Placemaking

Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm to maximize shared value.

With community-based participation at its center, an effective placemaking process capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, and it results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and wellbeing.

Placemaking projects will typically go through the same steps: Ideation, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation. Engagement usually happens throughout the entire process. This document is meant as a resource to help as your work through the concept design.

PHASE 1 IDEATION

Placemaking projects typically focus on how to increase local vibrancy to help drive business and restore vibrancy to local communities.

Once you have an idea, or even before you have a solid idea, you will want to speak to local stakeholders (e.g.: local businesses, community organizations, government).

This phase includes identifying groups that you want to partner with on the project. Consideration should be given to identifying local assets — the people, resources, and unique qualities that can be leveraged and built upon as part of the placemaking project.

Questions to answer during Ideation:

- Is there a particular place (street, public space, area) that would benefit from a placemaking project?
- What are the opportunities to draw visitors and increase the local vibrancy of this place?
- What are the local assets, strengths, and unique qualities of this place that should be celebrated and/or leveraged?
- What additional elements or features will be added to enhance the space?

- Who are the stakeholders that would know most about the space/issue and how can you learn from them and/or involve them at this early stage?
- Are there groups or organizations that would help to make the project a success (i.e., as partners, sponsors, funders)?

PHASE 2 PROJECT PLANNING

The planning phase works out the details that will enable successful implementation of an idea. It includes developing a detailed vision, work plan, budget, funding strategy and evaluation plan. The plan may include details about maintenance, evaluation, and project sustainability.

Engagement of community, businesses and other local stakeholders is almost always a critical part of the planning phase.

You will likely want to consult with Indigenous leadership and/or city staff at this stage and may decide to contact technical experts who can support the project. As you are planning your project, you will need to identify and apply for any necessary permits and approvals.

Questions to answer during Planning:

- What are the specific steps that need to be taken to implement the project?
- What ongoing management, maintenance, and resourcing is required to ensure the project is a success and sustainable?
- Who are the individuals or groups that would have an interest in this project?
- How can we engage or collaborate with them during planning and implementation?
- Which city departments should be informed and/or engaged in the project?
- Are there any technical experts that would help to make the project a success?
- Are there permits or approvals needed?
- How much will the project cost?
- How will we fund the project?
- How will we measure success?

PHASE 3 IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation phase is when your plan becomes a reality. As your project is happening, you will want to document and share your successes to continue

to generate enthusiasm and support for the project. This could include taking pictures, collecting, and sharing stories on social media or other forms of communication.

Questions to answer during Implementation:

- How will you address unforeseen circumstances?
- Who would benefit from hearing about the project as it progresses?
- How can we best document and communicate the results of the project to maintain momentum and enthusiasm?

PHASE 4 MEASURING SUCCESS

It's important to start thinking about measuring success well before the project is complete. Below are some examples of the types of data that can help to demonstrate the success of your project.

When you're evaluating outcomes, think about who and how many people were involved, the partnerships that were built, and any positive outcomes that result from those partnerships.

Questions to answer in Phase 4:

- What change were we hoping to achieve?
- How will we know when/whether the change happens?
- What do we need to measure to know whether this change occurred?
- What baseline data do I need to be able to show how things have changed?
- What data is easily available?

Ways of measuring success examples:

- Number of visitors/participants
- Number of events or activities held in the space
- New partnerships created
- Number of jobs created
- Local Business Impacts
  - Increase in revenue
  - Decrease in number of vacant storefronts
- Survey of users
  - Stronger sense of belonging
  - Increased sense of safety
  - Increase sense of identity

PHASE 5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engagement should take place at various points throughout the placemaking process. It increases the likelihood that project outcomes are widely accepted and successful and creates more effective solutions by drawing on local knowledge from diverse groups. It's important to think about how you will involve and collaborate with community members during the process.

Questions to answer as part of your Community Engagement:

- What does the community want and need?
- How can we gather input from this community?
- How can we actively cultivate meaningful engagement?
- How are we ensuring that diverse groups within this community know about opportunities and can participate?
- Is the information about the project accessible and understandable for all community members?
- Do community members have opportunities to participate that work for them?

Sources:
My Main Street
Placemaking Education
Project for Public Spaces