 10" on a regional scale by linking towns and cities together with major public spaces and mixed-use neighborhoods serving as connections. This could be the basis for a new paradigm of regional development that reincorporates traditional storefronts, locally owned businesses, and human-scale public spaces into the neighborhoods in which we live and socialize.

A city/region needs 10+ MAJOR DESTINATIONS

Example: Chicagoland region

Brookfield Zoo Museum Campus Forest preserve bike trail Navy Pier Ravinia Festival Frank Lloyd Wright houses
 Baha'i Temple Lake Michigan lakefront path St. Patrick's Day Parade Soldier Field Second City Apple picking
 Chicago Botanic Garden Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Historic Pullman District Downtown Chicago Chinatown

A Destination needs 10+ PLACES

Example: Downtown Chicago

Navy Pier Crown Fountain Ice rink Taste of Chicago Popcorn shops Shopping "The Bean," aka Cloud Gate
 Harold Washington Library Grant Park Sears Tower Gene Siskel Film Center Daley Plaza Chicago Riverwalk
 Green City Market Chicago Theatre Mies buildings World-class restaurants Looptopia Buckingham Fountain

Each place needs 10+ THINGS TO DO

Example: Daley Plaza, Downtown Chicago

Go to the farmer's market Sit on the Picasso statue Meet up for Chicago's Critical Mass ride Join ethnic celebrations
 Put your feet in the fountain Read the newspaper Take a break after getting your driver's license Eat lunch outside
 Catch the El or a bus, within a block Listen to free lunchtime music Visit two churches and a synagogue within a block

There are many areas in the Chicago region that already exemplify the Power of 10. Here are some examples we've noticed ... But there are many more.

Lincoln Square, where you can...

- Watch Little League games
- Join a pick-up game of Ultimate Frisbee
- Appreciate the slow-moving, one-way traffic
- See a movie at the historic Davis Theatre
- Attend a summer concert series event
- Don your Lederhosen for TWO annual German fests
- Take a class in martial arts, cooking, music, or dance
- See a piece of the Berlin Wall at the Western EL stop

Wicker Park, where you can...

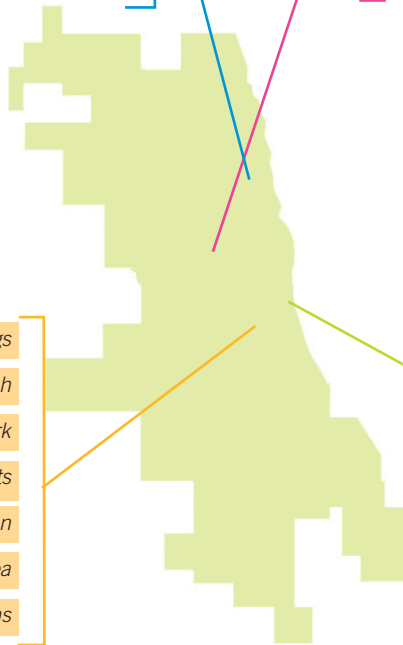
- Play a game of chess
- See where Nelsen Algren lived
- Chase a kid through the "jungle gym"
- Set up a tightrope between the trees
- Blend with hipsters and yuppies
- Play catch in the dog park
- Watch a softball game

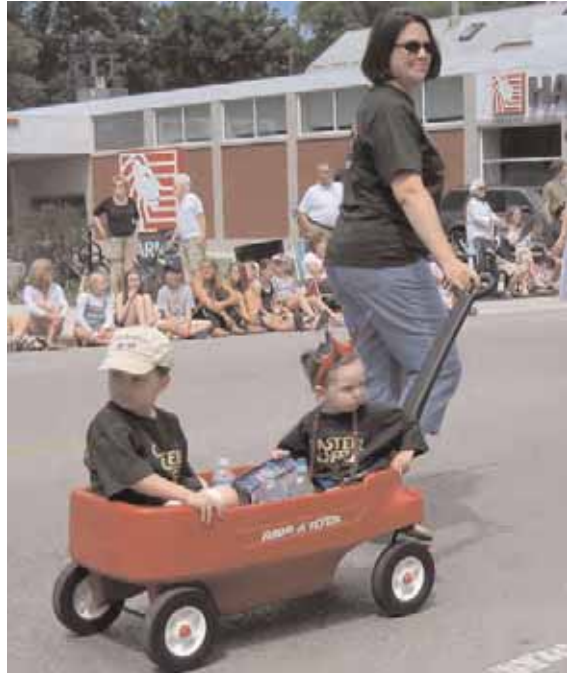
Chinatown, where you can...

- Pick up a pair of Foo Dogs
- Try something new for lunch
- Fly a kite in Ping Tom Park
- Buy bamboo and money plants
- Take a picture in the Zodiac Sculpture Garden
- Meet friends for bubble tea
- Enjoy Chinese New Year celebrations

Northerly Island, where you can...

- Look north to the skyline
- Look east to the sailboats
- See a concert
- See native wildflowers
- Go fishing
- Picnic in silence
- Say hello to fast bikers





What Makes a Place Great?

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

What makes some spaces succeed while others fail? In part, it is having a variety of things to do in one spot. When the space becomes more than the sum of its parts, it becomes a place. For example, an area in a park that has a fountain, playground, somewhere for parents to sit in the shade, and a place to get something to drink or eat will attract people to stay there for

more than a few minutes and return. If the park had a library across the street, with an outdoor area that had storytelling hours for kids and exhibits on local history, people would come to both the library and park again and again. Easy access to a bus stop or bike trail and proximity to residential areas are additional components that cumulatively add up to a very successful place.

When people describe a place they especially enjoy, words like "safe," "fun," "charming," and "welcoming" tend to come up repeatedly. These types of adjectives describe the Intangible Qualities – the qualitative aspects – of a particular space. Intangible qualities can also be measured quantitatively in a variety of ways by using statistics or conducting research. When combined, positive intangible qualities lead to tangible success in public spaces.



Place Diagram

In evaluating thousands of public spaces around the world, 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:



Imagine the center circle on the diagram is a specific place that you know: a street corner, playground, or plaza outside a building. You can evaluate that place according to four criteria in the orange ring. In the green ring are a number of intuitive or qualitative aspects by which to judge a place; the blue area shows the quantitative aspects that can be measured by statistics or research.

Four Key Qualities of a Successful Place

Access and Linkages

Access concerns how well a place is connected to its surroundings both visually and physically. A successful public space is visible, easy to get to and around. Physical elements can affect access (a continuous row of shops along a street is more interesting and generally safer to walk by than a blank wall or empty lot), as can perceptions (the ability to see a public space from a distance). Accessible public places have a high turnover in parking and, ideally, convenient public transit.

Comfort and Image

Comfort and image are key to whether a place will be used. Perceptions about safety and cleanliness, the context of adjacent buildings, and a place's character or charm are often foremost in people's minds – as are more tangible issues such as having a comfortable place to sit. The importance of people having the choice to sit where they want is generally underestimated.

