LAFAYETTE PLACEMAKING PLAN

PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

PLACEMAKING PLAN
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Prepared for

City of Lafayette Economic Development Department

Prepared by

Project For Public Spaces

Placemaking Community Workshop at MatchBOX, Lafayette

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INTRODUCTION

Lafayette's downtown, its people, its businesses and its buildings, reflect the best of what a downtown main street community can be. It is how this community works together to leverage these assets into sustaining its shared places that will determine how Lafayette can thrive in the future.

Placemaking is nothing new and trendy. Historic Downtown Lafayette was clearly built with this ethic and common focus. The Placemaking process, principles and action items that this report summarizes are geared to galvanize a renewed energy to what Lafayette is already doing. This report is the vision that emerged out of three days of workshops, but is hopefully just the start of a vibrant conversation, shared learning process, and even bolder vision that will come from continuing to collaborate to create great places.

The goal of the three days was to convene community stakeholders, training them in the tools and techniques of Placemaking, and developing strategies and next steps for how Lafayette can best work together to enhance and sustain great places. The three days included Placemaking training for Lafayette's city leaders, participatory public workshops, on-site evaluations and interviews, and design schemes with talented and insightful Ball State students. The preparation and follow-up has included extensive online and in person discussion as well.

This Placemaking vision and action plan builds on the leadership and momentum of the community and previous studies. The report *From Good to Great: Making Lafayette a Community of Choice* (2012) lays out many goals that the action plan for Placemaking can help realize, in particular: "Greater Lafayette is a Great Place for All People" (focusing on diversity and inclusion); and, "Make the Hilltop-to-Hilltop Corridor Human-Scale, Pedestrian-Friendly and The-Place-To-Be."

This document has to be the launching point for a campaign to create great places, but even more importantly, a campaign to build the capacity for Lafayette to continue to sustain its places. The short-term, small-scale projects are a means to take on bigger challenges. No effort should be considered too small. No failure should be considered wasted.

The strength of a city, a local economy, and America as a country, is really built on how communities organize and evolve themselves at this community scale. We look forward to continuing to be part of the Placemaking conversation in Lafayette and to help share your lessons and stories around the world.

ABOUT PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

Our History & Approach

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) was founded in 1975 to expand on the work of William Holly Whyte, author of The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces. We are a nonprofit planning, educational, and technical assistance organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. Our pioneering Placemaking approach helps citizens transform their public spaces into vital places that highlight local assets, spur rejuvenation and serve common needs.

Since our inception, we have completed projects in more than 3000 communities in 43 countries and all 50 U.S. states and are the premier center for best practices, information, and resources on placemaking.

Through research, conferences, and strategic partnerships, PPS has been promoting Placemaking as a transformative agenda to address some of the most pressing issues of our society for the past 40 years.

What is Placemaking?

'Placemaking' is both an overarching idea and a hands-on tool for improving a neighborhood, city or region. Placemaking is a quiet movement that reimagines public spaces as the heart of every community, in every city. Placemaking strengthens the connection between people and the places they share.

Placemaking is a community-based, place-led approach to creating vital public spaces that build stronger communities.

Placemaking involves looking at, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work, and play in a particular space, to discover their needs, aspirations, and vision for that place.

Our approach to Placemaking is based on our belief that it is not enough to simply develop design ideas and elements to improve or develop a public space. Improvements need to reflect community values and needs. We believe that a public involvement process that defines and responds to community conditions and needs from the outset is one of the most critical factors in achieving a public space that is truly sensitive to its context.

THE BENEFITS OF PLACE

Placemaking is often the most effective way of helping communities rise above isolated issues to forge a more compelling, integrated vision. Focusing on creating great places is perhaps the best way to create great communities.

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.

Places benefit cities economically by encouraging small-scale entrepreneurship, local ownership, more desirable jobs, greater talent retention, higher real estate values, and greater tax revenue.

Places promote a greater sense of comfort because they are visually pleasing, generally stimulating, environmentally friendly, and promote a sense of belonging.

Places draw a diverse population, including more women, elderly, and children, as well as a greater ethnic and cultural mix, by supporting a wider range of activities and uses, new service, retail, and customer niches, and encouraging people to get involved and take pride in the area.

Places create improved accessibility, being more walkable, safer for pedestrians, compatible with public transit, less reliant on cars and parking, more efficient in terms of time and money, and offering better connections between uses.

Places foster frequent and meaningful contact through improved sociability, cultural exposure and interaction, exchange and preservation of information, wisdom, and values, reduction of race and class barriers.

THE BENEFITS OF GREAT PLACES

+ Visually pleasing
+ Generally stimulating
+ Sense of belonging
+ Greater security
+ Better environmental quality
+ Feeling of freedom

+ More walkable
+ Safe for pedestrians and bicyclists
+ Compatible with public transit
+ Reduces need for cars and parking
+ More efficient use of time and money
+ Greater connections between uses

+ Greater community organization
+ Sense of pride and volunteerism
+ Perpetuation of integrity and values
+ Less need for municipal control
+ Self-managing

+ Small-scale entrepreneurship
+ Economic development
+ Higher real estate values
+ Local ownership, local value
+ More desirable jobs
+ Greater tax revenue
+ Less need for municipal services

+ Increased physical activity
+ Access to fresh food
+ Greater security
+ Greater social inclusion
+ Enhanced environmental health

+ Improves sociability
+ More cultural exposure, interaction
+ Draws a diverse population
+ More women, elderly, children
+ Greater ethnic/cultural pluralism
+ Encourages community creativity

PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?

PPS has spent almost 40 years working to improve failing public spaces and to create vibrant new ones. We have distilled the qualities that make a place great into the following four basic ingredients.

Uses & Activities

A great place has a range of uses and activities that attract a variety of community members. These activities are what keeps a great public space lively, inviting, and exciting time and time again.

Access & Linkages

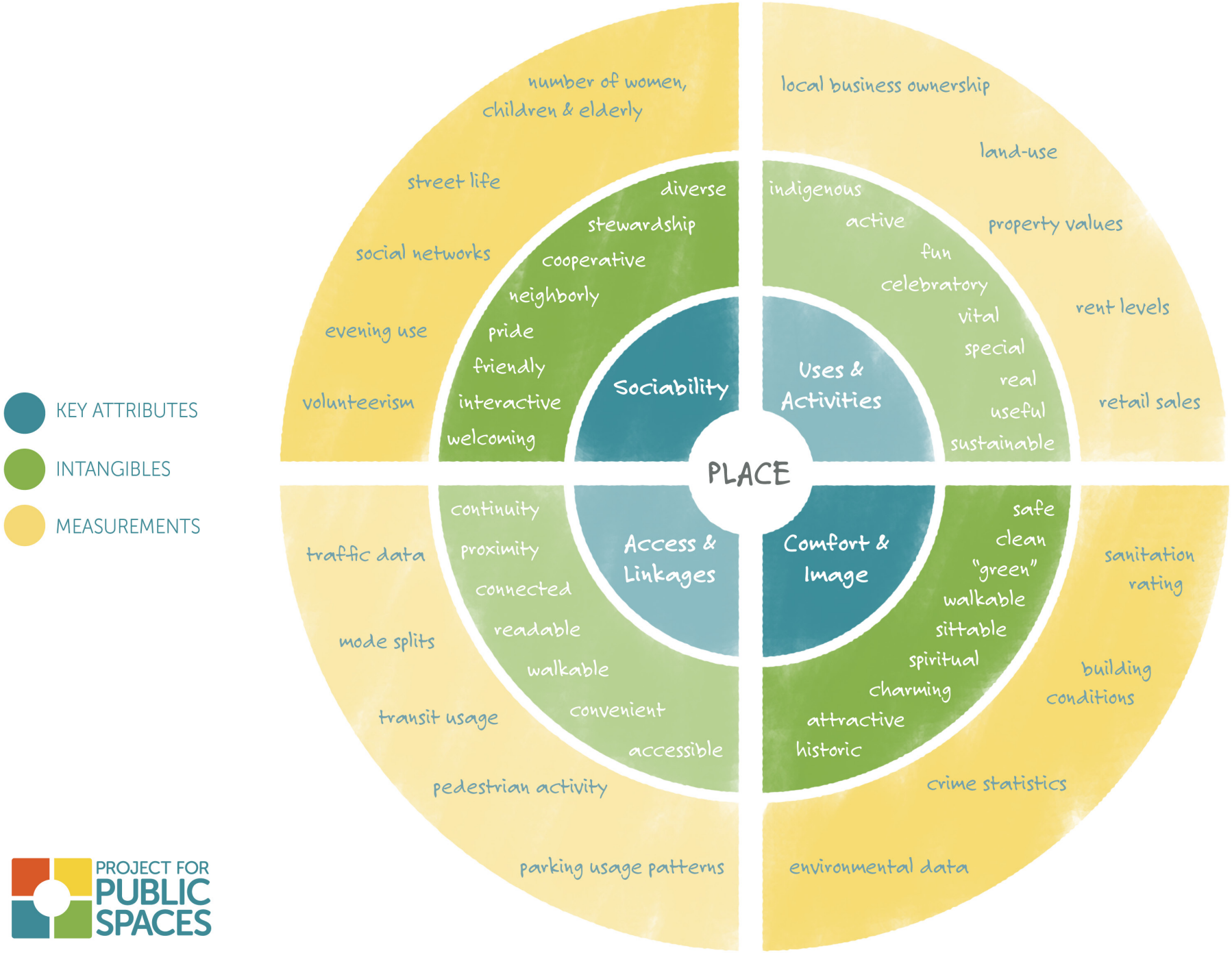
A great place is easy to get to and see into. It should be accessible for all modes of travel, including on foot, by bike or on public transit. People need to see that there is something to do and that others have been enticed to enter. Linkages and open sight lines should connect different destinations and help create a consistent people-friendly environment. Linked destinations create more total activity than the sum of their individual parts; if a coffee cart, magazine stand, and playground are located adjacent to each other, more activity will occur than if they were located separately.

Comfort & Image

Great public spaces are comfortable to use and help give a city a unique identity. Amenities, such as benches, movable tables and chairs, umbrellas and shade trees are essential in any good public space. Good management is required to keep a place clean and the amenities well-maintained.

Sociability

A sociable place is one where people want to go to meet friends and interact with a wide range of people who are different from themselves. This is at the very heart of what makes a great place. Farmers' markets are a typical example of a sociable place, and research shows that people have four and a half times more social interactions in a public market versus a supermarket.



PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

THE PROCESS

Placemaking Workshop at MatchBOX, Lafayette

Placemaking is a place-led, community-based approach to creating vital public spaces that build stronger communities. Rooted in community participation, Placemaking involves the planning, design, management and programming of public spaces with the people working, living, studying and playing near these places. More than just creating better urban design of public places, Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of activities and connections (cultural, economic, social, ecological) that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

The Placemaking process is based on our belief that it is not enough to simply develop design ideas and elements to improve public space. Improvements must reflect community needs. We believe that an early and continuous public involvement process that defines and responds to community conditions and needs is one of the most critical factors in achieving a great public space that is truly used and loved.

In the Placemaking process, leadership can come from many places – from city leaders, from staff, from

community organizations and other thought leaders, from local entrepreneurs, from the public and the grass-roots. Unlike the traditional model for city planning and urban development, projects are not initiated and designed from the top-down. Professionals serve as facilitators rather than leaders who have to defend their pre-determined plan in limited public meetings. In the Placemaking process, the community is the expert, as people engage, generate ideas, build partnerships, organize events and help implement improvements throughout the life of the public place.

The specific Placemaking process that's right for a community must reflect its unique needs and characteristics. PPS's task in Lafayette is to help the City—both its government and its citizens—establish a process that works best in Lafayette, puts the city on the path to creating great public destinations downtown, and continues to drive ongoing community participation.

This report was developed as an initial strategy for deploying a Placemaking process in Lafayette that would deepen the knowledge and understanding of how existing destinations downtown function and would generate ideas and actions for their improvement as well as for creating new places.

PLACEMAKING STRATEGY - A VISION FOR LAFAYETTE

Great cities are created through great places. During the public presentations in Lafayette, PPS introduced the concept of the *Power of 10* as a way to envision great places not in isolation but in a network of places, and as a way to scale the idea of a great place to the level of a great downtown, a great city or a great region. Successful cities and towns are built around dynamic places and destinations that attract people downtown. Each of these destinations needs a diverse array of activities for people to engage in, giving them ten things to do (figuratively speaking). It's not enough to have just one or two great destinations downtown as it is not enough to have only destinations that are related to retail, dining or entertainment. Great downtowns need a variety of places, some public and some private, some that can be enjoyed for free, and some that may require a ticket or purchasing an item. The key is that a mix of such places is needed, and even a street with great outdoor terraces can benefit tremendously by adding public seating to attract a variety of people.

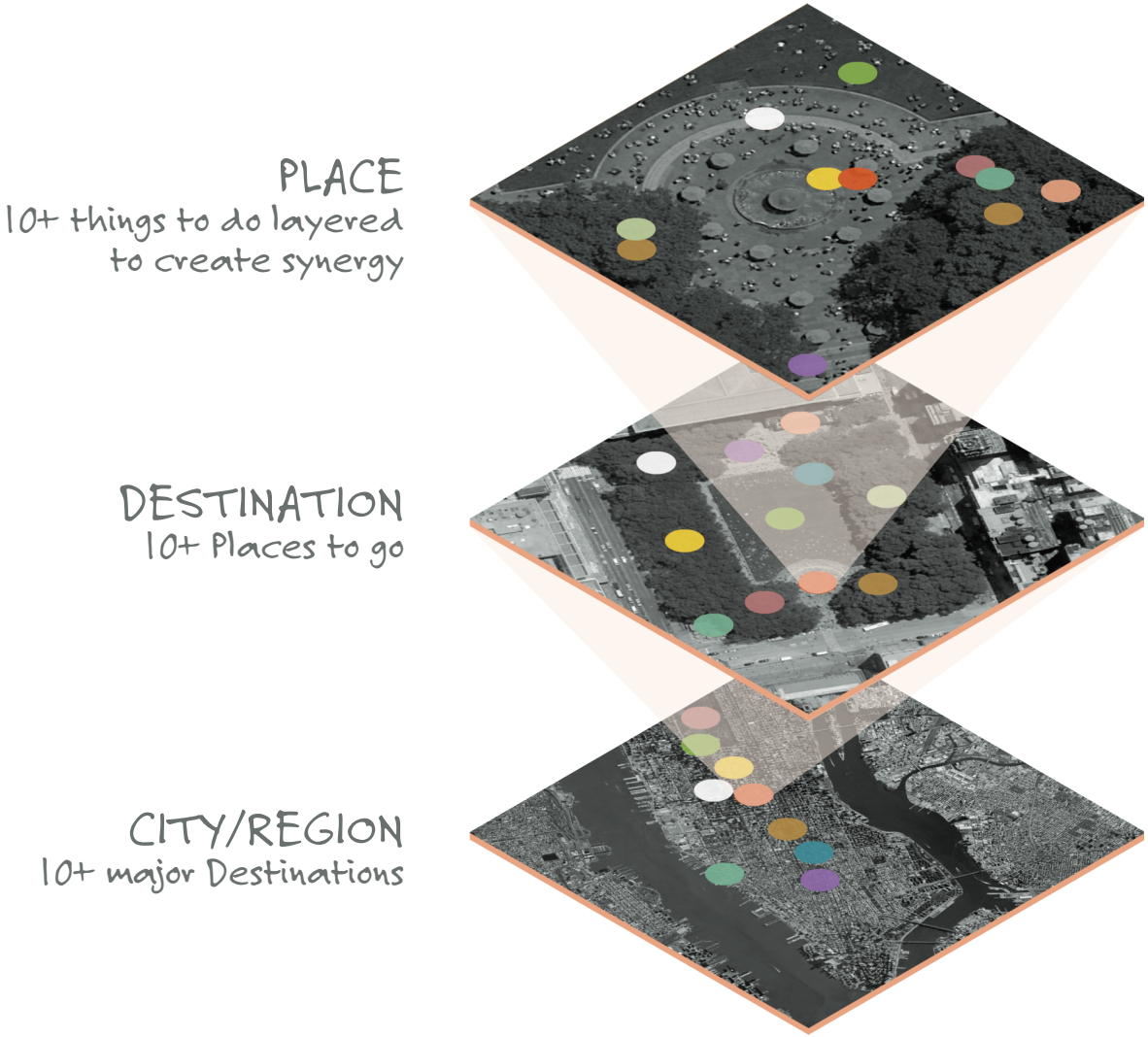
Downtown Lafayette, while rich in history, dining, and entertainment venues, needs to add to its existing assets in order to build ten great public destinations. Some of these destinations already exist, but can be significantly improved, and their potential harnessed to make downtown better for everyone.. Other new exciting places will need to be created.

