



Placemaking for REALTOR® Associations

A 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.



“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



An underused vacant lot in Roseland, Chicago, Illinois.



The lot has been transformed into a welcoming, fun and safe place for residents.

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 others areas in the surrounding community. As a place becomes desirable, properties around the place increase in value.

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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.

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.



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 and Public Spaces

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.



Neighborhood residents in Portland, Oregon built a shelter for passersby to pause, rest, watch, think, make music, read, and write.

Community 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.

Added benefits of community gardens include increasing a sense of community ownership and pride, teaching young people where food comes from, and bringing together multiple generations.

Community gardens are a great project in which to involve neighborhood residents and organizations. There are roles for everyone. Residents, students and volunteers can help clear the space of litter, paint colorful signs, install

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JOYAN SPELTER, CITY ARTS, WASHINGTON, DC

Rooftop Garden with a mosaic footpath.



LAURA MICHEL

[Avers Community Garden](#) (Chicago, Illinois)

planters and plant the seeds. Funds will be needed for supplies such as fencing, seeds, and lumber to construct raised beds.

There are several crucial steps to take when starting out creating a community garden. According to this [community gardening resource](#), these include designing for sustainability, and analyzing existing conditions and natural landscaping features.



Can you think of any neglected, vacant spaces in your community that could become a community garden? This might be a great community outreach project for your members.

Build 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.

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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.



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.

BEFORE



THE BETTER BLOCK

AFTER



THE BETTER BLOCK

Images from the Tyler Better Block in Dallas, Texas

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“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

Here are some examples of Better Block projects:

- The Better Block Project San Antonio, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VC5EFcD5aCM>
- Better Block Jefferson Park, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA5tMyuHXoo>
- Norfolk Better Block, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnrYE9hi3rM>

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.



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.

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“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

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 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.

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

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“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
Senior Vice President,
Michigan Association
of REALTORS®

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.

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.

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.



“In creative Placemaking, partners from public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, tribe, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. 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.”

NEA

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.

Main Street

The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) has developed [Main Street®](#), 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.

NTHP 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 defined by NTHP as 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. The [NTHP 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.



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®](#).



“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

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®

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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.”

GILBERT WHITE
Gilbert M. White,
REALTOR®

are the eyes and ears of communities,” says Kathie Feldpausch, senior vice president of the Michigan Association of REALTORS®. 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.

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.

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.

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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.

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

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.



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL

"What a community wants" exercise at the Polish Triangle in Chicago.



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL

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.

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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 from 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.

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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

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.

[GoFundMe](#) is one 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

Resource: NAR's [Smart Growth Grants](#) support a wide range of land-use related activities including Placemaking.

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.



[Washington Park \(Cincinnati, Ohio\) Ribbon Cutting.](#)

and celebrities may encourage more people to attend. For additional ideas, see ["10 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.

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

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.

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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 in Action

REALTORS® Making Places



JHP ARCHITECTURE/URBAN DESIGN

Outcome of Atlanta Edgewood Station Design Charrette.

Atlanta Commercial Board of REALTORS®

ACBR participated in a charrette, a collaborative process that allows a variety of project stakeholders to participate in local planning and design decisions, to determine the fate of a large but underutilized parking lot on the seven-acre site at the MARTA station at Edgewood/Candler

Park. The fenced parking lots and deteriorating sidewalks created a barrier between the station and an adjacent park, and isolated the station from nearby multifamily and retail sites. The charrette's outcome indicated the community's desire for green space and civic areas. As the development gets underway, members of the Atlanta Commercial Board of REALTORS® may be taking on a new role at Edgewood—that of leasing brokers.

Michigan Association of REALTORS®

In 2012, with funding from NAR, the Michigan Association of REALTORS® awarded \$20,000, in Placemaking grants to nine applicants from the Greater Lansing Area. Grants of \$500 to \$2,500 were given to projects for the first phase of MAR's Lighter



JASON HENRICH, MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

Pine and St. Joe Community Garden, Lansing, Michigan.

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Quicker Cheaper (LQC) Placemaking initiative. Here are a few of those projects that had a REALTOR® sponsor, a clear concept, and a community-wide resolve to see it through:

- **Historic Dimondale Walking Tour:** Residents and visitors alike can take a walking tour of Dimondale and learn about historic places and events from new signs posted at half-mile intervals. New benches will also be installed for rest and reflection.
- **Trowbridge Village Neighbor Station:** Amidst the hustle and bustle of Michigan State's south campus, the Trowbridge neighborhood will build on past efforts to establish a small free library, and comfortable place for residents of all ages to relax, learn and share.
- **Barnes Street Community Garden:** Leveraging help from multiple local groups and volunteers, a new community garden and gathering area will enable neighbors to grow fresh produce and enjoy art in the company of friends.