Uses and Activities

Activities that occur in a place – friendly social interactions, free public concerts, community art shows, and more – are its basic building blocks: they are the reasons why people come in the first place and why they return. Activities also make a place special or unique, which, in turn, may help generate community pride.



Sociability

This is a difficult but unmistakable quality for a place to achieve. When people see friends, meet and greet their neighbors, 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.

High proportion of people in groups The presence of people in groups can be an index of selectivity. William H. Whyte's *Street Life Project* found that often when people go to a plaza in twos or threes, and always when they rendezvous there, it is because they have decided to do so in advance.

Higher than average proportion of women Women tend to be more discriminating about the spaces they use. Reasons for this range from types of seating available in a place to perceptions about whether a place is safe.

Different ages The presence of people at a range of ages usually means a place has different constituencies who use it at different times of day. For example, pre-school age children and their guardians can use a neighborhood park when others are working, as can seniors and retirees.

Varied activities Popular places generally have more things to do than less successful spaces. One of the most successful public places PPS has evaluated is the town dock in Cold Spring, NY. PPS staff and community members counted as many as 20 different activities occurring simultaneously, ranging from fishing to feeding ducks to picnicking, rowing, and swimming. Many of these activities don't require special equipment or facilities.

Affection There is generally more smiling, kissing, embracing, holding and shaking of hands, and so forth in good public places than in those that are problematic.

“Placemaking is a dynamic human function: it is an act of liberation, of staking claim, and of beautification; it is true human empowerment.”

PPS member

Impacts and Benefits of Placemaking

People care about places in their communities. From its international experience, PPS has learned the institutionalization of “Placemaking” yields benefits far beyond making better spaces for people.

Shared places work toward creating a community narrative. When public spaces become a part of daily life, they are forever linked with personal and collective milestones – meeting new friends, children’s first steps, celebrating local culture and entrepreneurship, for example. Placemaking creates emotional links to places, and sharing these links helps strengthen community.

The following are just a handful of positive results achieved through Placemaking.



Bridge Building Places draw a diverse population that can include women, elderly and children, as well as an ethnic and cultural mix, and encourage people to get involved and take pride in the area. Public spaces indeed are a “common ground.”



Economic and Community Development Public space improvements can easily be targeted to catalyze private investment and small-scale entrepreneurial activities, such as public markets.



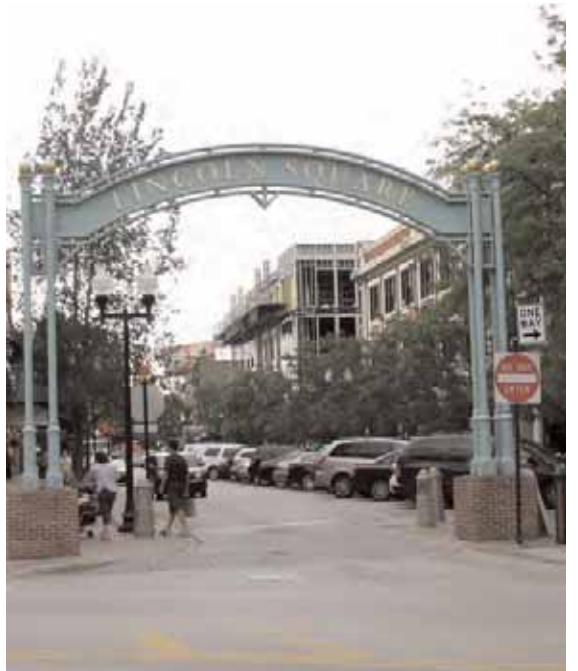
Community Identity Places nurture and define community identity through greater community organization, a better sense of dedication and volunteerism, perpetuation of integrity and values, and a common vision.



Democracy Building Public spaces are a common goal that diverse groups can work on collaboratively in a democratic process.



Youth Engagement Youth are often an overlooked audience, which misses the opportunity not only to build leadership but also reduce apathy or cynicism among their age group.



Why Chicagoland Needs Great Places

Great public places can happen anywhere. The following seven case studies show that all it takes to make a great place in your community is a simple first step: a vision for an unused trail, a desire to play music by the beach, or a conversation with a neighbor. These case studies, though tied specifically to one principle, often incorporate a number of the 11 principles. They embody Placemaking and show that by working with people who share your passion and vision, anything is possible. All it takes is making that first step.

Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail

Every Block a Village

Lincoln Square

63rd Street Beach Drum Circle

Elmhurst City Centre

Growing Home

Senn Park Unity Garden

Principle: Develop a vision**Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail**

Josh Deth first became acquainted with the Bloomingdale railroad tracks, on the North Side of Chicago, on his bicycle. He used to ride along the abandoned tracks that tower above Bloomingdale Avenue, which he described as “a dead man’s space. The railroad was not taking care of them. My explorations gave me a feel for what the space could be.”

What the abandoned tracks could be, it turns out, is an elevated park that stretches for nearly three miles above 37 streets and across four neighborhoods.

City planners previously has considered the Bloomingdale in the 1997 Chicago Dept. of Transportation (CDOT) Bicycle Facilities Development Plan – albeit in the lowest grouping due, in part, to lack of perceived demand and minor ongoing rail use. In fact, some city staffers recommended demolition. Then, in 2003, the City of Chicago, Dept. of Planning and Development, CDOT, and Chicago Park

District held numerous community meetings to consider the project as part of the city’s Logan Square Open Space Plan.

In the wake of those meetings, Deth and a group of cohorts formed the Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail not only to show support for trail development on the embankment, but to back up this support with community-based planning. Following an initial informal meeting at a bar in Wicker Park in 2003, the organization has spread its vision through organized trail cleanups, a children’s coloring contest, and public lectures about the trail. The initial group of 20 people has swelled to almost 1,000 through outreach and community meetings. Through it all, Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail has remained true to its goals: preserve the trail and create a beautiful and well-used public space that connects the neighboring communities and institutions.

According to Deth, a primary activity of the Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail has been outreach. Building community and political backing allowed them to approach other organizations with a plan that had a strong base of support. Ben Helphand, a co-founder of the Friends of Bloomingdale Trail, said “by meeting with the alderman and community groups, the city came to the project more easily because they knew the consensus was there.” The project soon became a keystone of the Logan Square Open Space Plan and, when the Bicycle Facilities Development Plan was updated as the Chicago Trails Plan, community demand helped move the project up to the top priority list.



Four years and countless meetings after the first gathering of Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail, the Trust for Public Land acquired vacant lots for the Chicago Park District to serve as trail access points. A year later, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning awarded CDOT federal transportation funding for design and engineering work. Step-by-step, Deth, Helphand, and the Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail are working with their community, citywide civic groups, and public officials to make the vision a reality.

For more information, please visit Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail online at www.bloomingdaletrail.org.