During PPS's visit to Lafayette, through discussions with city staff, stakeholder observations and workshops, a number of key places were identified downtown. These included several sections of the Main Street corridor, N 5th Street, (site of Lafayette's successful Farmer's Market), the John T. Myers Pedestrian Bridge and adjacent Riehle Plaza, the area around MatchBOX co-work studio, (a cutting-edge entrepreneurial incubator), and the Tippecanoe County Public Library.

The *Power of 10* concept posits that each of these places needs to offer 10 things for people to do in order to become a great destination. The challenge in growing these existing places is developing the right mix of activities and amenities that will attract people. Equally important is to have a management strategy to ensure that places operate to everyone's satisfaction day after day. The physical design and infrastructure component, should be developed or improved upon

only after the uses have been determined, in order to best support them.

What follows is an evaluation of some of Lafayette's most important public spaces, along with initial ideas for how these places could be improved. These recommendation are based on results of the Place Game exercise conducted onsite and PPS's previous experience working in similar locations. However, the people of Lafayette need to continue their Placemaking efforts by launching a responsive and engaging process which will help develop initial ideas further and will evaluate and adjust early improvements and "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" interventions.



1. Myers Pedestrian Bridge
2. Riehle Plaza / Main Street
3. Farmers Market(Main Street / 5th Street)
4. Gateway (Main Street / 11th Street)
5. City Hall / South Street / Historic Gas Station / Library

JOHN T. MYERS PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

The pedestrian bridge, linking Lafayette and West Lafayette is a unique, albeit underutilized asset. Featured in the logos of Lafayette, West Lafayette, and Tippecanoe County, it is an important icon for the region. Yet in its current state, the bridge is merely a place to pass through, not yet a destination in its own right. Most days it receives only light use, with a slow stream of pedestrians and bicyclists, a handful of whom stop. In addition, there is a lack of strong adjacent destinations for the bridge to connect.

Key Findings

The bridge has been used as an exceptional venue for special events with the Tippecanoe County Courthouse as a backdrop, and the Wabash River flowing below. But these events are few and far between. Aside from a slow trickle of pedestrians, there is little everyday use on the bridge.

Visibility of the bridge from Downtown Lafayette is very poor. The stairway over the train tracks makes it impossible to see the bridge from Main Street, disconnecting it from the energy of downtown.

The tall set of stairs is cumbersome for seniors and others with mobility problems (and the elevator is reportedly frequently out of service). The stairway also forces bicyclists to dismount, which is a problem as this is the only safe route for cyclists to cross between the cities.

Although the bridge is one of the best places to view the beautiful Wabash River there are few ways to interact with it. The hope is that the efforts of the Wabash River Enhancement Corporation will create more opportunities for people to be on the river in Lafayette.

The bridge provides few comforts or amenities that would encourage visitors to linger and enjoy the views. There is little protection from the elements, especially the frequent strong winds.

The limited visibility, secluded setting, and dim lighting contribute to a perceived safety issue at night, particularly for women.

Opportunities

Build off what is already working. The number of events that take place on the bridge could be expanded. They don't

Mini golf, The Porch, Philadelphia

always have to be huge, like "Dancing in the Streets" Smaller regular events could go a long way to making the bridge into a stronger destination. Large events like "Beers Across the Wabash" could turn into a small regular beer garden (and a potential source of revenue for more programming on the bridge). A Friday night performance series, or other regular small programming could be a good start. Installing permanent stage electrical outlets and plug-and-play A/V system near a location could make it significantly easier to host regular events. Expanded partnerships will be key to ensuring a steady stream of programs and Purdue University, its student groups and a various departments, should be actively engaged to provide talent, programming assistance and promotion of events.

Every day use. While special events are important for creating a buzz around the bridge as a destination, the ultimate goal is to encourage more everyday use. Workshop attendees brainstormed many potential uses and activities that would attract them to the bridge. These included mini-golf, a temporary beach, an arts market, unique art and light installations , among many others.

Improve accessibility. Making the bridge more accessible is a longer-term, capital-intensive goal that should be pursued as capital improvements to the bridge infrastructure are planned. A longer, less steep ramp could draw people from Main Street and make it a more viable route for cyclists. Visibility from a distance could be improved in the short-term by using lights, colorful flags and banners, or other visual elements,

some of them mounted on and addressing the stairway over the railroad tracks.

Connect with the waterfront. The bridge already has promising connections to the river, via a ramp to Wabash Heritage Trail on the east side and through Tapawingo Park on the west side. Yet visitors are kept at arm's length from the water, and there is little to do beside look . River-oriented activities, such as boating, fishing, and waterfront dining, should be encouraged and supported here. The cities of Lafayette, West Lafayette and the county should pursue their joint planning efforts around the river, but they should also pursue joint short-term "LQC" improvements and events. Something as simple as a portable kayak rental and river edge event in summer could become a great experience and a

River Walk, San Antonio, TX

Les Anneaux (The Rings) - Daniel Buren and Patrick Bouchain, Nantes, France

strong argument in support of ongoing planning efforts by WREC. New intimate ways to interact with and experience the river, such as docks, boardwalks, and stepped terraces should be explored as planning continues. The Wabash River occasionally floods, and Lafayette can use integrated flood control measures as an opportunity to make these enhancements (many cities have done this—San Antonio even made its flood control system its most famous attraction, the River Walk). The bridge and adjacent areas are a critical element in the ongoing efforts to enhance Lafayette's access to the river, including the Wabash River Greenway and Lafayette's waterfront development plans.

Lighting and Safety. Better lighting can help address safety concerns and improve

the aesthetics of the bridge. For example, a bright, festive lighting canopy that runs consistently from the start of Main Street to the edge of Wabash Landing could create a greater sense of place, make the bridge more visible, and encourage night time use. An emergency "blue light" system could also be installed to further address safety concerns.

Comfort and image. Reducing exposure to the elements on the bridge, particularly providing shelter from the wind, was seen as a significant improvement that would enhance use. Workshop attendees mentioned using screens, overhangs or canopies and suggested challenging Purdue engineering students to design and create them. Participants also proposed adding trees, bushes and grassy areas to provide shade and comfortable places to rest.

Programming Riehle Plaza. Programming Riehle Plaza with the right events can go a long way to improving use of both the plaza and the bridge. The train depot should also be included in the programming as a venue that could offer supporting services and host activities. A more careful examination of Riehle Plaza should be part of a Placemaking process to look into partnerships, opportunities to operationalize the plaza, as well as into amenities needed to support use at this location.

To take advantage of these opportunities, close collaboration is necessary between Tippecanoe County (owners of the bridge), Lafayette (owners of the train depot and plaza), and West Lafayette (owners of Tapawingo Park). As the literal and symbolic link between these communities, enhancement initiatives should focus on promoting it as the iconic destination of the region.

MAIN STREET CORRIDOR

Successful main streets work because people go there for a variety of reasons: to walk, socialize, shop, snack, dine, do business, run errands, see shows, attend community events, and visit other attractions. Lafayette's Main Street has a lot of assets both social and economic. It has a well preserved historic urban fabric (something many cities have lost over the last half century), including charming architecture and great retail frontage on a well proportioned human-scale street with slow-moving traffic. It also has a good mix of uses: shops, offices, restaurants, bars, entertainment venues and some residences. However, it does not quite have the critical mass and quality of these uses to generate everyday life on the street. Without more public destinations and reasons for people to come downtown at all times of day, Main Street is yet to become the great place it could be. The Placemaking workshop identified four sections of Main Street and looked at them with the intent to create a destination cooridor that showcases and draws on the best of Lafayette.

RIEHLE PLAZA & THE FIRST BLOCKS OF MAIN
(Between N 2nd and N 4th Streets)

This is a promising section of Main Street, and a gateway to downtown from the Myers Pedestrian Bridge. Red Seven, Star City Coffee & Ale House, and La Scala all offer great outdoor seating. The large apartment complex, mix of offices and retail, and establishments like the Black Sparrow, give it life throughout the day. Riehle Plaza, the train depot, and the Tippecanoe County Courthouse provide great potential anchors that should be better activated. With some special attention to these destinations, this area can become the most active part of the Main Street cooridor.

Findings

The great destinations here don't have a cohesive presence on the street to tie them together and create a stronger sense of place.

The plaza in front of the Chase Bank building is poorly designed and underutilized.

Riehle Plaza has little everyday use, is wide open, and uncomfortable.

The train depot is hidden away, and doesn't contribute to the life of adjacent public spaces.

The Tippecanoe County Courthouse is a beautiful building, an icon of the city, and an important public institution. Set in a passive lawn, little of its outdoor space is usable public space.

Opportunities

Transform the Chase Bank plaza. People need reasons to be in this space, which is currently dead. In the long run, landscaping here should be reconsidered to create more space for people to be in, and the building's ground floor should be converted to retail or restaurants that spill out on to the plaza (for an excellent model, look no further than RedSeven and Star City directly across the street). Since this is a privately owned space, the challenge will be to convince the property owner to make necessary changes, a good task for a potential Downtown Manager. This may require creating a compelling vision, and explaining how this change could add value to their property. One strategy would be to use temporary, "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper"

Outdoor seating in front of RedSeven and Star City

LQC food truck, seating, umbrellas & planters at Congress Square Park, Portland, ME

interventions that can be implemented on a trial basis. These could include more flexible seating options and interactive public art, but a fully fleshed proposal should be developed as the Placemaking process evolves in Lafayette.

Innovate to grow what's working. Successful dining and entertainment establishments should be encouraged to create parklets in the parking spaces directly in front of their buildings. The city could facilitate this by developing a permitting process that allows for this kind of seasonal use. At the placemaking workshop, Paul Baldwin of the Black Sparrow expressed interest in giving up the parking spaces in front of his establishment and replacing them with a parklet terrace, if permitted by the city. As an influential business owner, his

success could encourage others to follow suit, and prove that the value created for the businesses is much greater than the minimal parking sacrificed.

Develop a program of uses for Riehle Plaza. Riehle Plaza is in need of new programmatic partners to use the space on a regular basis for events, performances, and exhibits. A variety of ideas were brought up in the placemaking workshop: for example, broadcasting Purdue sports games live on an inflatable screen in the plaza as a "tailgate" party of sorts. Food trucks were also mentioned as a potential activity that could attract nearby office workers and residents at lunchtime, provided they had a regular schedule.

Amenities to support lunch use, and to make the plaza feel more comfortable and less barren, such as umbrellas, shade structures and flexible seating should also be explored here. Improvements should include ways to enhance the visibility and identity of the train depot (for example by partnering with Amtrak to create an exhibit of trains and their history running through downtown Lafayette).

Use the Courthouse's lawn as a public space. The city should engage in a dialogue with the Tippecanoe County Court as to ways to invite the public to use their outdoor space, as they have already done in a small way with the fountain on the northeast corner.

Activating a public space in front of a government office, Melbourne, Australia

FARMER'S MARKET
(N 5th Street)

The Lafayette Farmer's Market is a local treasure. In operation for 165 years, the market is a wonderful community destination, and one of downtown Lafayette's greatest attractions. However successful, the market operates only for a few hours a week during market season and the opportunity to generate activity and sense of place outside of market hours is lost. Area residents and visitors who are devout supporters of the market choose it over the supermarket precisely because they value it as so much more than just a place to buy food—it is an exciting gathering place to meet friends, neighbors and strangers, feel a connection to your community, support the local economy, reduce environmental impact, and learn more about the food you eat.

Findings

The market is a vibrant hub of activity for a total of five hours a week (Saturday from 7:30am to 12:30pm), and only during the warmest six months of the year. Downtown needs life on the street at many other times. Many nearby businesses and institutions aren't open during the market, so the potential for spillover and synergy with other attractions is lost.

The market primarily offers meat, produce, and flowers, with little or no prepared foods, art, crafts, or other goods.

Besides shopping and occasional live music, there are few other regular activities at the market.

Few amenities are available for shoppers to rest and enjoy their purchases.

The market is well located as a public space in the heart of downtown. A one-block section of N 5th Street is closed to traffic on market days and has a special brick paving treatment to give it a better sense of place. However, when the market is not operating, the area no longer functions as a public space.

Opportunities

Experiment with the market's hours. Many residents at the workshop said they wished the market was open longer. The market managers (Chamber of Commerce) could consider expanding its

hours of operation, or shifting its opening time to a later hour (especially in the spring and fall when it is dark and cold at 7am in the morning). While this may inconvenience some of the farmers, the market is after all a place meant to attract and please customers. The afternoon is when more downtown stores are open, and a shopping trip to the market could potentially be combined with drinks, brunch or early dinner. To ease vendor concerns, the change could be experimented with on a trial basis and if later hours fail to attract more customers, it will be easy to revert back.

Expand the offerings. Fresh produce is a great foundation for the market. However, produce and meat are susceptible to spoil, thus customers must return home with their purchases and not remain downtown. Offering prepared foods and crafts will attract a new segment

Cooking demonstration at a farmers market

Children's concert, Jackson Heights Farmers Market, Queens, New York

of customers — people who may linger at the market to eat, socialize, browse or go do other activities downtown. Downtown shops and restaurants should be encouraged to offer small selections of their full products at the market, enticing subsequent visits. Adjacent businesses could both benefit and support the market by making certain accommodations. For example, the Knickerbocker Saloon could expand their outdoor seating during market operation, and potentially even offer a small "public section" for shoppers to rest or eat.

Makers and Artisan Market. MatchBOX "makers" should be encouraged to be part of the market and sell their innovative creations either at the market (if there is enough room for them) or at a nearby location (i.e. along Main Street or on N 5th Street north of Main).