The program has now been expanded to seven regions in the state of Michigan, with additional grants to be awarded.



Main Street, Seville, Ohio.

Medina County Board of REALTORS®

The Board provided support to the Village of Seville (Ohio) to develop a strategy to alleviate blight and attract increased foot traffic in the downtown area.

In particular, they were focused on how to reduce commercial real estate vacancy, and what to do with the recently vacated

elementary school building, which had served as a downtown anchor and a vital part of village life. With an NAR Smart Growth Action Grant, The National Main Street Center® visited Seville, met with stakeholders, and produced a report with recommendations. A major recommendation was to build on the asset of the

town's several antique shops and craft stores by recruiting others. This has been a success, and now most of the commercial vacancies have been filled.

High Point Regional Association of REALTORS®

Twice a year, the population of High Point, North Carolina doubles for a week when it hosts the High Point Market, the world's largest home furnishings trade show. But the pattern of bi-annual income spikes, though predictable, it is not a viable economic model for the city, whose central downtown area with its vast acres of parking — necessary only two weeks of the year — has been suffering substantial blight in recent decades.

In May 2013, High Point was the subject of a planning charrette, a series of concentrated strategy sessions conducted by renowned architect and urban planner Andrés Duany, a specialist in revitalizing city centers. The week-long program was sponsored in part by an NAR Smart Growth Grant secured by the High Point Regional Association of REALTORS®, working with The City Project, a grassroots partnership of city government, the local business community and concerned citizens. Its mission is to develop High Point based on principles of smart growth, creating an urban area filled with economic health, local quality of life, and community pride.

During the charrette, High Point's disproportionate downtown parking situation became a focus for lively discussion. Exciting ideas emerged, from staging outdoor concerts and events, to farmers markets, to temporary shipping container festivals, to crafts fairs inspired by the workmanship of High Point's historic furniture industry. The city now has a lot to think about — and implement. The hope is that by making the parking area contribute to a walkable downtown district, people who are drawn to the venue will want to stick around and visit nearby businesses, shops, and restaurants.

Kevin McCarthy, REALTOR®

The Westchester County Association in New York, in partnership with Blueprint for Westchester and the county's Young Professionals Group, hopes to revitalize some of the county's parks, downtown areas, commercial corridors, train stations, office parks, industrial districts and waterfronts to improve Westchester's housing

and lifestyle landscape by giving it a sense of place. Key stakeholders will be considering pop-up cafes and restaurants, and cultural offerings, as well as repurposing current inventory such as Westchester’s commercial space. Taking an active lead in this Placemaking initiative is REALTOR® Kevin McCarthy, a commercial real estate broker and a founding member of Westchester County Association’s Young Professionals Group. Kevin became involved in this project to help re-purpose and transform Westchester County, and as someone working in the industry, he feels he is at the front lines of what can reshape the current parameters of commercial real estate in Westchester County. Kevin says that, “As a REALTOR®, I have the unique opportunity to sit with local municipal leaders, landlords, tenants, and prospects and educate them on the changing expectations of commercial real estate and its use. Through this process I can help shape and grow local neighborhoods and submarkets into vibrant communities.”

Community and Public/Private Placemaking



LIVING STREETS LA

“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.

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Clam River Greenway in 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.



NORTHWEST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL

“People Spot” in 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.

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Community Garden in 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.



LAWRENCE, KANSAS COMMON GROUND PROGRAM



DEMOISELLE 2 FEMME

Vacant Lot Transformed in Chicago, Illinois

Near the intersection of 103rd and Wentworth Avenue on Chicago's Far South Side, a group of ten young women was charged with the task of selecting a place in need of transformation, raising awareness of issues that face the community, and using community engagement and design principles to transform it. Working together, the group

transformed a vacant, trash-strewn lot nestled between two storefront churches into a play lot featuring a ropes course that reflects the Swiss Alps. Their efforts included knocking on doors, creating live twitter feeds and installing chalk boards

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where people could write their ideas for what the space could become. Newfound pride in this lot continues to be evident in the way the park has been maintained.

Urban Park Renewal in Cincinnati, Ohio

Washington Park is located in the historic Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. As the neighborhood fell on hard times, lack of investment led to the deterioration of the neighborhood and the park. The Park underwent a major renovation and was turned into an 8-acre urban sanctuary, becoming an anchor for Over-the-Rhine's revival. The transformation has spurred new economic development in the surrounding area, and the park better serves its diverse community and a new population of visitors drawn to its extensive program of concerts, movies, educational programs and special events.



CINCINNATI PARKS

Washington Park is now a premier urban space for all people.



CADILLAC URBAN GARDENS ON MERRITT

A tomato planting production line of University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University students at the Cadillac Urban Gardens.

Parking Lot to Community Garden in 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.