Principle: Start with the petunias
Every Block a Village

In 1995, Adell Young was a 58-year-old grandmother living in Chicago's West Side neighborhood of Austin. Working to support her family, she felt isolated from her neighbors because of her children's drug use. "I would go to work and return home ashamed and just was not interested in knowing my neighbors," she said.

Slowly, out of desperation, Young began reaching out to her neighbors. She found many of them felt the same way she did and, by talking to each other, they put a human face on each other's children. Through this interaction, the blank faces on the street began to become people.

Emboldened by these new connections, Young and her neighbors took a simple yet brave step: they stood on the street corner and offered bowls of chili to drug dealers. "We let them know that we were not only concerned about our safety, but about them. We prayed for them and offered them food. There was no confrontation, we just hung around them and sometimes we would pray. We showed them love and attention, and after a while they left our block."

These efforts led to the creation of Every Block a Village (EBV), an organizing initiative in Austin that builds relationships among neighbors for mutual support. Supported by the Westside Health Authority, EBV uses the culture and experiences of Austin residents as a base for motivating and mobilizing them to use their assets to solve community problems. In 2001, for example, the group sold catfish dinners and solicited donations to raise \$60,000 in seed money for the Austin Wellness Center.

When this building opened in 2004, it was the first new building in Austin in 45 years.

Even with such big successes, EBV's focus remains on improving the quality of life for Austin residents through large and small changes. For Young, the most important neighborhood improvement happened in her own house. "My home has been drug free for 10 years. It's amazing what neighbors can do when they work together."

For more information, please visit Every Block A Village online at www.ebvonline.org



Principle: You are never finished

Lincoln Square

In the 1940s, the neighborhood of Lincoln Square in Northwest Chicago was home to a thriving business district full of locally owned hotels, banks, and retail stores. Easily accessible by train, yet away from the grit of downtown Chicago, the neighborhood attracted a strong base of residents to support its locally owned businesses.

Lincoln Square was similar to other urban neighborhoods of the time. What is unique is Lincoln Square managed to maintain its vibrant, unique character through decades of urban neglect and economic changes. This stability is due, in large part, to a group of volunteer businessmen who recognized the strength of the neighborhood and ensured its sustainability by creating the Lincoln Square Chamber of Commerce in 1948.

For the past 60 years, the Lincoln Square Chamber of Commerce has positioned itself as the center of neighborhood activity. Decades of building and maintaining connections to neighborhood residents and businesses has allowed the Chamber to represent community wishes and maintain a strong business district. Melissa Flynn, executive director of the Chamber, said the goal of the organization is to “focus on improving the quality of life for Lincoln Square through cultural, educational and sustainable activities.”

Through collaboration with Ald. Eugene Schuler (47th Ward), a strong advocate for the neighborhood, the Lincoln Square Chamber of Commerce works with residents to provide community programming such as free summer concerts, festivals, sidewalk fairs, and garden

walks, many of which are held in Giddings Plaza. Located on Lincoln Avenue between Lawrence and Leland avenues, Giddings Plaza boasts the Giddings Square fountain, a maypole, murals and statues. Often considered the heart of Lincoln Square, Giddings Plaza is a place for the community to gather for holiday festivities, wedding celebrations, or informal chats over coffee. Through the efforts of the Lincoln Square Chamber of Commerce, Ald. Schuler, and an engaged community, the unique character of Giddings Plaza and Lincoln Square will continue to exist for generations.

For more information, please visit the Lincoln Square Chamber of Commerce online at www.lincolnsquare.org.



Principle: Money is not the issue**The 63rd Street Beach Drum Circle**

Every evening at dusk, a group of drummers form a circle in front of the 63rd Street Beach House on Chicago's South Side. "They just know to come," said Rick Taylor, a drumming teacher, who has been part of the circle since 1983. "There is no organization." The drummers have been meeting here daily for the last 40 years, when the weather permits, of course.

"The circle is here at 63rd Street because of the nearby communities. Most of the drummers come from South Shore, Hyde Park and Kenwood," said Marcus Lenton, a construction manager, who has been coming to listen for 30 years and has many friends in the circle. Many in the audience join the circle after enjoying the nearby beach. Because the drummers don't

play in a formalized amphitheater there is no need to reserve the space – something that fits perfectly with the circle's spontaneity.

The place where the circle forms is nothing special: the drummers set up over a wide stretch of sidewalk that leads from the parking lot to the Beach House entrance. Without the drumming community, this space would be just another silent, unused path. Instead, it comes alive each night when the group sets up between a colonnade of tall tree trunks on the east and low, full bushes on the west. The trees are the only fixtures that trace out a loose boundary for the group, separating the circle from the vast grassy lawn where picnickers spread out their blankets. The trees make the



circle feel complete and protected, but also natural and unplanned ... almost like a campfire site where the beat is the flame.

Lenton said the circle is great exactly because nothing has been built to host it: “There are no additives, it’s totally natural.” He was adamant about keeping it that way. “I wouldn’t change a thing. Don’t build anything. It would ruin it. It’s got to be spontaneous.”

A single drummer, explained Lenton, is enough to start the circle. Pretty soon, without fail, others set up chairs and instruments near the trees. The circle is widest and loudest just before nightfall and continues until around 10:30 when, according to Lenton, “the cops break it up” in time for the park to close at 11:00.

The circle is open to everyone. “If you can catch the beat, you can join in,” explained Lenton. The drummers are a mixed group. “Some went to school for it, some just picked it up recently, and some were brought up doing it their whole lives.”

Even though everyone calls the gathering “the drum circle,” it’s not limited to one kind of instrument. Some people shake maracas or tambourines; others play the trumpet and saxophone, while some just clap, sing, and stomp their feet. Even the police officers who walk this beat clap along and nod their heads from their places along the circle’s periphery.

Kenyatta Jackson, who plays several kinds of drums in the circle, said he comes because the circle provides a “release for us as drummers

and as human beings. It’s a way to maintain our lives, day-to-day.” It’s also a community center: “[The drum circle] brings all the generations together,” said Edward Phillips, Lenton’s friend, “this is our common culture. It’s like we all found our home here.”

Jackson said a rule of the circle is “no drinking, no drugs, no profanity, and no arguing.” As long as there are drummers, he said, “it’s safe here. Check the police log if you want, but I can tell you there are no violent crimes when this circle is around.” Taylor added, “Anytime you have music, anytime you have rhythm, the place starts getting crowded. It just builds and builds.”



Principle: You are creating a place, not a design

Elmhurst City Centre

Take a walk around City Centre Plaza in downtown Elmhurst, a suburban community about 15 miles directly west of downtown Chicago. You will see vibrantly painted car sculptures and Adirondack chairs, a water fountain, raised planted beds, and, when the weather is nice, an abundance of outdoor dining areas.