Add activities for kids and adults. What makes markets special is that they don't have to be just about shopping. They are just as much a social experience and function best when they are multi-use destinations. Markets around the country have begun hosting complementary activities like cooking, canning and composting classes, recycling and upcycling stations, and live music, which have proven effective in attracting more shoppers, and getting them to stay longer and shop more.

Be more kid-friendly. The market will attract more families if it caters to the needs of kids. Consider arts and craft activities, storytelling, simple games, music for kids, petting zoo, climbable art, or a "playground-in-a-box."

Expand the size. The market is reportedly near capacity, with little room to accommodate new vendors. Expansion south is unlikely because of high-speed Columbia Street, which is difficult for pedestrians to cross. Expanding across Main Street, or closing portions of Main Street and expanding along it, is a better option. This would afford space for new varieties of vendors and activities, and would have spillover benefits for a greater section of downtown.

Seasonal offerings/holiday and special markets. The current holiday market could be expanded to attract more customers (and therefore public-space users) in the winter. Seasonal special markets like plants markets, and mothers/fathers day could also be explored either as part of the regular market or as separate special events.

Winter Market featuring hand made items

Parklet in Nevada City, CA

Transform N 5th Street into a permanent public plaza. One way to capitalize on the market site's prime location in the center of downtown is to make it function as a public space more often. This can be done in phases, beginning by using lightweight, temporary amenities. The space should be used frequently for other events beyond the market. In addition to temporary closures for events, the city could consider transforming that block into a "shared space" closed to through traffic, but available for business use. Additionally, the street is quite wide for only two lanes of traffic, so this could be a good place to experiment with small parklets that extend the sidewalk into the street, and allow amenities such as umbrellas, tables, and chairs for use by adjacent restaurants and businesses (who would have to manage those spaces in return).

HEART OF MAIN / SURFACE PARKING LOT
(Between N 6th and N 7th Streets)

Findings

The surface parking lot is an enormous void in what should be the heart of the Main Street corridor. The lot divides Main Street into the east and west zones and saps the street's overall vitality.

Opportunities

The lot is privately owned, so, like with the Chase Bank Plaza, the key will be to create a vision that convinces the owner to change its use. In the long run, the lot should be redeveloped into a mixed-use building with active ground floor uses along Main Street, and residential or office

Temporary food fair in an empty plaza

Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper interventions such as artificial turf and moveable planters for a special event, Brooklyn, NY

spaces above. The property owner already allows public use of the lot after hours, charging a small amount for downtown patrons to park. In the short term, a variety of LQC interventions could be considered here during off-peak times to prove the site's potential. Options include hosting special events such as markets, fairs, food truck rallies and potentially even a beer garden. The dimensions of the space, as well as the fact that it could be closed-up at night, would allow for special amenities to be used here, including communal and picnic tables, hammocks, swings, large outdoor pillows, and colorful tents.

GATEWAY

(Main Street at N 11th Street)

The eastern end of Main Street around 11th Street is an unceremonious gateway into downtown, with little sense that one is entering the heart of Lafayette. This is a major gateway to the city off the highway, and Lafayette should create a stronger sense of place here.

Findings

Road design and the lack of signage conspire to quickly direct vehicles toward Columbia Street bypassing downtown. While this is a good solution for avoiding through traffic on Main Street, visitors who actually seek Main Street as their final destination often miss the turn.

This section of Main Street received the poorest ratings of all of those evaluated during the placemaking workshop.

The old rail right-of-way has been transformed into a bus stop and small plaza at the corner of 11th and Main Streets. However, the space lacks amenities and is underutilized.

Opportunities

Better introduce downtown Lafayette. A lot could be done to improve signage, the sense of arrival and the attractiveness of this gateway into downtown. In the short term better, more visible and attractive signage along with other visual cues (planting beds, landscaping, banners, etc.) should be installed to welcome visitors.

Grow what's working. Building off the successful coffee shop, Fuel, which is a popular community gathering place, the gateway area could offer more outdoor seating and a terrace of sorts for coffee shop patrons.

Bring businesses out into the public realm. Surrounding businesses should be encouraged to provide outdoor seating, displays and signage in the public space.

Turn the bus stop plaza into a good public space. There is already some public art in the space, and a few benches for those waiting for the bus, but more can be done to improve the comfort of transit riders and give others reason to use this space. Potential programming ideas for the space were identified during the workshop, including gallery/museum

Gateway signage, Wooster Street, New Haven, CT

outposts, creating a playground or kid-oriented interactive exhibit for children in the neighborhood.

MATCHBOX, TIPPECANOE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY, AND THE HISTORIC STANDARD OIL STATION

Libraries make some of the best partners for Placemaking. They have long served as trusted community institutions, but now in the digital age they are no longer the sole gatekeepers of information. Instead of seeing their significance in communities diminish, libraries are re-inventing themselves and expanding their role to become dynamic resource centers, cultural centers, civic hubs, and "third places." So while they're already thinking beyond books, the challenge now is to get libraries to think beyond their walls. Harnessing nearby public spaces is a great way for libraries to extend the reach of their existing programs. For example, children's story time can be held in a park to attract new families; providing tables, chairs and WiFi in an adjacent plaza can create a pleasant outdoor reading room and bring more patrons through the doors.

Currently, the Tippecanoe County Public Library downtown is physically introverted. Most visitors enter through

Outdoor story time with portable library

Bringing a craft workshop out to the street

the secluded back door, off the rear parking lot, while the rest of the community speeds past the main entrance on South Street. The library has an enormous opportunity to become a better engaged place and a cultural destination with a strong presence in the public realm.

The library has a number of great assets to take advantage of, including its forgotten front entrance plaza and the adjacent transit stop. A generator of regular use, transit has fittingly been triangulated with the library's front door. Instead of creating a connection with transit, and providing riders a place to wait and engage, the library has removed seating from its front entrance. The transit agency has also abandoned transit users offering little more than a metal pole with the bus stop sign. The library should consider working in partnership with transit to offer amenities, information, shelter, and ways for riders to engage at its front door.

The library building features a large back parking lot, which is rarely used to its full capacity, and a covered colonnade along its rear façade. The colonnade, while of limited width, could certainly be used for small scale outdoor programs such as book sales by the Friends of the Library, health and information fairs, small workshops for children and other similar programs. The parking lot itself, particularly the section between the library building and Standard Oil Station, could be used for special outdoor events, as other libraries have done. These spaces can be easily adapted to facilitate outdoor library programming, and be more welcoming spaces for library users and the Lafayette community.

The biggest opportunity to meaningfully expand the library's

presence outdoors is the space around the historic Standard Oil service station, which is also a gateway to MatchBOX. The station itself is under-utilized as an obscure "walk-by museum."

The parking lot of the service station is an opportunity to create a small, active corner plaza, which could be programmed and used casually by library patrons, MatchBOX members, and the general public. The charming historic building could be adaptively reused to house functions that would support everyday use of the site, such as a coffee or sandwich shop with outdoor seating open to the public. The garage-style doors allow for the space to spill outside in good weather creating a truly active edge. Program elements that feature and support the library could also be part of the plazas such as a library-curated cart of reading materials, a small free library, or simply a free books box.

The service station and proposed mini-plaza are also a great place to explore a potential innovative partnership between MatchBOX co-work studio and the library, as libraries around the county increasingly see their role as supporting career advancement, adult learning, and "making"/production. MatchBOX representatives and workshop participants suggested the studio could use the service station to expand its "maker" facilities particularly with activities that may be louder or more "industrial" in nature such as 3D printing, prototyping, and fabrication using various materials. We encourage MatchBOX and the library to explore options for joint programming (such as hands-on classes, workshops and demonstrations) and for the library to promote access to making facilities for the larger community, and to provide additional resources for local entrepreneurs.

A MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

A MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR DOWNTOWN LAFAYETTE PUBLIC SPACES

The success of any public space depends, above all, on management. In order to succeed as a downtown made of destinations, Downtown Lafayette will require an intentional change in management practices and a strategy that allows for the involvement of many partners, both public and private. A management entity, or a Downtown/Main Street Manager, should also be considered as a way to achieve the goals set forth for the downtown's public spaces.

Attracting People

Downtown office workers, nearby residents, Purdue students, dining establishment patrons, and visitors can all take pleasure in active and attractive public spaces adjacent to the places where they work, stay, study, come to do business, or come for entertainment. Downtown's improved public spaces can help lure new visitors and students, offer attractions for those already working and living nearby, as well as for hotel guests and tourists. Examples from other cities have shown that a great downtown can be a huge draw for area businesses as they recruit and retain employees. Successfully and actively managed public spaces can enormously improve the image of downtown as a place to do business, shop and live.

Attracting Partners

The success of downtown's public spaces depends to a large extent on attracting public and private partners who can contribute to programming, events, and sponsorships. Funding from partners is needed to support downtown's functioning at a higher level than what the city alone is currently able to offer. The Friends of Downtown, the Quality of Life Council, individual business owners who support the improvement of downtown, the team at MatchBOX, and Purdue University are but a few of these partners whose contributions can help downtown improve the quality and energy of public spaces downtown.

Increasing Downtown User Security and Satisfaction

A clean and friendly Main Street that is actively programmed feels much safer than one that is empty, no matter how many police or security guards are posted. The real reassurance comes from seeing people shopping, walking, relaxing and enjoying themselves in the public realm, particularly if women and children are present. Undesirable or illicit activity happens in places that are empty and devoid of other uses. Security concerns on Main Street have mostly

been evidenced by people "hanging-out" or smoking near the Wabash Valley Hospital outpatient clinic. This kind of activity is typical for places that are not being used by a variety of users. Once a good program of daily activities begins bringing other people to this part of Main Street—office workers, tourists, hotel guests, transit users, students—undesirable activity tends to diminish, and sometime completely disappear. This is best accomplished by having a visible, regular management presence on the street. In addition, what is perceived as a negative activity is primarily outpatients smoking outside or waiting for their rides back home. One solution to this situation would be to create a nice waiting area near the clinic, either on the sidewalk or across the street in the vacant parking lot, where these patients can smoke and wait for their rides. This solution is not about eliminating people seen as less desirable or hiding them out of sight, but about giving them a place to be, where they feel comfortable and respected. Seeing a variety of people engaged in healthy, purposeful, positive activities, or simply people-watching downtown, helps model everyone's behavior and understanding of what is acceptable and permitted. Diversity of users is key to improving security as no single group should dominate Main Street.

While ongoing activities and events like the Farmers Market, the Artwalk or Mosey Down Main provide the "bones" of a good program, downtown has not reached its full potential, and thus some of the businesses on Main Street are struggling economically. Some physical amenities and infrastructure downtown are in need of an upgrade, but most of all downtown needs to reinvent itself as a network of active public destinations for people to enjoy and engage with.

In short, to realize its potential as a place for people and as an economic generator, downtown must be well-managed and well-programmed.

THE PRINCIPAL MANAGEMENT TASKS

Maintenance. The more used and loved a public space is, the more maintenance it requires. Keeping maintenance standards high is critical to the success of a more active use and management strategy. Prompt attention to items that could be easily deferred, such as a broken light or removal of litter, shows that someone is in charge, that the place is safe and cared for.

The day-to-day maintenance of Main Street will remain the responsibility of the City (routine repairs, litter removal, basic horticulture). The City requires property owners to provide sidewalk repair and cleanup. For successful businesses this is not a big burden, but for those who are struggling, the expense and effort are seen as a nuisance. In addition, business and property owners on Main Street complained about the lack of clarity in various city rules and regulations. We understand that previous attempts at providing extra landscaping planted by garden club volunteers in front of businesses on Main Street ended with plans dying for lack of water—many businesses did not take on the responsibility to care for the plantings. We believe this is a signal of the lack of mutual understanding between downtown business owners and the City. Being able to put a friendly face to the interaction with the municipality, interfacing with someone they know and respect, could go a long way to improve relationships with Main Street merchants. The situation could be remedied by starting with the willing partners, of which there are many, organizing them to take responsibility, and potentially even to share the cost of horticultural services or power washing.

Maintenance and gardening in process (Crystal City, Arlington VA)

Security and Hospitality. Security in public spaces should be visible and comforting without being intrusive. This is an opportunity to get volunteers, Friends of Downtown, and merchants, to act as ambassadors for downtown. When people feel "hosted" and "welcomed," they don't feel the need to be "protected." Engaging the Wabash Valley Hospital clinic patients in particular to become ambassadors for downtown could have a positive effect on minimizing undesirable activity during the day. Experience shows that often people who are seen as marginal have a great knowledge and desire to be useful and to share with others. Ambassadorship could also be a welcome work opportunity for some of the people served by the clinic.

Main Street, Downtown Lafayette

Programming. "Programming" refers to a variety of planned activities and to all the facilities and equipment related to them. Programming downtown's public spaces successfully is an entrepreneurial art; the programmer drives the content the way a curator does in a museum. It does not necessarily imply intensive staffing, but it does require at least one person whose attention is focused primarily on facilitating and recruiting programs downtown, as well as promoting them. A dedicated downtown program staff person could provide scheduling and support for events, expand marketing and outreach, direct organizers of events and regular activities to use the most appropriate space downtown, etc.

A more intensive program of uses and events should be built around the great special events and regular programs that are already taking place downtown. Historically, Main Street and N 5th Street have been the two places that have hosted the most regular programming—the Farmers Market on 5th Street and the walks, moseys, runs and other larger events on Main Street. The objective of enhanced programming downtown is to activate additional places: Riehle Plaza, the John T. Myers Pedestrian Bridge to West Lafayette, the area around the old gas station outside of MatchBOX. The goal is also to expand on the use of Main Street and 5th Street, particularly with the intent of creating a significant public space at the core that would generate regular use and where a variety of cultural, educational, community, recreational, and wellness-oriented activities happen regularly. New programs should seek to attract new audiences downtown, in particular students, workers, as well as broader Lafayette residents and visitors.

Marketing and Promotion. Promoting not only the events and activities that take place downtown, but also downtown businesses, is an important adjunct to programming. Some of the challenged Main Street merchants complained about lack of marketing and promotional support from the city. A downtown manager who is also helping merchants with joint promotions would provide a great service to those who are struggling. Until the downtown's expanded programs and activities become well established and sought-after, it will be imperative to market them to both potential partners and users. To help revamp the image of downtown and get the programming rolling, a commitment to marketing and

promotion, and the special skills they require, will be needed right away. This is an activity that can be shared with city, non-profit and private partners. The dynamic entrepreneurial community growing at MatchBOX should be engaged in spreading the word on social media, attending, and potentially organizing or even sponsoring events and programs downtown. If any marketing companies are part of MatchBOX, they should be encouraged to help market and promote events, and could be contracted for that task as funding becomes available.

Fundraising. Raising money to support the downtown management from a variety of funding sources is key to its long-term sustainability.

As management transitions into a stronger partnership between the city, other organizations and merchants, there will be more opportunities to seek grant money, corporate sponsorships and donations from a wider variety of sources. The Placemaking initiative underway has already spurred interest in supporting improvements downtown. A number of partner organizations were brought up in discussions, including the Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Council/Friends of Downtown, the Quality of Life Council and Visit Lafayette/West Lafayette. In addition, arts and cultural institutions, Purdue University, the library, health services, and WREC should all be included as stakeholders in a steering committee or a working group focused on improving places downtown. Corporate sponsors, private individuals and public agencies should all be approached to fund specific programs or areas downtown. In-kind donations can be as valuable as capital—encourage local businesses to donate their expertise, labor, or products.