JOE MOLINARO, NAR

Columbia Heights Fountain Plaza (DC)

Resources

NAR Resources

Placemaking Guide

On Common Ground

[Summer 2013 Article](#)

[Placemaking Issue](#)

Social Media

[Community Outreach Facebook Page](#)

Education and Technical Assistance

Smart Growth for the 21st Century: a four-hour course on the value of smart growth, training real estate professionals to become effective advocates for bringing its benefits to their communities. State and local associations are encouraged to offer this course for members and associates; Smart Growth Action Grants may be available from NAR to cover hosting fees.

Placemaking Sessions at NAR Conferences: Annual, Midyear, AEI, GAD Institute. Check [REALTOR® Action Center](#) for dates and links to presentations.

Webinars: NAR offers webinars on various Placemaking topics. Check [REALTOR® Action Center](#) for links to webinars.

Funding for REALTOR® Associations

Smart Growth Grants: for programs and projects that support REALTOR® engagement in land-use related issues.

Issues Mobilization Grants: for state and local issue advocacy campaigns to promote positions on public policies (government laws, regulations, courses of action and funding priorities) that affect REALTOR® interests.

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. <http://www.pps.org/>

Eleven Principles for Turning Public Spaces Into Civic Places

<http://www.pps.org/reference/11principles/>

Five Essential Elements of a Placemaking Campaign

<http://www.pps.org/blog/five-essential-elements-of-a-Placemaking-campaign/>

Placemaking Chicago: <http://www.placemakingchicago.com/>

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. <http://www.placemakingchicago.com/guide/>

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. http://jefferson.uwex.edu/files/2010/09/Professional_Guide_5_8_09_000.pdf

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Northern Michigan Community Placemaking Guidebook: a guidebook for anyone wishing to create a vibrant, prosperous community. <http://www.createmiplace.org/>

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. <http://cityrepair.org/>

City Repair's Placemaking Guidebook

<http://cityrepair.org/2011/04/city-repairs-placemaking-guidebook/>

Gardens and Parks

How-To Guide for Creating Pocket Park and Greenspace Projects: Outlines the steps to create a pocket park, community garden or green space in your neighborhood. http://www.kibi.org/pp_how-to

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. http://sfpavementtoparks.sfplanning.org/docs/SF_P2P_Parklet_Manual_1.0_FULLL.pdf

How to Create a Community Garden: a few simple steps to follow when creating a community garden. <http://neighborworksnews.blogspot.com/2012/08/how-to-create-community-garden.html>

Placemaking: Designing a Garden for the Community: Designing for a community involves understanding five important steps. <http://www.doitgreen.org/green-living/placemaking-designing-garden-community>.

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). <http://www.pps.org/reference/lighter-quicker-cheaper-a-low-cost-high-impact-approach/>

Placemaking for REALTOR® Associations

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Michigan Association of REALTORS®' Lighter Quicker Cheaper Challenge:

Application form, examples and assessment matrix. www.mirealtors.com/content/upload/AssetMgmt/Documents/LQCAApplication13.pdf

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.

<http://www.arts.gov/pub/CreativePlacemaking-Paper.pdf>

Creative Placemaking Strategies for Gateway City Growth and Renewal: four high-level takeaways from a Creative Placemaking Summit held in 2011.

<http://www.ahanewbedford.org/creativeplacemaking.pdf>

ArtPlace: provides communities with creative Placemaking, a grassroots, bottom-up design tool used to identify their goals for their public spaces.

http://www.artblocks.org/who_we_are.html.

Build a Better Block

The Better Block: News and information on Better Block projects occurring around the world. <http://betterblock.org/>

How to Build Better Blocks in Your Community: Ten steps to follow to build a better block. <http://www.livablecities.org/blog/city-city-block-block-building-better-blocks-project>

Pop-ups and Temporary Places

No Vacancy! Guide: a practical “how-to” for property owners and potential temporary space users. <http://novacancyproject.wordpress.com/no-vacancy-guide/>

Pop Up Project: Temporary actions that will inspire permanent change.

<http://www.popupprojectal.com/index.html>

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Streets and Transit

StreetsBlog.org: Streetsblog is a daily news source connecting people to information about sustainable transportation and livable communities. Public Space Blog: <http://www.streetsblog.org/category/public-space/>

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. <http://www.pps.org/reference/livememtraffic/>

Streets for People: a Primer for People Who Want Quieter, Safer, Friendlier Neighborhood Streets. <http://www.transalt.org/resources/streets4people>

Main Street

National Trust for Historic Preservation: NTHP has developed [Main Street®](#) an approach to revitalizing traditional commercial districts in a community. <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-programs/>

Recommendations to establish a Main Street program.

<http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/getting-started/#.Uc3oCJzNmEA>.