City Centre Plaza, located at the northeast corner of York Street and Schiller Drive, exemplifies the many attractive and well-used public places the city and residents of Elmhurst have cultivated over the last 20 years. Elmhurst implemented tax increment financing (TIF) in the late 1980s as the foundation of its downtown revitalization strategy. The city added a Special Service Area (SSA) for the downtown, called “Elmhurst City Centre,” in the early 1990s. With these financial mechanisms in place, local officials implemented plans to improve streetscapes with brick pavers, street trees, decorative lighting, and other visual features. The city even installed decorative corrals for newspaper boxes to match the downtown design theme – and won an award in the process.

The Elmhurst City Centre group has made the most of the city’s commitment to downtown revitalization, building upon the city-led

improvements by hosting public events – such as concerts and holiday tree lightings – in the plaza. Inspired by the Chicago Cows on Parade, the City Centre group brought interactive art to the downtown community by calling on local artists to customize the “cool kiddie car” sculptures and Adirondack chairs.

“The chairs were added to offer an alternate price point for sponsorship and mix things up a bit visually,” said Mimi Stojavljevic of the Elmhurst City Centre. “While the kiddie art is for the little ones, the chairs invite adults to enjoy the space as well.” The cars and chairs are decorated by local artists, sponsored by local businesses, and auctioned off each year for a local charity. For the past two years, vocational education students from York High School have built garden benches and chairs for display, and every year the Junior Elmhurst Children’s Assistance Foundation holds a children’s scavenger hunt that is open to the community.

“Elmhurst has drawn upon so many excellent resources for local support, and the community is better off for it,” commented John D. Said, director of planning, zoning and economic development for the city, and a 16-year resident of Elmhurst. “The lively downtown environment here has helped increase property values throughout Elmhurst, and made the community a very special and admirable place,” Said added.

**For more information, visit
www.elmhurst.org or
www.elmhurstcitycentre.com.**



Principle: They'll always say, "It can't be done"

Growing Home

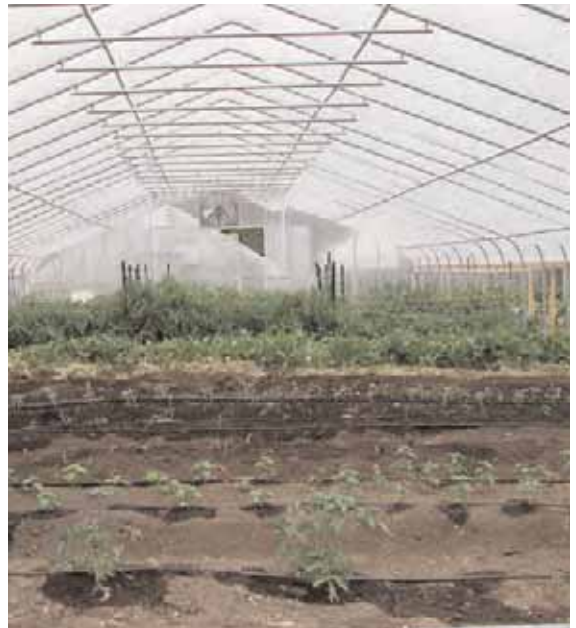
In 1992, Les Brown, director of policy for the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, wanted to do more to combat homelessness. He recognized a lack of living wage jobs is one of the major factors leading to homelessness, but he believed giving someone a job was not enough. In order for an individual to break out of the cycle of homelessness, he needs a sense of purpose. "Homeless people," according to Brown, "are often without roots. They're not tied down, not connected, not part of their family anymore."

Brown founded Growing Home as a way to give people this sense of purpose. With a mission to help homeless and low-income people gain job training and employment opportunities through a nonprofit organic agriculture business, Brown found land about 75 miles southwest of Chicago and, in 2002, started a pilot training program. The structure of the Growing Home program prepares previously incarcerated and homeless individuals to re-enter the workforce by teaching job skills. It also, in the words of Brown, provides "a way for them to connect with nature – to plant and nurture roots over a period of time. When you get involved in taking responsibility for caring for something, creating an environment that produces growth, then it helps you build self-esteem."

Since 2002, Growing Home has helped more than 100 Chicagoans, many of whom are recovering from addiction, mental illness, or have not held a steady job in years. Approximately 65 percent of program participants find full-time work, and the program has a 90 percent success rate for participants improving their living situation.

In 2007, Growing Home established Chicago's first permanent year-round farm, in the South Side neighborhood of Englewood. Named the Wood Street Urban Farm, it is part of Englewood's Quality of Life Plan, and a community-wide effort to reconfigure the food system in the neighborhood. By providing a model of urban agriculture and coupling job training, transitional employment, youth and adult outreach programs, and congregational space for community members, Growing Home's Wood Street Urban Farm is a community center and an integral part of Englewood's revitalization.

For more information, please visit Growing Home online at www.growinghomeinc.org.



Principle: You can't do it alone

Senn Park Unity Garden

In 1996, the lot on Thorndale Avenue where Senn Park Unity Garden now stands was a vacant lot covered with brambly plants, weeds and trash. Today, this lot is filled with community gardening plots for residents to use and an earthen berm/performance space the diverse Chicago North Side neighborhood of Edgewood embraces and utilizes. The success of the garden has much to do with how it was planned.

The creation of Senn Park Unity Garden can be attributed to community participation throughout the entire planning process. During the winter of 1996, representatives from the Chicago Park District gathered high school students, neighbors, families, seniors, and block clubs to community meetings that focused on what the neighborhood wanted out of the space. Through these meetings, the community agreed on a site that featured an earthen berm “bench” where people could perform or sit and enjoy the space, and a dozen community garden plots. By the time spring rolled around, when the ground began to thaw, residents were armed with a plan for a community garden.

During the spring and summer, people of all ages spent their Saturdays clearing the site of garbage and debris. Teens from the youth outreach program Alternatives helped landscape the garden. Children from the Broadway Armory’s Day Camp and Senn YouthNet assisted with plantings and watering the new trees and shrubs. All 12 of the raised beds were filled by local residents, who grow everything from herbs to potatoes. The site was selected as a Gallery 37 in the Parks site and Mirtes Zirwinski, a mosaic artist, and Chet Jakus, a landscape architect, worked with more than 50

Senn High School students to design and install mosaics, a totem, and the landscaping.

In 2004, due to high demand, six more beds were added to the garden. Jane Schenk, who oversees the coordination of the community gardening plots as the Gardening Program Specialist for the Chicago Park District, said, “All of the gardeners know each other because they see each other on a regular basis. Almost all of the current gardeners live within a four-block radius of the park.”

By inviting the community into the design and creation of the garden and encouraging them to take ownership of it, a space was created that the community feels connected to and uses. As Bonnie Tawse, former project manager for Senn Park Unity Garden, said, “It is this human connection to this small, little space that means so much to residents.”



Step-by-Step Guide

The following are the steps PPS recommends for assessing and then doing something about the public spaces in your neighborhood. The steps include not only how to get started, but also how to move through a Placemaking process to get improvements implemented.