However, funding operations and programming will remain a constant need for the economic and social sustainability of downtown. Money from parking fees and eventually concessions and rentals will be an important source of income. Having a simple, transparent and responsive permitting process would help facilitate relationships with property owners and event organizers and promoters.

THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Conversations during the Placemaking workshop in Lafayette with city staff and other stakeholders have revealed that, at this time, creating an independent not-for-profit to manage downtown would be unrealistic, although that may become a possibility in the future. In the short to medium term, we propose to use the resources of several partners to provide for downtown. While creating and funding a formal not-for-profit would take 6 months at a minimum, a strong steering committee could be formed right away. These partners should include the City and representatives from relevant departments, the Greater Lafayette Commerce (Quality of Life and Downtown Development Councils), the Friends of Downtown, Purdue University, Visit Lafayette-West Lafayette, downtown merchants, representatives of MatchBOX, the library, residents, and others.

However, in the end, regardless of which partner they are formally employed by, there must be at least one person who is entirely focused on the downtown and making it a great place for people.

STAFFING

We recommend that the following staff positions and their duties be considered, regardless of which city agency or organization they are housed in:

1. GENERAL MANAGER & PROGRAM DIRECTOR

1 person full-time

A careful program manager would focus on building partnerships with Main Street merchants and attracting the right programs and activities downtown.

Responsible for all operational oversight.

Promote activities downtown and establish and maintain a positive public image.

Develop programs, including exploring relationships with other nearby entities ways to offer joint programs (i.e. work with MatchBOX, TAF, the Art Museum, the Long Center, the Lafayette Theater, etc., to coordinate new programs downtown).

Manage events and activities.

Coordinate the scheduling and logistics of all activities.

Outreach and work with downtown merchants, starting with those interested in collaborating (Black Sparrow, Red Seven, Lafayette Theater, Carnahan Hall, etc.)

Oversee supplemental services.

Facilitate issuing city permits to businesses and for events.

Help manage public relations and contribute to:

- *Event promotion*
- *Publications*
- *Social networking*
- *Community outreach*

Fundraise for events and sponsorships.

In the immediate future, some of these responsibilities could be given to a free-lance consultant (for example someone from MatchBOX), or a mature, experienced University intern who would work under the supervision of the City. Short and long-term financial support should be pursued to hire a full time staff person either via the City or through one of the non-profit partners.

2. DOWNTOWN AMBASSADOR

1 person full-time or
2 people part-time

This position would be a good fit for a senior or for a qualified clinic outpatient to serve as both ambassador and basic maintenance agent. The Ambassador's duties would include:

Meet & greet

Information agent

Informal security

Facility inspection/condition reporting/simple maintenance

Light sidewalk sweeping, litter control

Basic landscaping maintenance (i.e. water plants)

Assist with programs and events

3. SUB-CONTRACTED/ OUTSOURCED SERVICES

Seasonal horticultural and decorating services

Post-event heavy cleaning

Public relations/marketing/major promotions

Major repairs

Major fundraising

FUNDING

Funding for the general manager/ program director position could partially be provided by private and corporate donations, or by state or federal grants, until the city is able to cover the position entirely or until a non-profit entity is created as a quasi-municipal organization that could receive funding from outside sources, such as facilities rentals, program and event fees, and possible concessions.

Specific sources of revenue could include:

Grants from community, corporate and family foundations and individual donors;

Rental fees from private events held in downtown public spaces such as fundraisers, dinners, product promotions, etc.;

Concessions: vendor fees connected with special events or programs; fees from markets and related activities (e.g., beer garden, wine tasting, gourmet dinners, pop-up restaurants, etc.);

Other event-based fees, service or restoration fees;

Corporate and individual sponsorships of events and activities;

Sale of bricks or tiles or other elements downtown, as well as sponsorship or "naming" of benches, bike racks, planters etc.

MAKING IT HAPPEN - NEXT STEPS

As the previous sections make clear, Lafayette has an abundance of opportunities to turn its downtown public spaces into the great destinations they should be. There is no single right way—rather, Lafayette has to figure out which of these options works best for Lafayette. It is important to recognize that it will take some time to implement many of these suggestions, and no one expects a new bustling downtown overnight. But the key is to get started right away. These are some of the critical next steps that should be taken:

Grow what's working. The first step should be building on what's already succeeding downtown. Special events should be 'special' because of their great content, not their rarity. Look for ways to increase the regularity of the moseys, exhibits, performances, and other public events numerous groups are already putting on. People should expect to find something new happening downtown, even if it's as small as a street musician or new window displays on Main Street. Also look to extend the hours of successful programs so that they overlap with additional activities and reasons to stay downtown, which creates synergy and serendipity—the hallmark of a vibrant urban center.

Many workshop participants said the Farmers Market was a prime candidate, as it is well-established but only open Saturday mornings—before many other businesses are open, and before students are out of bed—and could spill over visitors to other downtown activities if held later in the day and on other days of the week. To attract new audiences, the market could also expand its offerings—selling new types of goods, as well as hosting activities, cooking demonstrations, and performances.

Create a central, accessible resource for downtown information and management. Ultimately, this should be a single person, a dedicated easily-reached manager who maintains relationships with partners and merchants, knows all the relevant regulations, organizes and promotes events, seeks grants and raises funds, and is the point-person for any downtown issue, even if they don't handle it themselves (described in detail in the Management section of this report). Ideally, this position would be part of an independent non-profit, which allows greater flexibility for fundraising and cross-river partnerships. This position could also serve as a helpful buffer and intermediary for relationships between downtown residents, businesses, and patrons, and the City itself.

In the short term, before this position can be created, Lafayette can take steps to streamline communications and resources. Business owners who attended

the workshop requested clear reference materials that could walk them through important hurdles related to engaging in the downtown and public spaces. These could take the form of handbooks and checklists for obtaining permits for special events, clarifying the city and property owners' responsibilities and opportunities for managing adjacent spaces like sidewalks, and even some Placemaking how-to guides that PPS would be happy to make available.

Seek interagency collaboration. Too often, government departments focus only on the tasks that fall directly within their realm of responsibility. Public space care typically is divided up under the purview of these various "siloed" departments, with no one thinking holistically about their needs. In Lafayette's case, this includes the Departments of Economic Development, Community Development, Parks and Recreation, Parking Operations, Streets and Traffic, among others. Effective interagency cooperation within city government can lead to more successful management of the city's public spaces while increasing efficiency of operations. The City of Lafayette should consider establishing an interagency task-force for public spaces that brings together all the relevant departments to meet periodically in order to update each other on ongoing initiatives and look for opportunities for collaboration. Departments should be

evaluated based on their contributions to shared outcomes, like making a block more desirable to visitors, rather than narrow department-specific metrics.

Fix Columbia & South Streets. The most glaring physical barrier to a vibrant downtown is the one-way couplet of Columbia and South Streets. These roads were designed with one objective in mind: to move cars as quickly as possible through and past the Downtown. Their width, speed, and one-way direction make the streets less safe, contribute to a poor pedestrian experience, and sap the life out of downtown and its economic vitality. It is nearly impossible for motorists flying by to notice an interesting store or new display, and be tempted to stop. The effect is clear—despite being busier, Columbia and South Streets have far fewer businesses and residences than Main Street, with its human-scale retail frontage and narrower, two-way roadway. And the couplet cuts off the northern half of downtown from destinations on the southern portion, including the library, city hall, the main hotel, and other establishments.

Formerly state highways, the streets recently fell under the City's control, which is a huge opportunity. Lafayette has taken a wise first move in converting one of South Street's lanes to on-street parking, which naturally makes drivers more cautious, and provides a comfortable buffer between moving cars and pedestrians on the sidewalk. The City should seek additional ways to improve the couplet via a "road diet" and other methods. Despite fears of lost capacity, these initiatives have been shown to have negligible or positive impacts on traffic flow, even on the busiest of streets. Among others, PPS's transportation expert Gary Toth may be an excellent resource.

Engage Purdue. As emphasized, building great partnerships is key to successful Placemaking. Lafayette already has many partners, and dozens more were identified during the workshop. But the elephant in the room (or just across the river, as the case may be) is Purdue University. A world-class university with almost 40,000 students and thousands of faculty members is a neighbor most small cities can only dream of. So far, there is only a casual relationship between the City and Purdue. Almost all university events are held on campus, and for the most part, only graduate students are attracted to living and playing in Downtown Lafayette.

There are some real challenges to overcome, including distance and accessibility. Most of the students' basic needs can be met in West Lafayette, and the campus provides ample public gathering space. However, West Lafayette doesn't currently offer the charm, urban

character, and authentic experiences available in Downtown Lafayette. Studies have found these qualities to be of increasing significance to this generation of students and young professionals. The university has already acknowledged this fact in its participation in the "Community of Choice" initiative and the State Street Master Plan. The report *From Good to Great: Making Greater Lafayette a Community of Choice*, specifically recommends Placemaking as a strategy for creating a more compelling destination to attract and retain students and faculty. More should be done to promote the shops, restaurants, and performance venues of downtown to the Purdue community. For the Placemaking workshop, Ball State student assistants conducted surveys and interviews at Purdue, which yielded valuable information. An ongoing, open dialogue should be established between the downtown and the university, to continuously seek ways to better cater to the university's needs. Students, faculty, clubs, teams, bands, and other groups should think of downtown as an ideal setting for their next outing.

Given Purdue's strengths in engineering and other fields, there is a unique opportunity to engage with various departments in the design and programming of the downtown's public spaces. Engineers of all sorts should be given the opportunity to think outside the box (or the lab), and create new custom amenities (seating, shade, etc.) and activities. This could take the form of windmill-powered displays on the gusty Myers Pedestrian Bridge, or innovative 3D-printed prototypes, for example. The Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, the College of Technology, and others, should be allowed to use downtown public spaces and underutilized private spaces as a course practicum. West Lafayette has had previous success working with the Civil Engineering Club—a model that should be expanded. Other promising suggestions at the workshop included screening Boilermaker sporting events and community "tailgating" in iconic public spaces downtown during big games, as many college towns do.

Just do it — Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper improvements. There's no reason to wait for the planning, funding, approval, and implementation of major changes to downtown's public spaces. There are low-cost, temporary improvements that can be tested almost immediately to see what works. These are detailed at length in previous sections, but here are a few priority locations:

The Tippecanoe County Public Library downtown is a great community asset, but is currently physically configured to turn its back on that community. As detailed previously in this report, Libraries make excellent Placemaking partners if they are

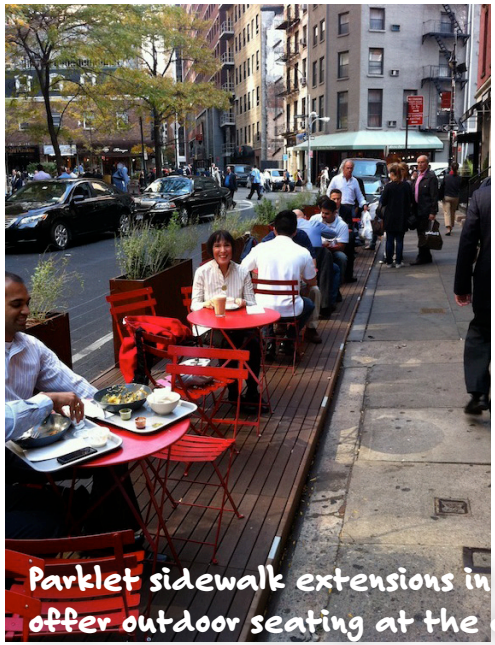
encouraged to think more broadly about their role, and take existing programs outside their walls to reach directly into community spaces. The first step should be reorienting the front door on South Street to be a more welcoming main entrance. Tables and chairs should be placed on the small plaza there, so that patrons can read or work outside in the fresh air. Later on, collaboration between the Library and MatchBOX could create a café, workshop, and multifunctional public gathering place on the rehabilitated site of the historic gas station between them.

Along the Main Street corridor and its cross streets, store owners should be encouraged to provide outdoor seating. The City should consider regulations that help them accomplish this. Sidewalks are narrow in that area, so instituting a parklet program could create more space for vibrant street life. The program permits qualifying stores and restaurants to convert the parking space immediately in front of their business into outdoor café seating. Only a handful of parking spaces would be lost in total, far offset by the increased appeal of downtown and its businesses. Influential local entrepreneurs volunteered enthusiastically to pursue this program, if given the opportunity by the City.

5th Street, which is already closed successfully for the Farmer's Market on Saturdays and has an attractive special paving treatment, should be used as a public plaza more often. The downtown lacks a central public space, and this block has already proven its potential to serve that role. Parklets or sidewalk widening next to Bistro 501 or the Knickerbocker Saloon should be considered, as well as more weekend and off-peak street closures. Adjacent merchants or event hosts would be held responsible for managing the installation and removal of lightweight amenities (with the city providing oversight).

The Myers Pedestrian Bridge and Riehle Plaza are both underutilized. More amenities, including seating and shelter from sun and wind, should be experimented with. Programs and special events should be expanded, including informal performances.

It doesn't matter what specifically is tried—the key is to start trying *something*. The LQC approach means changes are reversible, so there's no reason not to give it a go.



Parklet sidewalk extensions in New York (left top and bottom) and San Fancisco (right) offer outdoor seating at the cost of a few parking spaces.

In NYC parket seating is free to the public and not attached to specific businesses. Local BIDs or management groups care for the spaces and store furniture and equipement.

In NYC, lushly landscaped planters are used to extend the sidewalk space even without seating. Landscaping services are provided by teams trained by the Horticultural Society

San Francisco's Exploratorium showcases its Tinkering Studio outdoors.

Metal casting workshop at the Madagascar Institute's outdoor art space in Brooklyn, NY.

An outdoor Arduino workshop at East Bay mini-maker faire.

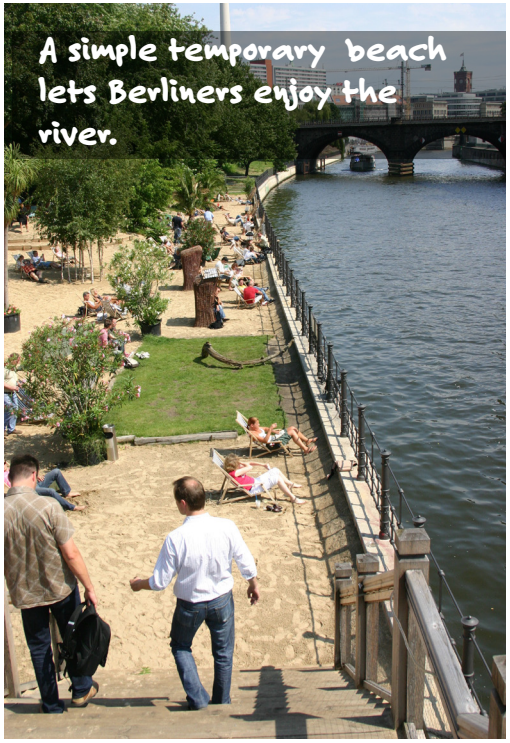
NYC Maker Faire, hosted in Flushing Meadows Park.

An outdoor concert at Richland Public Library, SC. The library covered an underused parking lots in artificial turf to create a pleasant venue for oudoor events all summer long: movies, concerts, workshops, yoga.

Cheerleaders and a variety of lawn games can be fun and offer positive activity at tailgating parties.

A temporary barge terrace in Stockholm offers people an opportunity to be on the water in good weather.

A formal dinner event on the Southwark bridge, London.



A simple temporary beach lets Berliners enjoy the river.

Event on the pedestrian "Bridge to the 21st Cetury" connecting Little Rock with University of Arkansas.

Pittsburgh "Knit the Bridge and Yoga" Party.

This part of the Perth Cultural Centre combines flexible lawn space, raised planting beds for edible agriculture, and seating.

Painting the steps and adding the fun, colorful, elbow tables made the Brutalist, intimidating steps much more approachable.

This historic clock in Vancouver doesn't impede foot traffic. Further, it serves as an icon, a landmark for people to meet and rest at.

Giant board games like Scrabble and chess are entertaining for people of all ages.

This kiosk cafe in Berlin is nestled in the park space, activating the pastoral park with activity.

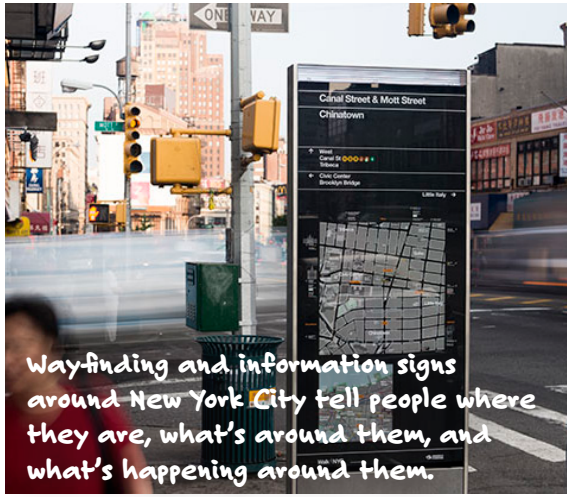
This outdoor reading room in Amsterdam offers comfort and shelter, as well as activating the edge of the sidewalk.

This water feature combines the benefits of play, water, and public art.

This play area in Brooklyn Bridge Park serves as both art and a play area.

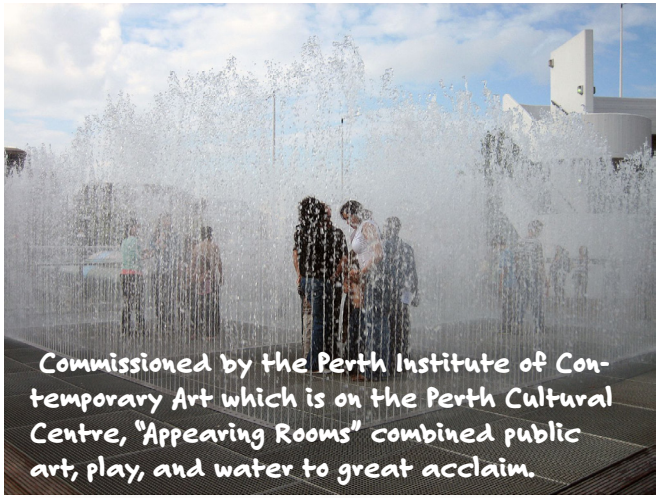
Foosball is one example of a great game that everybody can play.

This kiosk in Travis Park, San Antonio, houses books and games for the park's visitors.



Wayfinding and information signs around New York City tell people where they are, what's around them, and what's happening around them.

Mario Kart was a great way to use the screen in the Perth Cultural Centre that was more interactive.



Commissioned by the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art which is on the Perth Cultural Centre, "Appearing Rooms" combined public art, play, and water to great acclaim.

A wooden deck allows people to sit in the back area while keeping the trees and their shade.

This blank wall was enlivened by painting trompe l'oeil windows and installing narrow (3'-5' deep) retail spaces built by stage set designers.

Lafayette Placemaking Plan

December 2014

Recommended Reading

Appleyard, Donald. Livable Streets

Bernick, Michael and Robert Cervero. Transit Villages in the 21st Century

Engwicht, David. Mental Speed Bumps: The Smarter Way to Tame Traffic

Gehl, Jan. Life Between Buildings

Jacobs, Allan. Great Streets

---. Looking at Cities

Jacobs, Alan, Elizabeth MacDonald and Yodan Rofé. The Boulevard Book

Jacobs, Jane. The Death and Life of American Cities

Kotter, John P. Leading Change

Kunstler, James Howard. The Geography of Nowhere

LaFarge, Albert, editor. The Essential William H. Whyte

Lynch, Kevin. The Image of the City

Marcus, Claire Cooper. Easter Hill Village

---. People Places

McKnight, John and John P. Kretzmann. Building Communities from the Inside Out

Moudon, Anne Vernez. Public Streets for Public Use

Oldenburg, Ray. The Great Good Place

Sucher, David. City Comforts

Urban Ecology. Walkable Streets: A Toolkit for Oakland.

Whyte, William H. City: Rediscovering the Center

---. The Social Life of Small, Urban Spaces

Publications

Diers, Jim. Neighbor Power: Building Community the Seattle Way

Project for Public Spaces. 9 Ways to Transform New York into a City of Great Places

---. Building Community through Transportation series

A Citizen's Guide to Better Streets

Great Corridors, Great Communities

Streets as Places

---. How to Start Your Business at a Local Market: A Vendor Handbook

---. SNAP/EBT at your Farmers Market: Seven Steps to Success

---. Diversifying Farmers Market Report

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The Biggest Little Park in the World

Strong programming—both fixed attractions and special events—draws crowds to Houston's Discovery Green, an unusual

IT'S THURSDAY EVENING, and Houston's Discovery Green is all abuzz. A band performs on a stage near the center of the park, and a crowd has gathered to listen. For some, the music is the main event; for others, it is merely a soundtrack for other activities.

Groups of teens play Frisbee and football on the lawn. Office workers spend happy hour on a terrace by the pond. For kids, there are a playground and two interactive fountains, and for dogs, a fenced area where they can run around. Discovery Green includes a model boat basin that becomes an ice rink, a reading room, bocce courts, shuffleboard, and much more.

"They've managed to incorporate so many different activities in such a small area!" exclaims Lynn, a resident of Houston's Upper West End, as she watches her grandchildren play. Though Discovery Green is less than 12 acres, it has more than 25 different programmed spaces.

JOHN GOLLINGS

hybrid of park, sculpture garden, and fairground. By Daniel Jost, ASLA

It also has another type of "programming." Almost every day, some sort of free event is offered here. Many days, there are two or three. Some are big events like movies, farmers' markets, and car shows, and some are smaller such as writing workshops for kids, tai chi classes, and Zumba. Last fall, the park even curated an inflatable art exhibit.

In this and other ways, Discovery Green breaks from the traditional urban park. Built and operated with predominantly private funding but open and free to the public, it's a hybrid between park, sculpture garden, and fairground with a little bit of community center thrown in. Its closest analogue is Millennium Park in downtown Chicago, but while Millennium feels more like a sculpture garden meant to draw tourists, Discovery Green is very activity based and draws mainly local families.

Discovery Green's emphasis on activation and programming (both design programming and event programming) can be traced back to community workshops run by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS). This New York-based organization has been critical of landscape architects who allow design ideas rather than social function to define their work. Hargreaves Associates is among the high-profile firms that PPS has criticized, but at Discovery Green, the two entities worked together (even if through intermediaries). Hargreaves's San Francisco office took a series of program elements developed by PPS, refined it, and created a design that connects these elements together in an unusually artful way. But how does the space work, and how does everyone feel about the final product?

Creating the Program

For years, Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center had a bad reputation. "Coming to a convention here, it felt like you were on the moon," says Guy Hagstette, president of the Discovery Green Conservancy. The facility was cut off from downtown by a wasteland of parking lots. A small linear green space had been created on private land to make the convention center feel more connected, but the green space was more like a mowed field than a park and got very little use.

When the owners of the green space, who had always planned to develop it one day, put the land up for sale in mid-2004, Houston Mayor Bill White's office moved quickly to preserve it. But local leaders' vision went beyond preserving the existing field. They imagined a park more than twice as large—incorporating two city-owned parking lots and part of an existing street.

To encourage greater public support, White pushed for an unusually fast timetable—first demanding the park be completed in two years and then settling on a more practical three-year schedule for planning, design, and construction. To speed the process along, the city worked with local business leaders and foundations to create a nonprofit called the Discovery Green Conservancy. The conservancy would be responsible for raising funds, overseeing the park's design and construction, and then managing the park for 50 years. However, to make sure the land would remain in the public trust, the city deeded the land to a new public corporation called the Houston Downtown Park Corporation. Hagstette, an architect and urban designer with experience developing parks, was chosen to lead the conservancy. While the city contributed land and paid for the

From the beginning, the city was concerned about how to activate the space.

parking garage beneath the park, all the money necessary to construct the park itself was privately donated.

From the beginning, the city was concerned about how to activate the space. Aside from a few convention goers looking to escape after a long day of presentations, there was no built-in constituency for a park here.

Early on, the conservancy looked to New York's Bryant Park as a model. Through a major redesign, the addition of food vendors, and programming of the space (with events like afternoon piano concerts), that once-derelict space was transformed into a vibrant gathering place. But Discovery Green doesn't have the same concentration of office workers nearby, and the conservancy knew it would take much more to make this space work. So it brought in PPS, which was involved with Bryant Park in the early 1980s.

Fred Kent, the founder of PPS, has sought to develop a new sort of professional, separate from the designer, who works with the public to program open spaces and makes sure the designer sticks with the program (see "Separating Program from Design," page 89). Working in this capacity at Discovery Green, PPS ran a series of workshops on site and in the adjacent convention center. "We do this thing called the place game," says Kent. "You go out there and have people evaluate how [a landscape] works as a 'place.' Not as a design, but from a social point of view." Participants say what they like about a space, what sorts of things they imagine doing there, and then everybody reports back to the larger group to discuss what they came up with.

Using that public feedback, PPS creates a sketch that lays out ideas for the site's program. The group promotes an idea called "The Power of Ten," meaning that every place needs at least 10 things to do. Though PPS's definition of a "place" typically extends beyond a project's boundaries—it may involve a series of spaces and even the ice cream parlor across the street—Discovery Green's context would do little to energize the park. So PPS's diagram here was particularly program heavy.

PPS also gives its clients advice about managing a space to facilitate use. "I think people believe that design alone is going to solve the problem, but it's never that easy," says Kathy Madden, vice president of PPS. "We say at least 70 to 80 percent of its success will be the way it's managed—whether there's a kiosk, who's running the kiosk, and what they charge at events."

During the planning stages, there was concern that Discovery Green's isolated location, *left,* would deter use. However, through fixed attractions, special events, and the sheer beauty of the place, this unusual park, *opposite,* has done something once thought impossible—it is attracting families to Houston's downtown, *above.*

JOHN GOLLINGS. TOP: COURTESY DISCOVERY GREEN CONSERVANCY. BOTTOM

COURTESY HARGREAVES ASSOCIATES

"There are so many [people who] don't want any commercial activity [in public spaces], and that really discourages the use of a space," says Kent. At Discovery Green, a restaurant and banquet facility, an informal café, and a weekly farmers' market not only help to energize the park, but also provide a source of rental income that helps to fund maintenance and free events beyond what the city itself could provide.

"Everyone knew raising operational funds would be a challenge," says Hagstette. It's much less sexy to donate toward the maintenance of a garden than to plant one. Early on, the city agreed to spend $750,000 per year on maintenance, an amount it determined to be typical for a "trees and grass" park of that size. But that accounts for less than a third of the conservancy's annual budget. The other funds are raised through donations, the rental fees paid by the company that runs the two restaurants, and fees for private events that are held there.

Those private events range in size from kids' birthday parties to a Lyle Lovett concert, which drew more than 7,000 people. Any group larger than 20 planning to use the park is required to purchase a permit in advance. "We spent an unusually large amount on electrical [hookups] here, which allows them to stage events in different places," says landscape architect Jacob Petersen, a principal at Hargreaves. One space in particular—an 11,000-square-foot event lawn—was designed to accommodate a large tent adjacent to the Grove, the restaurant and banquet facility, which often caters to convention goers.

Holding private events in a park often raises controversy. Consider Discovery Green's inspiration, Bryant Park. While it's extremely successful as a social space, PPS has named Bryant Park to its Hall of Shame because for nearly a month out of the year, most of the park is covered in tents and closed to the public for New York's Fashion Week.

The number of program elements was a real challenge for the landscape architects.

But not all private uses are equal. There are many factors that contribute to the way people perceive such uses—the event's exclusivity, its duration, and how much of the park it takes up all contribute to how an event is perceived. Even though it's a little obtrusive in Kent's opinion, he says that "if the fashion show [in Bryant Park] was open to the public, it would be okay."

With these distinctions in mind, the conservancy is particularly sensitive to how it rents out spaces. "We never allow a single event to take over the entire space," says Hagstette. At least part of the park is always open to the public. They rarely rent out Jones Lawn, the largest lawn area, for private events that last longer than a day, and the fountain and playground are never available for rental.

Contextual Design

Once PPS finished its work, the conservancy began interviewing landscape architecture firms. Each of the firms was given a copy of PPS's use diagram before the interview and a list of activities the community was interested in incorporating into the site. Hagstette made it clear he wanted to maintain the essence of PPS's planning, but he was open to argument on the specifics. The diagram, after all, was not a design.

"The challenge from [the conservancy] was to make it a beautiful, green respite—a place that reflects Houston's garden heritage," says Mary Margaret Jones, FASLA, of Hargreaves Associates. Jones won over the board with her local roots. "I think it really helped that I grew up there," she says. "They knew I would know what it's like—what the climate is like and what the culture is like."

Hargreaves Associates' experience designing parks on parking garages also drew the conservancy's attention. At Discovery Green, Hargreaves Associates has beautifully integrated the underground parking structure with the park (see "Integrating Park with Parking," page 93). The space where cars enter the garage is covered with a slanted roof, which actually functions as the main seating area for a stage.

The rest of the design is organized around two major cross axes—both former streets. "There was this allée of live oaks that was already existing and that really drove a lot of the design," says George Hargreaves, FASLA. The Brown Promenade, which runs under the oak allée, is very gardenesque, with lush plantings and benches where visitors can sit in the shade and look out over the lawn. To complete the allée, which had some gaps, a few large oaks were transplanted from other sites downtown where they were slated for removal.

COURTESY HARGREAVES ASSOCIATES

The Andrea and Bill White Promenade, located over an existing utility easement, is wider, more brightly lit, and more heavily activated. This is where the farmers' markets are held. Since there were no trees existing there, the landscape architects chose to plant fast-growing Mexican sycamores, which would be able to provide a significant amount of shade within 10 years.

There was some concern that allowing people to put up their own tents for markets and events would divide up the park. "Those white tents people use can really create a barrier," says Petersen. So the landscape architects designed a canopy of removable, custom shade structures with spaces between them that allow people to flow between the picnic lawn and the main lawn. Within these spaces, there are also benches where people can sit along the promenade—even when the space is in use by the market or other events.