Getting Ready

STEP 1: Assess Public Space Challenges

STEP 2: Select a Site

STEP 3: Identify Key Stakeholders

Evaluating your Neighborhood

STEP 4: Collect Data

Making a Place Plan

STEP 5: Conduct Place Evaluation Workshop

STEP 6: Translate the Ideas into Action with a Working Group

STEP 7: Develop a Visual Concept Plan

STEP 8: Create a Summary Report and Presentation

Implementing your Place Plan

STEP 9: Implement Short-Term Actions

STEP 10: Develop Long-Term Design and Management Plans

STEP 11: Assess Results and Replicate

Getting Ready

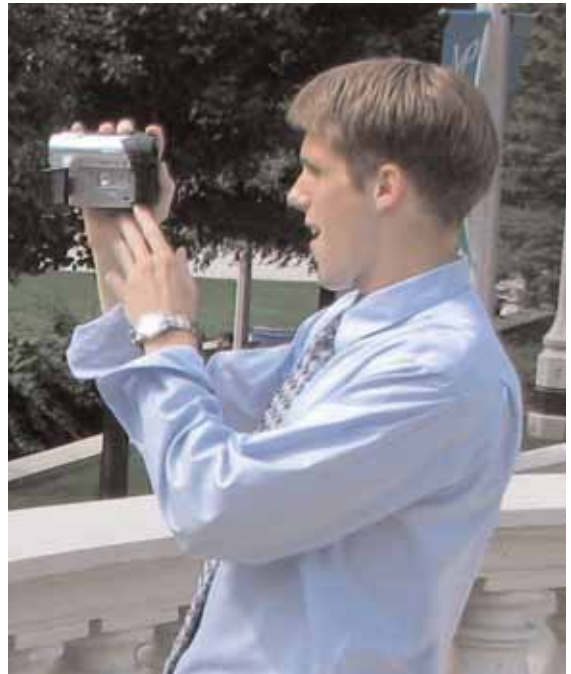
Step 1: Assess Public Space Challenges

Assessing the 10 most important places in your neighborhood

A strong Placemaking process begins with an informal assessment of the public space or spaces within and around the selected project site. Start by convening a group of interested leaders and stakeholders in the broader neighborhood (or city) and, using a map of the area, list what the group thinks are the 10 or so most important places in the area. These spaces can be places you think are already successful or ones that need improvement. This initial group of participants may help you form a working group along the way (see Step 6).

You can list these spaces and/or locate them on a map. You also should list why you think these places are successful or not. Maps, plans, and photo or video documentation is extremely valuable for gaining insight into a space. Where possible, walking to and around one or more of the places helps identify certain basic needs such as seating, shade, underutilized corners, or create a safe place to cross the street.

This informal assessment will not only help you view these spaces with fresh eyes, but help you to begin to determine the challenges and issues that need to be resolved. From this list you can decide which spaces you want to undertake improving first.



Getting Ready

Step 2: Select a Site

Once you start to narrow down your site options, it is a good idea to check with the Chicago Dept. of Planning and Development (DPD) or your alderman's office to learn what is possible to do on the sites. A space may have restrictions on it that could influence your plans.

After determining the availability of a site, go to the space! While there, begin to think about the elements that contribute to the success of a place. What ingredients make an otherwise ordinary plaza, street, or square into a people magnet? When they enjoy a place, people often describe it as **safe, fun, charming, or welcoming**. All of these seemingly intangible descriptions represent certain basic criteria for success: a place must be accessible; have

people who are engaged in activities; be comfortable and have a good image; and be a place where people choose to meet up with each other or show to visitors. Great places may not have all four of those qualities, but usually they have at least two.

When you arrive at your site, take some time to look around. Try to see your space through a new set of eyes, examining its characteristics. If you are doing this with a partner or a small group, choose one person to record everyone's comments. How do this space's characteristics compare to those described above?



Typical Challenges

- What complaints or shortcomings do residents, the city, or local stores and building managers have regarding your neighborhood public spaces?
- Are there empty or underused areas?
- Do you have concerns about nearby development – a road, transit facility, or building – and are you trying to become an active and integral partner in planning for that development?
- Is a revitalization or planning effort underway in which you wish, or are being encouraged to participate? How can you shape these efforts to provide maximum benefit to you and your community?

Getting Ready

Step 3: Identify Key Stakeholders

This step in the Placemaking process is closely related to the way a project was selected in the first place. Placemaking projects are often initiated by self-selected groups of people who live, work and play in the selected site. Start by seeking to expand the initial group by identifying and contacting other key stakeholders.

Strong local partners are essential to providing background information, explaining the dynamics of the community, and identifying additional participants.

Friends and Neighbors

The easiest way to begin the process is by engaging those around you. Ask your next-door neighbor what kinds of improvements he or she would like to see in the neighborhood, and invite neighbors – those you know well and others who are merely acquaintances – to local meetings. Encourage them to invite their friends and neighbors. There is strength in numbers!

Nearby Stores and Businesses

Local entrepreneurs can and should be pulled into the Placemaking process early on. Businesses flourish when people enjoy spending time in and around them. Stores and professional offices may be enlisted to assist by participating in creative evaluation sessions, as well as providing simple tools needed to enhance the social experience in the area (providing public benches, for example).

Long-Time Residents

In a region where neighborhoods have changed radically over the last few generations, it will be beneficial to speak to those who have lived

there the longest. Actively ask questions about the history and changes they've witnessed, and assets that have been lost over time. Elderly and disabled residents will be more enthused about participation when they're included in the process from the "get-go."

Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)

Local and national NGOs focusing on economic development, youth and elderly outreach and activities, environmental protection, architecture, arts and culture, and economic development can make wonderful partners in the Placemaking process. The alderman's office is a good resource to identify appropriate nonprofits in the neighborhood to engage. Nonprofits also can provide in-kind support such as meeting spaces, training facilities and additional resources during implementation.

Local Community Groups

Local community groups or leaders can help reach out to neighborhood councils or other community groups such as retirees' clubs, parents' associations, block clubs, or individuals with disabilities and other groups that may not be known to local NGOs. In multi-ethnic communities, it may be necessary to involve religious and cultural organizations that represent different ethnic groups.

Streets and Sanitation Ward Office

Chicago is a highly networked town, and the folks working at the Streets and San Ward office often provide invaluable information. It will be worth finding a personal connection there! The office will be able to provide contacts for local decision-makers, as well as statutes and laws dictating what a community



may and may not do on its own without prior permission. Drop in on a weekday afternoon with a pleasant attitude and maybe even a box of cookies to share.

Local Government Officials and Professionals

You may find you need the assistance of local government officials, the chamber of commerce, or private sector representatives in order to meet your Placemaking goals. These groups may be most effectively approached after the core community collective has evaluated its spaces and agrees on the desires and potential resources needed for improvement.

Local government officials often facilitate the best Placemaking opportunities. From streetscape improvements to transit station rehabs, the city and aldermen's offices oversee many potential Placemaking projects and welcome your support. When the project isn't paired with a planned capital improvement, your alderman can serve as a key contact for identifying other potential partners and leveraging additional resources. In most instances, local government officials have proven to be great supporters and constructive participants in the Placemaking process.

DPD neighborhood representatives are good sources of information about the current status

and history of a site. They often are the best sources for existing plans, and future development plans and other relevant materials, and can provide base maps, proposals for existing conditions, and designs developed by different architects and planners. Sometimes they can even provide access to sites that are closed to the public, such as vacant lots.

Undertaking a Placemaking effort that goes beyond presentations and workshops usually requires the alderman's endorsement. In all cases, it is prudent to inform the alderman and his/her staff about the work in progress, even if they are not directly involved in the process. Aldermen often show a great interest in and genuine support for Placemaking because they share the goal of providing visible improvements in the community.

Individual Experts

Professional experts such as architects, urban planners, historians, and artists are critical in assisting with the planning and implementation process and preferably should be involved from the very beginning. They can help with design, technical expertise and drawings, and ensure the historic and local specifics of a place are respected and preserved. Architecture, planning, landscaping, or transportation engineering students also could be included to assist communities with creating idea sketches and technical drawings.

SEE APPENDIX • PLAN OF

STAKEHOLDERS *to learn how a*

Placemaking process developed Logan Circle, Philadelphia, Pa. into a great place.

Evaluating your Neighborhood

Step 4: Collect Data

Observation Techniques

Methods of collecting information about a public place are as varied as the places themselves. The appendix provides in-depth descriptions of several observational techniques – including trace measures, behavior mapping, counting, and tracking – as well as techniques for measuring people’s perceptions through interviews and questionnaires. Each description includes information on when and how to use a technique and an example of a form that can be used to collect the information. These tools can be used in many different ways for an hour or longer. However, observations should be conducted more than once.

They should be done over several different periods, on a weekday and weekend, and at different times of day to better understand the “flow” of a place. You may be surprised what you discover.

SEE APPENDIX • TECHNIQUES for a brief overview of observation techniques including behavior mapping, counting, tracking, interview & questions, and trace measures. More tips on data collection available on www.placemakingchicago.com.



Making a Place Plan

Step 5: Conduct Place Evaluation Workshop

Based on the simple power of observation, the Place Evaluation Workshop makes the most of participants' special knowledge, common sense, intuition, and input. Stakeholders can quickly sum up the good and bad qualities of a site, and ignite a creative process about transforming an ordinary place into an extraordinary community asset. Any observant person can do a Place Evaluation, from children and lay people to highly trained professionals. The exercise also works in a range of situations, from informal groups or small planning teams to workshops and conferences with as many as 200 people. Best of all, the Place Evaluation Workshop is fun: participants get to know each other better, while gaining insight on ways to look at public spaces more holistically and see their potential as “places” in communities.

As noted in Step 2, it is very important that workshops be organized in cooperation with interested Stakeholders. It is usually effective for a local group – a nonprofit or neighborhood association – to coordinate the logistics of the workshop, with support from the alderman. Such an organizing strategy ensures community participation in greater numbers than if the event is organized by local government in the formal setting of City Hall. Yet, including local officials in both the workshop and process in general is paramount to the project's success.

The Placemaking process is both transparent and inclusive, so individual residents, community groups, business owners, nonprofits, and local government, along with planners and design professionals, can participate equally and in a meaningful way to make their community better.

In general, a Place Evaluation Workshop includes an overview of the targeted location and interactive site evaluation. For more information on preparing and running a Place Evaluation Workshop, please see Appendix page 57 and www.placemakingchicago.com

SEE APPENDIX • PLACE EVALUATION

WORKSHOP for examples of *Letter of Invitation, Invitation Flyer, Workshop Checklist, Agenda, Place Evaluation Game, Conducting a Placemaking Evaluation, Base Map, and Visual Concept Plan*



Making a Place Plan

Step 6: Translate Ideas into Action with a Working Group

Several good ideas will come out of the workshop with your assembled stakeholders, many of whom will be excited by the possibilities for the space they've just evaluated. The next step is to ask for volunteers – preferably, a mix of the most enthusiastic and influential people – to become members of a working group. Often, it is even better to establish the working group in advance and get their help organizing the workshop.

The purpose of the working group is to review the evaluation and ideas that were generated, solidify these ideas into a vision, and develop more specific recommendations. The working group should include a strong point person to lead the efforts.

It should identify a problem statement and create an action plan to address this problem.



Making a Place Plan

Step 7: Develop a Visual Concept Plan

The next step in the process is to produce what PPS calls a “Visual Concept Plan.” Because public spaces are so visible, it is important to implement even short-term improvements to make them attractive and functional.

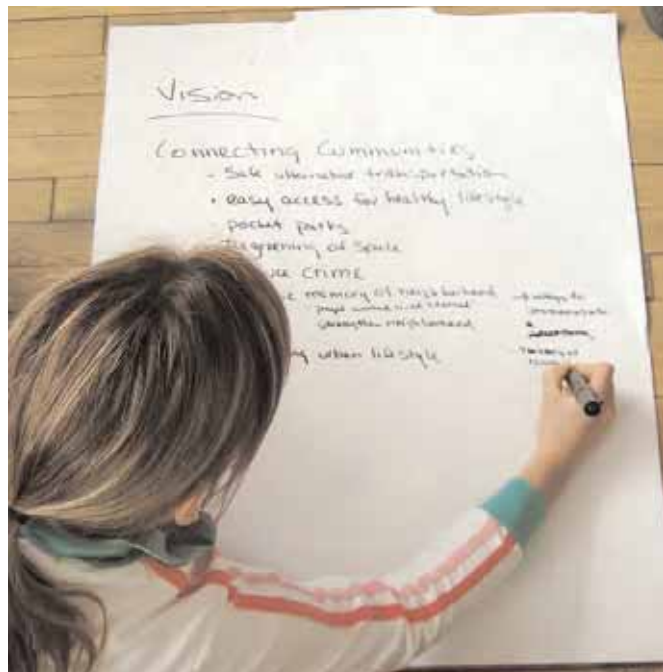
Developing a visual concept plan may seem like something that requires hiring an architect, but there are many ways you can design a simple space yourself, with people who have a good eye for what makes a space both appealing and useful. You can even cut out pictures to use as illustrations if no one in the group can draw. For example, in Tabor, Czech Republic, the local Placemaking group came up with the idea of re-opening a boat rental. Rather than just hang a sign on the old boat

house, they were inspired by the work of a Czech artist who painted imaginary city scenes with bright colors. The project manager’s husband was an architect and together they used the artist’s approach in deciding how to paint the building. The painter was invited to the opening of the boat house – he said it was like being in one of his own paintings! People were much more attracted to using the boat rental because of its special character.

SEE APPENDIX • PLACE EVALUATION

WORKSHOP for an sample Visual Concept

Plan from Richland, Wa.