The landscape architects paid close attention to the wind patterns on the site. Given Houston's hot, muggy summers, they realized it would be important to plant trees in a way that channels the summer breezes as much as possible rather than setting up wind blocks. The three buildings on site, which house the café, the park office, the reading room, and the banquet facility, are also sited to channel breezes. Designed by Larry Speck of PageSoutherlandPage to fit within the park's framework, the buildings are contemporary glass, wood, and steel structures, yet they incorporate verandas that recall the traditional southern porch, complete with movable seating where visitors can sit in the shade and look out over the lawn.

Local culture also informed other parts of the design. Jones chose to plant azaleas, which are found in many historic Texas gardens, along the oak allée. Wood piers in Kinder Lake reference the piers in nearby Galveston, and Texas granite is used prominently throughout the design.

The landscape architects used local and sustainably sourced materials whenever possible at Discovery Green, which was given the name "green" partially for the word's sustainable connotations. While not locally grown, most of the wood used on the terraces adjacent to the buildings is sustainably harvested ipe, and solar panels, donated by BP, provide the energy necessary to power the park office. The entire project recently achieved LEED Gold certification.

Working with the Program

The number of program elements was a real challenge for the landscape architects. "We had to sift through what worked and what didn't work," says Hargreaves. "You have to figure out how you can have two, three, or four elements overlay in the landscape."

Some ideas were dropped out. The conservancy decided it couldn't afford to construct a coffeehouse. Others were modified to fit within the greater design scheme. A suggestion to create a zip line through the space was replaced with a bar that allows kids to glide

Discovery Green mixes fixed activities such as an interactive playground, a café, and fountains, *opposite,* with special events like farmers' markets, *top,* and inflatable art displays, *below.* A model boat basin, *above,* doubles as an ice rink during the winter.

© JIM OLIVE/WWW.STOCKYARD.COM. TOP: COURTESY DISCOVERY GREEN CONSERVANCY. CENTER: JEFF FITLOW PHOTOGRAPHY. BOTTOM

along the bottom of the children's playground. A suggestion to create a stream became the Gateway Fountain, a spray pad that children can play in. And the idea for a tree house in the oak allée was exchanged for the beautiful, but not publicly accessible, dining space on top of the banquet facility, overlooking the oaks.

So that the park would always feel that it was bursting with energy, many of the most popular activities are located in the same area. Kids can run between the model boat basin, the Gateway Fountain, the playground, and the *Mist Tree* sculpture while their parents sit on the terrace with food from the café or picnic on the picnic lawn.

Most of these spaces are also within view of the main stage, so if there's a concert going on, everyone is a part of the action. Hargreaves Associates used the pond to create a dramatic backdrop for the stage. However, the stage is open on all four sides, so viewing is not limited to the slanted lawn. It actually feels like a picnic shelter when there are no concerts going on.

On the other side of the park, the Wortham Foundation Gardens provide a quieter place of escape. The fountain here is designed to be soothing rather than interactive. A number of venues that generally attract fewer than 10 people, like shuffleboard courts and a putting green, are integrated into these gardens.

JOHN GOLLINGS

The design is organized around two major cross axes, both former streets. The Brown Promenade took advantage of an existing oak allée to create a quiet place to sit or stroll, *above*. The Andrea and Bill White Promenade, *right*, has more active areas plugged into it.

Separating Program from Design

SHOULD PROGRAMMING AND DESIGN BE TWO SEPARATE DISCIPLINES carved out by separate professionals? Are there certain benefits or disadvantages to this approach?

FRED KENT, PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES: "You need a lot of skills to make a project work. In the beginning, you need a vision and you need a program. You don't want a design. You don't know the answer, but the community does....

"The program needs to be independent of any designer because you know as well as I do, if you have the designer do the vision, it's really only about the design. [When a separate programmer works with the community], the community then owns the program because they did it. There's this healthy tension between [the programmer and the designer] that can produce really fantastic results. It's like a check and balance."

MARY MARGARET JONES, HARGREAVES ASSOCIATES: "It depends on the designer. We always do public process up front before we have a design vision. Maybe some don't, but we do. The best designs are usually the ones that grow out of what you hear about the program, what you hear about desired uses, and the site itself—its soils, its climate, its geomorphology—and out of those things you begin to work on the design. You also have to bring good design to the table.

"Programming is not rocket science. It should never be seen as something that's separate from design. In the best instances, it's part of the design process. There have been cases where designers have had set styles that they apply wherever they go, and those have led to failed plazas and parks, but that's not the way we work."

GEORGE HARGREAVES, HARGREAVES ASSOCIATES: "In architecture, they will do programming that's not building specific, then they set about designing a building around it. The flaw in that is you often end up with a building you can't afford. I find it very difficult to work that way.

"We actually put design as part of that process. If you put a parking lot beneath a park, that's $30 million; it creates these problems and these opportunities. At the same time we're trying to understand the regional landscape, trying to understand circulation flows, the microclimate. We're not only talking about program opportunities and how much they would cost, but how they would impact what we're trying to build."

BOB EURY, CENTRAL HOUSTON INC./BOARD OF DISCOVERY GREEN CONSERVANCY: "I feel pretty strongly about having an independent program advocate. The tension created by the two parties, the separate programmer from the designer—I think that tension is extraordinarily helpful. There are a lot of significant pieces of Discovery Green that are a direct product of the public engagement. But I sure don't want Fred [Kent] designing it either."

GUY HAGSTETTE, DISCOVERY GREEN CONSERVANCY: "I feel fortunate that we had the talents of both PPS and Hargreaves. They both brought a lot of ideas to the table. I would not go so far as to say the programmer should always be separate. The public input process prepares the client to be a better client. You can do this with the design team or a separate programmer, but you need to do this."

JACOB PETERSEN, HARGREAVES ASSOCIATES: "It appears that [programming] will be something landscape architects have to fight for to retain it in the profession."

Maconda's Grove, within the Wortham Gardens, provides a particularly interesting example of how multiple uses can be overlaid. Instead of adding a driveway for trucks to access the event lawn, the landscape architects created a small, geometric grove of loblolly pines planted in a special structural soil blend created by a local company with a top dressing of decomposed granite mulch. Within this area, alongside the truck route, there are granite-outlined bocce courts with concrete seat walls meant to catch stray balls.

How's It Working?

There is not a lot of love lost between Hargreaves Associates and PPS. Both parties emphasized they had never spoken with each other during their involvement with the park. PPS reviewed the plans through Hargreaves Associates' conceptual design, but Hagstette acted as the middleman.

So what does Kent, who has visited the site since its completion, have to say about the finished product? His opinion is mixed but fairly positive. "That whole central area is spectacular," he says.

The *Mist Tree* is one of two "functional" sculptures created by artist Doug Hollis for the space. Sometimes it drips water in a band along the outside. Other times, it sprays a cloud of mist.

COURTESY HARGREAVES ASSOCIATES

Discovery Green is definitely well used. Hundreds of people filled its spaces on a Thursday afternoon at lunchtime, and as the day wore on, even more people came. Despite the fact that it was a weekday, most of the people were not office workers, but families. "To see families like this in downtown Houston. . .you just didn't see it before this park opened," says Hagstette. Many came for the whole day and brought their ice chests. "You can pull up right underneath the park," noted Karl Andersen, who drove 30 miles to come to a movie night put on by the local public radio station. "So if you have picnic supplies or lawn chairs, you don't need to worry about finding a space and dragging the stuff out."

Of course Kent has some criticism as well. "Hargreaves has this branding that keeps getting perpetuated—these mounds,"

he says. "That angled lawn area where cars go underneath it—that should really be more active. That kind of takes up all that space."

Which raises an interesting question about park design: Should a performance space that does get heavily activated for events be active all the time? *Landscape Architecture* visited the site over the course of three days, and two major evening events happened during that time, a concert and a showing of the silent film *Metropolis.* Both times the angled lawn was packed—too full, really, to hold any more people. But there weren't many people on the lawn during the day or at night when there was no event going on. Should there be? Looking at Discovery Green's schedule, there tends to be some sort of major event at least one night per week. Hargreaves says the grass is engineered for two major events per month. Would the grass survive if it was used much more?

The mound does make it difficult to circulate around the park without ending up on the sidewalk that runs along the park's edge. For better or worse, it's not really much of a strolling park. There aren't many good loops. But the experiences it does offer seem to make up for that.

Kent also thinks there needs to be a better connection to the hotel, and he is not particularly impressed with some of the plantings. "[PPS] gets criticized all the time because people say [we're] just interested in activities," says Kent, "but what we're saying is make it rich. That doesn't mean you can't have a quiet place with flowers, small hummingbirds, a fountain where you can be reflective, but a quiet place with just a bench and a lawn doesn't do much. Olmsted would make a path fascinating and interesting, but so much of design today is just a straight line and bosques of trees—it's just nothing. That's not a rich place for people."

In Discovery Green's first year, there have been a few adjustments, says Hagstette. "None of us anticipated the number of kids that are in the park." A puppet theater that had been incorporated into one of the buildings had to be transformed into a changing room for all the little kids playing in the fountain.

Also, although certain features officially met code, parents viewed them as a safety risk. After a number of worried mothers complained to the con-

Custom Playground Celebrates Flyway

THE PLAYGROUND AT DISCOVERY GREEN is a custom design. Hargreaves Associates came up with the concept—celebrating a bird migration route that passes over Houston—and then worked with Play Site Architecture from Massachusetts to realize the design in a safe and code-compliant way.

The playground is hugged by a grass berm, which was existing on the site. "It provides amphitheater seating for parents to sit and watch their kids," says Jacob Petersen. Worked into the hill is an ipe-clad concrete seat wall, providing another seating option.

Kids can climb on play feathers and play on gliders and a giant egg that has a little slide on it. A "nest" of nylon webbing provides an interesting lookout and has a bit of a bounce.

The playground also has some educational elements. It is decorated with cutouts of bird species that fly over Houston, and squiggly rails run along the bottom of the playground. "If you run your arms along them, it is the exact motion a bird's wing makes when it flies," says Petersen. Not many kids had caught on to this yet, but this adult got a bit of a kick out of it, as the motion is sort of funny and awkward.

Generally the playground has been a big success with smaller children—with one exception. Someone must have hit his or her head while crawling under one of the play feathers, since a pad has been attached with duct tape. Like Discovery Green as a whole, the playground could also be a little bigger. As Hagstette notes, however, no one really expected so many families to show up here in this isolated part of downtown.

The custom playground has a "crow's nest" created using nylon webbing, *top.* Smaller children can use a giant egg with a little slide on it to play king of the hill, *left.*

COURTESY HARGREAVES ASSOCIATES. TOP: JOHN GOLLINGS. BOTTOM

servancy, it added handrails to the piers. And in the model boat basin, it added a net around the outside that makes it more of a challenge for kids trying to swim out to the lake or crash their boats into the wall (which had become a popular sport).

The amount of logistical and storage space has also been a challenge. "When you're activating the park, you are constantly needing stuff to coordinate that activity," says Hagstette. A dance floor, which is put on top of the stage for ballet performances, must be dragged up from a vault in the parking garage because there is no room on the surface. The conservancy also has a larger full-time staff than originally expected, creating crowding issues in its building.

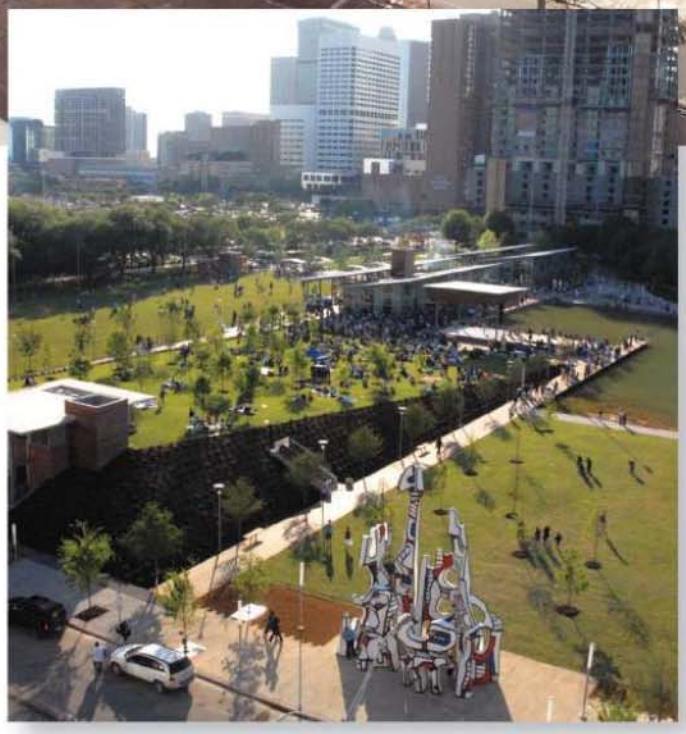
The biggest surprise for Hagstette is that the park attracts so many people, even when there aren't classes or events going on. "We thought [classes and events] would be necessary all the time," says Hagstette. "In the evening and during the week when school's in session, we need [classes and events]. But the experience of the place, and I think the beauty of the place, is a draw itself."

Regular events do help people to find out about the park, but so many of Discovery Green's

JOHN GOLLINGS

The Wortham Gardens, *above,* are a more passive garden space adjacent to the Grove, a restaurant and banquet facility within the park. A bosque of loblolly pines known as Maconda's Grove allows trucks to access the event lawn and provides a place to play bocce, *left.*

Hargreaves Associates seamlessly incorporated the entrance to the underground parking garage to create a slanted lawn area overlooking the main stage, *here.* Fred Kent is critical of this feature because it gets little use when there is no event going on. But the slanted lawn becomes the center of activity at least once a week when there is a concert or a movie in the park, *below.* Hargreaves Associates worked with artist Margo Sawyer to make the parking garage access stairways into Rubik's Cube-like sculptures, *opposite.*



program elements are fixed—the fountains, the playground, the café, the picnic areas, and the reading room. As Petersen notes, if you put water play, a playground, food, and bathrooms together, it's hard to go wrong. But you can't just design them without thinking about how they will be managed. A park's success is the result of how design, program, and management work together.

Would Discovery Green be better if it were bigger? Almost everybody has an opinion on that. "If a park has this much programming, I would like the park to be bigger," says Petersen. "It would be nice if it were 20 percent bigger." He thinks the great lawn, the play area, and the pond would all benefit from having more space. "The park is already crowded with no one living nearby," he says. "You can just imagine what it's going to be like [with more residents in the area]." The park has been spawning new construction along its edges. Since it was completed, two large towers have been built adjacent to the space.

JOHN GOLLINGS. TOP: COURTESY HARGREAVES ASSOCIATES. BOTTOM

Integrating Park with Parking

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECTS of the park's design is how it is integrated with the parking garage that lies beneath part of the site. "When you have an architect or engineer as prime [design consultant, he or she] might have the garage generate the park's form," says Jacob Petersen, a landscape architect with Hargreaves Associates. "Here we let the park's form generate the garage."

For example, the slanted roof over the automobile entrance is drawn out to become the viewing area for the main stage. Rather than covering the entire roof in three feet of soil, increasing the loading on the structure, the structural beams are located on top of the roof, creating deep linear pockets of soil where tree roots can grow. (The surface itself is flat.)