Making a Place Plan

Step 8: Create a Summary Report and Presentation

Write a short report that summarizes the result of the Placemaking Workshop, working group sessions, and follow-up Visual Concept Plan. The report should build on the workshop result summary and vision statement, adding specific short and long-term ideas, priorities and partners. You can use the concept plans to illustrate the report. The report also should feature ideas that were not shown on the plan, as well as information such as a list of ideal partners, proposed short-term budget, and well-thought-out financing plan.

Finally, with further time and resources, you can consider creating a presentation of the summary and recommendations, which could be a poster, slide show, Web site, or other visual format. Think of a presentation as a visual tool that can be used to market your public space improvement efforts to potential partners, political supporters, funders, and community residents.

SEE APPENDIX • SUMMARY

REPORT to read the *Houston Downtown summary report*.



Implementing a Place Plan

Step 9: Implement Short-Term Actions

The most important step in the Placemaking process is implementation – putting the vision into action. It is best to begin implementation as soon as possible to keep the group dynamic and get some quick results. Some ideas can be implemented without design concepts, while others cannot. Seeing ideas become reality will retain the interest and enthusiasm of your placemakers!

Adding new activities to a space are among the best short-term improvements to a public space. It is easy to energize the community with some basic activities such as clean-ups and painting/decorating. Groups also can organize some simple, temporary events to get people used to the idea of using the place – fairs, farmer’s markets, sidewalk sales, mural competitions, bicycle rides, etc. Activities of this kind are fairly easy to organize, don’t require much funding, and can get people together.

The working group should meet regularly to give progress updates on their assigned actions; identify problems or challenges to this progress; discuss new approaches or developments that may help speed implementation, and so on. The working group also should review programming proposals, management-related issues, and prepare for the purchase and layout of amenities. Members also might decide how and when to involve more partners and draw positive attention to the new public-space improvements. For example, if moveable seats and café tables are placed in the space, you could do an informal survey to find out how people like them and how they might be improved.



Implementing a Place Plan

Step 10: Develop Long-Term Design and Management Plans

Short-term events need to be followed by longer-term and more complex improvements.

Design Plan

As you implement short-term improvements to a place, it also may be necessary to develop a design for the long-term improvement of the space. At this stage, it becomes critical to have the local government on board, if not already, especially experts from the departments of urban planning, community services, transportation, park district (depending on the nature of the place), and other technical expertise – architects, engineers, landscape architects, etc. — who can help transform the community vision into reality. PPS calls this group the design team.

You and your working group should assess the results of the agreed-upon short-term improvements. As part of the assessment process, you also might consider holding a follow-up workshop to identify next steps, new partners, new funding sources, and, if needed, to modify or update the long-term plan for your site. Most importantly, remember to document, celebrate and share your successes! Regular communication with stakeholders, including news and photos, will generate enthusiasm and a sense of pride.



Because you have implemented short-term improvements, you will have some time to develop the next phase of improvements, as well as the longer term design plan.

To manage the longer term design work, PPS suggests the following tips:

- Always refer back to your summary report (Step 8) and use it to guide all new partners you bring into the process.
- Make the working group the “client” for the project, so the design team reports to the working group for its approval. This may mean inviting others who should share in decision making to join the working group.
- Have regular progress meetings with the working group and design team, with specific timelines and products to be reviewed.
- Use these meetings to conduct additional brainstorming with the working group to address new issues that have been identified.
- Continue to use examples of spaces or ideas that reflect what people would like to see.
- Don’t be afraid to say ‘no’ or ‘we don’t like that’ to the architect or designers, but do suggest alternatives.
- Hold public meetings to present the work of the design team before everything is “final” to allow for new ideas and get public reaction and changes.
- Build excitement about the proposed plan, using local media, public pictures, and plans.



Management Plan

While local government focuses on basic services such as waste collection, maintenance, and lighting, local community or business organizations can manage space on a deeper level, making people feel welcome and making the place seem more inviting through constant refinements to make the space work better.

This deeper level can be compared to the management of a good hotel that does everything it can to make its guests and potential guests so comfortable they will come back again and again. A good hotel not only cleans and maintains, but makes a concerted effort to draw in the public, such as: putting out flower boxes and flags and other colorful details; offering food and drink, perhaps with a sidewalk café; arranging and re-arranging furniture in the public areas so it is as user friendly and attractive as possible; answering questions and responding to complaints; hosting events; and addressing a range of other customer-responsive details. Other spaces, especially markets, need a different type of management particularly suited to their special functions.

Many times, the management tasks the city is not able to meet are taken over by neighborhood groups, adjacent institutions, volunteers, or a local business group; in some cases, a new organization might be created to manage the space (a continuation of the working group), complementing the services the city is already providing. To better understand the management that a space really needs compared to what it is getting, it is helpful to conduct interviews with the people managing the space now, chart what they do, and compare that with the new demands that will be placed on the space if you implement the long-term vision you have developed.

SEE APPENDIX • ACTION PLAN



Implementing a Place Plan

Step 11: Assess Results and Replicate

At this point (or even before you implement a longer term plan), you also can think about expanding your efforts to other sites or neighboring communities. In fact, if your Placemaking efforts are a success, stakeholders and community members from other places and municipalities will seek to initiate their own Placemaking projects.

Some of the questions you should consider as you expand your efforts are:

- What other places in the community need to be improved?
- Who will fund the implementation of short-term improvements?
- What role will the working group play? Should it be the working group for a new project or should a new one be created?
- Is there a need for a broader “Placemaking” organization in the community to oversee all of the projects?
- If so, how would that organization be funded and supported?
- How can you work with other similar projects in the region or country?



Why Chicagoland Needs Great Places

The staff of Metropolitan Planning Council

A recent global survey showed residents of Chicago are some of the most satisfied and optimistic people in the world. With a population that is expected to grow by 2.8 million over the next 20 years, it is clear this optimism is spreading.

As the Chicago region grows, it is essential to remember what makes Chicagoland truly special. With 552 parks, 33 beaches, one of the world's largest conservatories, an 18-mile linear park along Lake Michigan, and more than 40 community gardens, it is easy to argue public spaces are a big part of what makes Chicago, well, *Chicago*.

Many of the region's public spaces are officially maintained by the Chicago Park District or Cook County Forest Preserves. Unofficially, the people who live here are the reason these places work. They are the ones who dip their feet in the fountains on a hot summer day and connect with their neighbors at a community dog park. They spend their afternoons reading on a bench, playing pick-up softball games, and hosting impromptu barbecues. Without people, the great public places of Chicago – and thus the region itself – would not thrive.

For nearly 75 years, the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) has partnered with everyone from block club presidents to mayors to maintain and enhance the quality of life in the Chicago region. Through our work, we are continually impressed by how much Chicagoans love their city – and by the variety of projects, large and small, residents tackle in an effort to make their neighborhoods and region even better.



MPC's partnership with Project for Public Spaces represents an exciting opportunity and challenge. For more than 30 years, PPS has been a recognized leader in community-based public space planning. Its expertise has been honed by projects in more than 2,000 communities in 26 countries around the world. By partnering with MPC to create a Chicago-specific Placemaking publication and host local trainings, PPS recognizes the tremendous vitality of the Chicago region – and encourages us to do more.