Hargreaves Associates worked with artist Margo Sawyer to make the garage stairways into functional sculptures (titled *Synchronicity of Color).* Their colorful panels make them resemble Rubik's Cubes. The same sculptures also disguise utility vaults and ventilation shafts using ipe screens.

Even the location of the garage itself was influenced by the park above. The landscape architects were careful to make sure that its boundaries did not enter the drip line of the mature oak allée that makes up the Brown Promenade. Because the wall would have to run close to the drip line, a typical excavation with sloping sides would not be possible, so vertical shoring was used to hold the soil in place while the garage was built. Several hundred 18-inch-diameter holes were bored into the ground adjacent to the planned wall, filled with steel cages and concrete, and allowed to set before the hole was dug.

Finally, systems within the garage supply water for Kinder Lake. "To construct a below-grade garage in Houston requires a permanent dewatering system pumping something like 50 gallons per minute in perpetuity," says Petersen. "We're taking that water and putting it into the pond." This cuts down on the amount of water the park sends to Houston's overtaxed storm sewer system.

Outdoor movie attendee Andersen is also worried. "This park is becoming more populated," he says. "When you have an event like this [movie], I'm hoping it will still be big enough for people like us to have a space."

But grandmother Lynn leans the other way. "I'm not sure it needs to be bigger," she says. "I think if it were too big, you'd lose some of that energy."

"There's this energy to this park that is just brilliant," agrees Keith J. R. Hollingsworth, an artist who comes here often. "The fact that anyone can come out here and hang out...in the center of all this wealth—the skyscrapers, the Hilton.... This little park gives you the idea that Houston is becoming a real metropolitan city." LAM

JOHN GOLLINGS

PROJECT CREDITS

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THE Upside OF A Down Economy: GOING LOCAL

FRED KENT

The stumbling **global economy,** vulnerable energy supply, and loss of confidence in far-flung markets are being balanced by a surge of interest in **things local:** production of local food, promotion of local businesses, preservation of local character, improvement of public spaces, and perhaps most important, the rediscovery of meaningful ways to belong to a community.

Although new economic theories point to a fundamental shift in how city and regional economies function, more and more people around the world are expressing an interest in learning how to make their local assets into destinations within their cities that work as catalysts of economic growth. As a result, quality-of-life factors such as vibrant public spaces and more livable cities increasingly could become major economic drivers in attracting and retaining that capital.

Discovery Green, a 12-acre (4.9-ha) green space in downtown Houston that includes two restaurants, an interactive fountain, and a lake with a café, is credited with spurring construction of new office and residential high rises nearby.

JEFF FITLOW

PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

Informal gathering places outside the home and workplace—known as *third places*—have been developed in Washington state. At a derelict shopping center in Bellevue, a central area with a floor chess board has become a public gathering space for residents, students, and area employees.

The current downturn presents not just challenges, but also opportunities to change the way people think about development. A deep pride in local character, products, and foods suggests that the cities and towns that thrive will be differentiated by their lively neighborhoods and business districts, cultural and recreational attractions, and a stronger sense of place in their communities. Communities throughout the world can and are achieving this through an open and collaborative process among developers, city governments, local businesses, and residents.

The current slowdown in development thus offers communities an opportunity to revisit their values, local assets, and resources; to consider what they want their city or town to be known for; and to envision new types of destinations that could attract people to their downtowns and neighborhoods.

This also is having an impact on the type of development being envisioned today. The mixed-use developments that have predominated in the past few decades have focused primarily on shopping destinations—malls, strip centers, and lifestyle centers—and have failed to produce places that anchor and define communities. Cultural and educational institutions such as museums, libraries, and schools have frequently been developed in isolation, cut off from one another and from their downtowns, lacking public spaces and the surrounding uses that could make them gathering places and help sustain them economically.

These factors all point to a major opportunity for a new type of development that taps into the unmet desire for something beyond just a shopping experience: a new generation of destinations that have a strong local economic base and provide a real sense of ownership by the community.

The question of how to create these successful destinations was the focus of two recent forums titled "Creating New Models for Destinations," organized by New York City–based Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public places that build communities. Forward-thinking developers, managers of public spaces, nonprofits, and public sector representatives met to discuss the challenges and opportunities for development in a down economy. Discussion centered on issues such as how short-term place making can be used in development today; how civic institutions can become community anchors in conjunction with new development; and how these destinations can be made more economically sustainable in the future. The most recent meeting was held in mid-March at Trustees' Garden in Savannah, Georgia; its owners, Charles and Rosalie Morris, are seeking to develop the site into a new and innovative type of destination.

Several themes that emerged from the meetings upend earlier thinking about development and may prove critical in exploiting the synergies between place making and profit—in a down economy as well as over the long run. Developers in the vanguard are turning away from national business opportunities to local ones; from big-box construction to a smaller scale; from fast development to slow; from going it alone to forging partnerships; and from shopping-only developments to a new array of public gathering places.

Third Places in Washington State

Ron Sher, president and CEO of Terranomics Development and a passionate advocate of new ways of thinking about development, has developed three innovative projects in Seattle as *third places*—informal gathering places outside the home and work-

place, as described in the 1989 book *The Great Good Place* by Ray Oldenburg. After Sher took over the derelict Crossroads Shopping Center in Bellevue, Washington, in 1988, Oldenburg's insights inspired him to develop the project around Third Place Books as an anchor tenant, next to a central area that became a public gathering place for residents, students, and area employees. The unlikely partners at Crossroads include a library, a police station, city hall, and community meeting areas. Its gathering space is the site of live music and festivals, as well as a popular floor chess board with two-foot- (0.6-m-) tall pieces.

A similar project by Sher—Third Place Commons, in Lake Forest Park, Washington—was so beloved by members of the community that they founded a nonprofit organization, Friends of Third Place Commons, to manage the space and play host to clubs and cultural events there. The organization has become the center of a public/private nonprofit coalition that includes the city government, local businesses, an arts council, the local library, a community college, and other community groups.

Large Urban Transformations

Tony Goldman, founder of Goldman Properties in 1968 and a former board member and current trustee emeritus of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is known for developing emerging urban areas into dynamic pedestrian neighborhoods in places like Miami's South Beach, Manhattan's Soho and Financial District, and neighborhoods in Philadelphia's Center City.

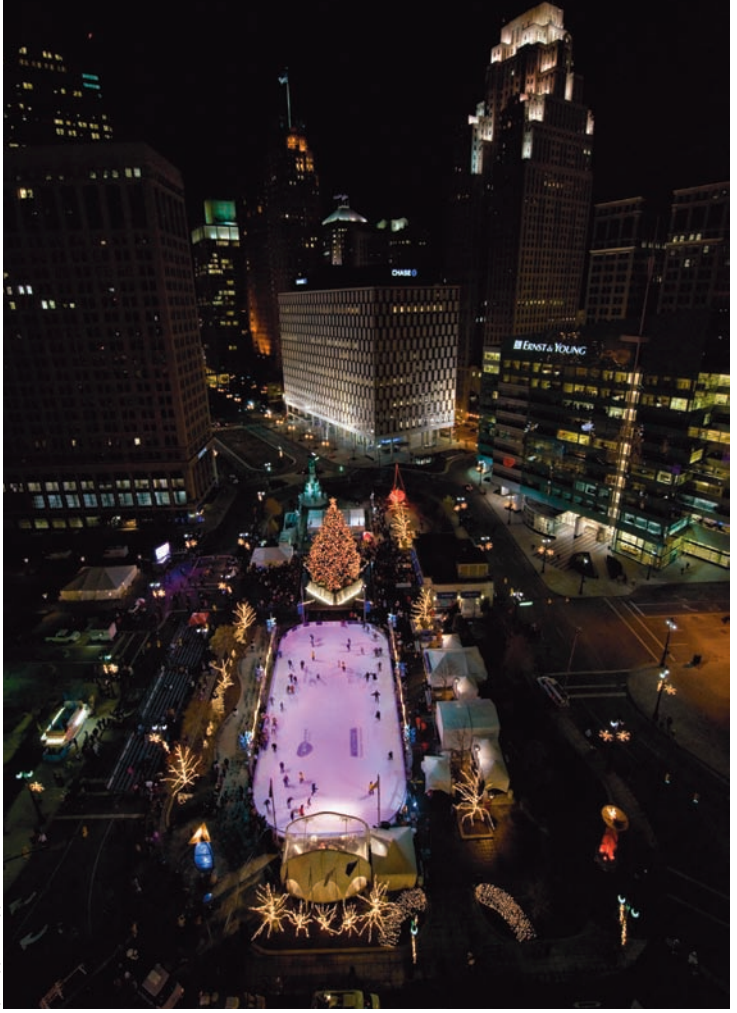
In choosing tenants for his developments, Goldman says he deliberately avoids large chain stores in order to cultivate a unique and vibrant feel. "Brands do not add to the energy; they suck the uniqueness out of an area," he maintains. If high-quality, entrepreneurial, local anchors do not already operate in an area, he "primes the pump"—for example, by seeding a restaurant to create a café culture or introducing unique businesses to give the site an image with which others will want to associate. His strategy also gives the community and stakeholders a sense of ownership of the development from its beginning. "I lay out the silhouette of a vision for the area—not too controlling—and let other stakeholders add to the vision. Let people feel invested in the project," he recommends.

GRANVILLE ISLAND

GRANVILLE ISLAND

Granville Island, a former industrial waterfront (top) in Vancouver, British Columbia, includes a permanent public market and a seasonal farmers' market (above).

CAMPUS MARTIUS



CAMPUS MARTIUS

Campus Martius, a new central square in downtown Detroit, transformed a six-point intersection into a destination where events are held year-round; an outdoor ice rink (above) is open during five winter months. Construction of office, retail, and residential space has begun on lots fronting the park (left).

Locally Grown Waterfront in Vancouver

Granville Island is a 43-acre (17-ha), formerly industrial waterfront in Vancouver, British Columbia, that was redeveloped in the 1970s. Because of its isolation, Granville Island had to succeed not only as a series of distinctive places, but also as a strong district. It did so by shaping development around local institutions and public spaces—such as a community center that is the site of numerous club gatherings, public meetings, and yoga classes; the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design; and a public market, with 50 permanent merchants and a seasonal farmers' market. Granville Island is also a hub for arts and culture, with four theater spaces and a diversity of festivals that occur throughout the year. Each of Granville Island's destinations is bolstered by the others, thanks to a network of walkways and pedestrian-dominated streets.

Now managed by executive director Lino Siracusa, Granville Island has become both a major tourist destination and a day-to-day community gathering place for the burgeoning population of high-rise dwellers in downtown Vancouver. It attracts more than 10 million visitors per year, and its 280 businesses employ 3,000 people and generate over $280 million in sales annually. "Granville Island has always been seen as a 'people place' that has remained authentic to its original vision," says Siracusa. "The interesting mix of uses and the focus on our community keeps this place authentic. That's what it's really all about."

Partnerships Restart Detroit's Heart

Campus Martius, a new central square in Detroit's downtown, attracts more than 2 million visitors annually. The redevelopment, which transformed an imposing six-point intersection into a destination where hundreds of events are held year-round and an outdoor ice rink during five winter months, is credited with infusing downtown Detroit with new life. Since Campus Martius opened, construction has begun on 2.24 million square feet (208,000 sq m) of retail and office space on lots fronting the park, and about 300 condominiums and apartments have been built or are planned.

Robert Gregory, president of the Detroit 300 Conservancy, which developed and manages Campus Martius, also has built a strong base of support in the community: business contributions and sponsor-

ships are the primary funding sources, and only two management staff members are paid. Gregory reports that park activity continues to increase, and has accelerated in the current economy.

"In creating a vision for Campus Martius Park, Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer challenged us to create one of the best public spaces in the world," says Gregory. "At the time, this challenge seemed daunting for a city with low self-esteem and beset by a generation of economic decline. The community took on the challenge with enthusiasm, and Campus Martius Park is now truly one of the most successful public spaces in the United States." He attributes the success to the partnership forged among the city, the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, and the business community, led by Edsel B. Ford II, chairman of the private nonprofit Detroit 300 Conservancy.

Houston Destination Sparks Development

Discovery Green in Houston transformed 12 acres (4.9 ha) of underused green space and parking lots near the convention center into a major gathering place in downtown Houston. The park, which officially opened in April 2008, and its many destinations—a one-acre (0.4-ha) lake with café, an interactive fountain, a playground, a market promenade, dog runs, a stage, a sitting lawn, and two restaurants—attracted an estimated 250,000 visitors in less than three months. (See "Houston's Downtown Transformation" and "Houston's New Park: Discovery Green," October 2008, pages 82 and 87.)

"Three out of the four developable blocks across from the park are being transformed since the park was announced, and the fourth block has been assembled as a site for a second convention hotel when the economy stabilizes," reports Guy Hagstette, president of the Discovery Green Conservancy. "Discovery Green offers both beauty and the chance to share experiences with fellow citizens, and as a result, the park is rapidly becoming the heart of a new urban neighborhood that includes a dynamic mix of residential, office, hotel, and retail attracted by the urban life that Discovery Green has helped create."

Public/Private Synergy in Santiago

The Metro Escuela Militar is one of Santiago's busiest transit hubs, accommodating up to 4.5 million commuters per month. But its adjacent plaza and galleries were desolate and unsafe until Marcello Corbo, cofounder of the development company Urban Development, turned them into a thriving market and public space.

JEFF FITLOW

While free Saturday morning yoga classes take place on the stage at Discovery Green, the blocks across from the park are undergoing a transformation and attracting a mix of residential, office, hotel, and retail offerings.

The project was a collaborative effort from the start, explains Corbo. The municipality of Las Condes created new plazas and taxi stops; the Ministry of Transportation modified the street design and created new bus stops; the Metro leased the galleries to Urban Development; and Urban Development found the vendors, rented out the stalls, reduced the number of access points and improved them, and assembled a private team to manage the site.

Corbo also credits SubCentro's success to intensive community involvement. One of his first moves was to solicit the neighborhood's opinions in an online survey to help determine the best mix of tenants for the new SubCentro. This helped give the public a stake in the project and make it feel invited and represented.

"SubCentro Las Condes was an exceptional effort to bring together the private and public sectors—but more than that, bring together those people in the institutions involved in a common good: to bring life to a place that was no one's land in the center of Las Condes," says Corbo.

PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

At one of Santiago's busiest transit hubs, a market and public space known as SubCentro Las Condes was started on an adjacent plaza and is credited with bringing life to a formerly desolate, unsafe area of the city.

Barcelona's Public Markets

The importance of Barcelona's public markets in supporting the life of the city was demonstrated last year: when a truckers' strike left private supermarkets with bare shelves, public markets simply restocked locally.

Public markets have long been a defining characteristic of Barcelona, a city that guarantees fresh food to its residents as an essential right. In fact, few citizens are farther than a ten-minute walk from one of the 46 public markets located throughout the city. Most of these markets are housed in public halls and are run by city staff.

In recent years, the markets have been playing an increasingly important role, says Jordi Tolrà i Mabilon, director of communications for the Markets of Barcelona. Business is booming, driven partly by lower-income residents transferring more of their food spending to their local markets in response to rising prices in private supermarkets. About 15 percent of public market customers go to a market every day, Tolrà i Mabilon reports, and 45 percent go at least once a week.