The goal of this guidebook is to do just that: help Chicagoans recognize the region's amazing public places and inspire action to preserve, improve and create new public spaces. We have identified the necessary tools and resources, and told the stories of people in the region who have brought positive change to their neighborhoods. Now, we ask you, the reader: What can *you* do to contribute to Chicago's bright future? What vision do you have for Chicago ... your neighborhood ... or even your own block?

A century ago, Chicago's visionary planner Daniel Burnham encouraged people to, "Make no little plans." Let's expand our imagination beyond Burnham's call to action and instead make lots of little plans! Even the smallest improvement or change can foster community life and beautify neighborhoods. Whether you are new to the area or have lived here your entire life, you can start making great places today!



Appendix

While meetings and discussions are important to a Placemaking process, making your case and implementing it often require data. The following techniques help generate specific statistics that can be used to evaluate and improve a community space. This chapter includes sample forms you can use for your projects. They can be modified to fit the exact needs and goals of your project. To download these forms visit www.placemakingchicago.com.

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Resources

GROUPS

Archi-Treasures

Archi-treasures is an arts-based community development organization offering services to community partners who are committed to a participatory process of planning, designing and building public spaces for community use.

www.architreasures.org

T 773-772-4416

Chicago Public Arts Group (CPAG)

Operating on the belief that community public arts projects strengthen communities, CPAG engages residents in the design and implementation of pieces of public art that reflect the social and cultural values of the community.

www.cpag.net

T 312-427-2724

LISC/Chicago

LISC/Chicago coordinates financial capital and resources to aid community projects. It also works with community groups to build and maintain relationships with city officials, and co-sponsors the New Communities Program – a five-year initiative in 16 Chicago neighborhoods to support comprehensive community development.

www.lisc-chicago.org

T 312-360-0183

NeighborSpace

NeighborSpace works with community groups that are interested in creating and maintaining open space in their neighborhoods. It provides assistance with issues such as ownership, funding, materials, and technical assistance.

www.neighbor-space.org

T 312-431-9406

Neighbors Project

Neighbors Project is a growing movement of a generation of people living in cities who want to connect with their diverse neighbors to improve the neighborhood for everyone.

www.neighborsproject.org

Openlands

An independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving open space in northeastern Illinois, Openlands accomplishes its mission through three program branches: Greenways, Policy, and Urban Greening, as well as a special initiative program, Corporatelands.

Openlands also works with CorLands, an affiliate organization to help communities in northeastern Illinois increase the quantity and quality of open space for public enjoyment

www.openlands.org

www.corlands.org

T 312-427-4256

The Trust for Public Land: Chicago Office

For the last 10 years, the Trust for Public Land's Chicago Office has worked diligently with public agencies and citizen organizations to plan for future. The Trust for Public Land's Greenprinting, Natural Areas, and Urban Parks programs assist government partners and communities with prioritizing land for protection, finding funding sources, and acquiring land for parks and open space that are sorely needed in many parts of the Chicago region.

www.tpl.org/chicago

T 312-408-1733

PROGRAMS**Chicago Transit Authority: Arts in Transit**

This initiative pairs the Chicago Transit Authority and Department of Cultural Affairs in providing more artwork at CTA rail stations. The two agencies successfully partnered to select artists and artwork for eight renovated Blue Line CTA stations, and six renovated Red Line stations, and are currently completing 18 renovated Brown Line stations.

<http://ctabrownline.com/artstransit.html>

T 1-888-YOUR-CTA

Chicago Transit Authority: Adopt-a-Station

Through the Adopt-a-Station program, the CTA partners with communities to create distinctive station designs and ensure ongoing community maintenance of the design.

www.transitchicago.com/downloads/brochures/adopt.pdf

T 1-888-YOUR-CTA

City of Chicago: Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS)

CAPS brings the police, community, and other city agencies together to identify and solve neighborhood crime problems, rather than react to their symptoms after the fact. Problem solving at the neighborhood level is supported by strategies, including neighborhood-based beat officers; regular Beat Community Meetings involving police and residents; training for both police and community; efficient use of city services that impact crime; and new technology to target crime hot spots.

www.cityofchicago.org

City of Chicago: Department of Planning and Development, Special Service Areas (SSAs)

SSAs are special tax districts that are allowed to use tax dollars for the benefit of those being taxed. Much like an association fee, these dollars can be used to amplify services already provided to the city. Past projects include marketing campaigns for neighborhoods, parade and festival funds, and small-scale capital improvements for local businesses.

www.cityofchicago.org

T 312-744-8356

City of Chicago: Department of Transportation, Chicago Streetscape Program

Working with community groups, CDOT initiated the Chicago Streetscape Program to beautify and enhance commercial districts.

www.cityofchicago.org

T 312-744-3600

City of Chicago: Department of Transportation, Open Space Impact Fee

When a new development takes place in the city, there is a certain amount of land the developer must leave as greenspace. If the developer cannot provide for it, they must pay what is called an 'open space impact fee.' The money from these fees are used by the city to increase green space and recreational facilities for the neighborhood residents.

www.cityofchicago.org

T 312-743-3600

City of Chicago: Mayor Daley's Landscape Awards

Every year, the city recognizes residents and businesses in Chicago that help to beautify their neighborhoods through landscaping. The awards are open to all residents of Chicago, and nomination forms are available on the Web site.

www.cityofchicago.org/city

T 312-744-6066

Percent-for-Art Program

Since 1978, Chicago's Percent-for-Art Program has funded the installation and maintenance of the city's vast collection of public art, such as the Picasso in Daley Plaza, and "The Bean" in Millennium Park.

www.cpag.net

T 312-742-1164

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Project for Public Spaces

New York, New York

www.pps.org

T 212-620-5660

F 212-620-3821

Project for Public Spaces is a nonprofit organization that has pioneered a “Placemaking” approach to revitalizing public spaces. Established in 1975, PPS has worked with over 2,000 communities, large and small, helping residents transform grow their public spaces into vital community places, utilizing programs, uses and people-friendly settings that highlight local assets, spur rejuvenation, and serve common needs. PPS has worked in settings as large as New York City, the organization’s home base, and in towns as small as Woodmere, Ohio (pop. 800), in the United States and around the world.

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www.placemakingchicago.com



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL

Metropolitan Planning Council

Chicago, Illinois

www.metroplanning.org

T 312-922-5616

F 312-922-5619

Founded in 1934, the Metropolitan Planning Council is a nonprofit, nonpartisan group of business and civic leaders committed to serving the public interest through development, promotion and implementation of sound planning policies so all residents have access to opportunity and a good quality of life, the building blocks of a globally competitive greater Chicago region.



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A Guide to Neighborhood Placemaking in Chicago
is generously supported by

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RICHARD H. DRIEHAUS
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