Barcelona is currently renovating the public markets and incorporating small private markets into them. In the process, the city has been using the markets to catalyze positive change in their neighborhoods. "We work closely with the surrounding communities to be a key social partner," explains Tolrà i Mabilon. "We reach out to new ethnic groups in the city and help to integrate the market into the community."

Seeds of Revitalization in Perth

Australia may have developed along the U.S. model of suburban sprawl, shopping malls, and car-dominated streets, but it is fast becoming an epicenter of the international place-making movement. Leading the charge is a coalition called Place Leaders—made up of the leading redevelopment agencies from Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore—which has been working since its conception in 2003 to revitalize urban centers and to create and maintain successful places across Australia.

One example of the coalition's work is an initiative being launched by Place Leaders member East Perth Redevelopment Authority (EPRA), in conjunction with local government agencies. One project is the Perth Cultural Centre, home to the city's premier arts and cultural institutions. Centrally located adjacent to Perth's central business, residential, and university districts, it presents a unique opportunity for the city to create a major public destination. Despite those strengths, however, the Cultural Centre had acquired a reputation for being sterile and unsafe.

EPRA saw the Cultural Centre's potential as a linchpin in its plan to create a "vital Perth," and is planning construction that will include a new 525-seat main theater, a 200-seat studio theater, and spaces for rehearsal and production. Simultaneously, EPRA is working with the city to revitalize 16 properties on the main arterial road bordering the Cultural Centre, upgrading historic facades, and generating leasing opportunities to create a downtown destination that will complement the district.

Although construction has not yet begun, EPRA's team has been working with local stakeholders to lay the groundwork for the transformation by making the Cultural Centre a magnet of activity downtown. Amenities such as photo exhibitions, indie music festivals, and a regular weekend market showcasing local food producers are being offered, plus a number of additional small-scale programming changes—such as improved identity for buildings by extending interior uses to the outside, provision of a series of flexible amenities, and presentation of events that highlight

THE MARKETS AT PERTH CULTURAL CENTRE

PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

To help dispel its reputation for being a sterile and unsafe place, attempts are being made to make Perth, Australia's Cultural Centre (above) a magnet of activity downtown, starting with events such as photo exhibitions, indie music festivals, and a weekend market showcasing local food producers (above left).

local talent—are planned to make the area active day and night.

A New Agenda in Norway

The Norwegian government has designated 13 cities to become "cities of the future" and form the vanguard of a new approach to sustainable development. With the ultimate, long-term goal of greenhouse gas neutrality, Norway is focusing on four core priorities: land use and transportation, stationary energy, consumption patterns and waste, and adaptation to climate change.

Through those four priorities runs a strong focus on place making and shoring up local assets. The land use goals include preserving the cities' public spaces—called *almenninger*, meaning commons—which have deep historical and cultural significance, and which the government sees as a key asset in attracting expertise-intensive businesses and commercial service providers. Bergen, one of the 13 cities of the future, writes in its land use plan, "The blend of residential houses, shops, offices, and businesses makes the urban spaces busy thoroughfares, places to linger, and venues for numerous activities all day long. . . . These qualities should serve as a model for urban structure in the densification areas."

That densification is being planned to cluster around Bergen's light-rail system, which the city is improving so that no district is more than 20 minutes from the city center. A wide-scale evaluation of the city's pedestrian routes also has been launched to identify opportunities for improvements. In order to create destinations to support a thriving pedestrian network, the city has vowed to increase public access to recreation opportunities on the waterfront and other natural areas, and to create five new swimming spots in the city center. "One of the overriding goals for the next few years is the reduction of the need to travel out of one's own city or city district for recreational experiences," the Bergen report notes. "[This] will also have a positive impact on the greenhouse gas accounts since it will reduce transport and thus also carbon emissions."

With the growing interest in place making around the world, a new vision for cities is emerging that stems from a community's assets—one focused on public destinations and strengthening local economies. The current economic turmoil, therefore, presents a pivotal opportunity to respond to the widespread desire for a strong public realm, forging collaborations that benefit everyone—developers, government, and, most of all, the public. **UL**

FRED KENT is president of the New York City–based Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public places that build communities. Kathy Madden, senior vice president; Phil Myrick, vice president; and Julia Galef, editor, contributed to the article.

Place Making a ULI book, and *Place Making and Town Center Development*, a ULI InfoPacket, are available at www.uli.org/bookstore, or call 800-321-5011.

The Washington Post

City parks, bringing urban centers back to life

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By?JoAnn Greco
Special to The Washington Post
Friday, July 30, 2010; 1:32 PM

I watch as a man lazily makes his way over the steppingstones in a low-slung pool that emerges from a limestone-clad water wall. Nearby, framed by the steel of St. Louis's iconic Gateway Arch, a mother points out a gleaming red Mark di Suvero sculpture to her toddler, and fountains mist two besuited men as they engage in shop talk and scarf down lunchtime hot dogs.

This is St. Louis's Citygarden, a small part of a master plan to redevelop the Gateway Mall, a 1.2-mile ribbon of green space connecting the still-splendid Arch with the once-grand Union Station. The mall's fortunes rose and fell with St. Louis's cycles of growth (in the early 1900s it was among the five most populous American cities) and abandonment (scores of buildings were razed by midcentury) before ending up as a patchwork of empty, littered and overgrown lots.

Citygarden, then, is more than just a pretty face. In the past year, seemingly every city I've landed in has boasted a new park or was in the process of planning one. But whereas parks unveiled in recent years by New York and Chicago - the much-ballyhooed High Line and Millennium Park, respectively - serve as desserts added to the already laden menus of residents and tourists, it seems that new parks in other cities are burdened with a much more challenging mandate.

In cities such as St. Louis, Houston and Detroit - all victims of disinvestment in the 1960s and '70s - new parks are charged with spurring development and creating downtowns that are places to live, not just work. It's a role previously assigned to the '80s-era performing arts center and the '90s-era downtown sports venue. Thanks to parks' across-the-board appeal, wide diversity of uses and heavy programming, though, they may be the piece that ultimately completes the puzzle.

For visitors, these new downtown parks offer more than tantalizing glimmers of hope and welcome rays of sunshine. In St. Louis, world-class sculpture is the standout; in Detroit, a varied slate of live entertainment keeps things hopping; and in Houston, boccie courts and model boat racing offer a perfect afternoon of family fun.

Here's a closer look at this trio.

St. Louis: Citygarden

St. Louis Deputy Mayor for Development Barbara Geisman calls the privately funded $30 million Citygarden (a figure that doesn't include the costs of acquiring the 23 sculptures, some by famous names) "one of the best

things to happen in downtown in many decades." Nearby lofts converted from derelict warehouses tout the park as an amenity, and plans for restoring the city's Kiel Opera House, located farther north of the mall, may finally go ahead.

Citygarden (www.citygardenstl.org), which celebrated its first anniversary last month, is set on a narrow, two-block strip dotted with sculptures. But while I found that an Aristide Maillol nude here and a Fernand Lger bronze relief there place Citygarden in the realm ofany big-city sculpture garden, I was most taken by the way the park is connected to its geography. A brochure explained that walls made of locally quarried limestone echo the curves of the nearby Mississippi and Missouri rivers, and a series of terraces represents the high ground of the river bluff. Plantings, too, tend toward the native - thanks to careful curation by the prestigious Missouri Botanical Garden - with seasonal grasses and wildflowers chosen to adorn the park instead of beds of annuals and hothouse flowers.

Unlike other new parks, this one isn't heavily programmed. Instead, if offers serenity and natural beauty. And there's water, water everywhere. Three fountains cascade down terraces, jet across plazas and lap over sculptures. The one concession to commercialism is the Terrace View restaurant, located in a pavilion in one of the park's corners. It serves an all-day, Mediterranean-inspired menu and is great for tapas, happy hour or Sunday brunch.

Detroit: Campus Martius Park

The ambitious relics of urban renewal trends past - the people mover and the new sports stadiums, the casinos and the renewed waterfront - are strewn all over Detroit. But the privately funded $20 million Campus Martius Park - its name means "military ground" and refers to land that served that purpose on the site in the 1780s - places its bets on simpler pleasures. Here in the center of downtown, movable chairs, a fountain, regular arts programming and greenery are all it takes to draw crowds.

After five years, the hoped-for urban development has started to occur: Nearby, Westin Hotels has invested $200 million in restoring the Book Cadillac, a 1924 grande dame that was once the tallest hotel in the world and a favorite of Hollywood's elite.

More piazza than park, the one-acre Campus Martius (www.campusmartiuspark.com) emphasizes lawns and keeps most of its flora - gorgeous flowering trees and botanical beds - along the perimeter. The Michigan Soldiers & Sailors Monument, erected in 1872 at the junction of five principal streets, anchors one corner, giving the space a sense of grandness and civic importance. On the summer afternoon when I stopped by, workers on lunch break clustered at the base of the 56-foot-high granite memorial, which is peppered with bronze figures representing the military branches. On Wednesdays during the summer, a local radio station sponsors noontime concerts from area bands and cover groups (Cheap Trick! Rod Stewart!).

Houston: Discovery Green

Discovery Green lays a LEED-certified carpet of green over the site of two former surface parking lots (the parking has been buried) and is strategically located in front of the George R. Brown Convention Center and between the Minute Maid Park baseball stadium and the Toyota Center football dome at the eastern edge of Houston's downtown. The park (www.discoverygreen.com) celebrated its second anniversary in April.

Houston is a place where no small plans are made. At 12.5 acres, built for the rather astounding sum of $122 million through a public-private venture, the Green features transported 100-year-old live oaks, two

restaurants, a playground, a stage, a boccie court, a dog run and a model boat pond/ice rink. Residents can even enjoy a mobile library service and reading room, where you can supposedly have a library book delivered to you. I didn't try it, but it sounded like a great idea.

I did sample lunch at the Grove, the more elegant of two restaurants in the park. Its picture windows, wooden ceilings and great views of both the park and the city skyline would have made me happy no matter what. But the creative farm-to-table, vaguely Tex-Mex (pulled rotisserie chicken tacos with grilled corn, spicy shrimp salad with avocado and mango) menu only added to the pleasures of a lazy afternoon.

This amenities-laden park is a prime example of how investment can transform a neighborhood. Even before it was completed, a developer bought an adjacent lot with the idea of opening One Park Place - a moniker from the mouths of marketers, if ever there was one. The first apartment tower to go up in Houston in decades, it started renting this year and is about 65 percent occupied. Its promised ground-floor retail has yet to materialize. On the western perimeter of the park, an Embassy Suites Hotel and a 31-story office tower will arrive early next year.

The park has been a beehive of activity, presenting some 400 events in a year, including movie nights, children's writing workshops and tango instructions. More than a million visitors, 30 percent of them from the distant suburbs and out of town, have taken advantage of its amenities and performances. The kicker, says Susanne Theis, the park's programming director, is that "weekends have proved to be the most popular days. We weren't expecting that at all."

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Placemaking in urban design

Kathy Madden

> 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.
>
> (PPS 2008:1)

After decades of urban planning policies geared towards facilitating the movement of automobiles and imposing order and development from the top down, a broader bottom-up approach to community-building is taking hold globally. This approach, which we refer to as *Placemaking*, is geared toward the "ground floor" of a city – streets, sidewalks, parks, buildings and other public spaces. Simply, *Placemaking* aims to create places in cities that can invite greater interaction among people, while fostering healthier and more economically viable communities.

An alternative to the approach that has shaped the built environment during the past fifty years, *Placemaking* offers a new direction for the field of urban design. Rather than requiring professionals to define the parameters of a project, this new approach is based on the community's vision and employs the skills of professionals (e.g. civil engineering, architecture, urban planning and community development) as resources in implementing this vision.

Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to improving public spaces, involves looking at, listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work and otherwise use a particular public space to discover how they use the space, their perceptions about it, and how they think it can be improved. This information is the basis of a common vision for that place and can evolve quickly into an implementation strategy, beginning with small-scale, incremental improvements that can immediately bring benefits to public spaces. An important component of this approach is becoming familiar with research about how a place or similar places are used to avoid repeating mistakes and creating spaces that are not used.

Thus, *Placemaking* focuses on the creation of the public places of everyday life: the street corners, bus stops, and parks (see Figures 50.1 and 50.2). They provide the setting for people to engage in a variety of activities at different times of the day, and consequently, draw people to use them again and again. Good "places" are busy because they have many reasons for people to use them, and they differ from "spaces," which do not provide reasons for people to be there and use them. In a sense, "spaces" are primarily physical settings that have yet to be turned into "places." People may notice them but rarely stop,

Figure 50.1 Los Angeles bus stop before improvements. Source: Project for Public Spaces – used by permission.

Figure 50.2 Los Angeles bus stop after improvements. Source: Project for Public Spaces – used by permission.

and if they stop they do not linger. Simply, "spaces" become "places" when they begin to develop a multitude of reasons for people to go there.

The foundation of placemaking

It is hard to design a place that will not attract people; what is remarkable is how often it has been accomplished.

(William Holly Whyte)

The above statement about the state of public space design was made in the 1990s by Holly Whyte and grew out of his research of many years about how people interact with buildings and their surrounding public spaces. Whyte was reacting to the fact that many designed public spaces, especially those of the last 50 years, have never become completely successful. Although he did not use the term *Placemaking*, Whyte examined the micro-characteristics of places and elements that together encourage the types of activity that result in a successful or well-used place. Whyte's philosophy was best expressed in his book, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980), which examines why some city spaces work for people while others do not, and what practical lessons could be learned.

In 1970, Whyte started the Street Life Project to research urban spaces using direct observation, which entailed, among other methods, interviews with people using public spaces, mapping of their behavior and levels of activity, time lapse photography and studies of density and other patterns of use. Whyte felt that direct observation had not been used to any great extent in cities in the United States to examine issues of concern to city planners and others, such as urban crowding. According to him, "most of the research on the issue was done somewhere other than where [crowding] supposedly occurred." In contrast, he felt that the direct observation of spaces could yield unique and vital insights into the success and failure of particular spaces.

With the goal of studying urban crowding, the Street Life Project began its work examining the use of public spaces in parks and playgrounds in New York City. Whyte and his researchers soon found something that surprised them. Most of these spaces, rather than being crowded, were characterized by a lack of crowding even in very dense neighborhoods. The simple conclusion was that the space alone was not enough to attract users. They also found that while most playgrounds were empty, the informal areas on city blocks – mainly the streets, were full of children playing. They questioned the common assumption that children play in streets because they lack playground space in their neighborhood, and instead hypothesized that many children play in the streets simply because they find them exciting.

This initial research yielded the additional conclusion that most crowding resulted from "choke points," such as at entrances to small parks, intersections or transit facilities that required people to move through spaces that were constricted in some way. Consequently, crowding was occurring frequently, but only for a short time, yet this experience had an impact on people's perceptions of the city. The perception that the city was a "negative" or crowded place was disproportionate to the amount of time that people actually spent in places where the discomfort occurred (Whyte 1980).

In the following years, Whyte and the Street Life Project researchers conducted further studies of the use of plazas through observations and time-lapse filming in order to learn more about the characteristics of spaces that were used versus those that were empty, and why people chose to use some spaces over others. The researchers concluded that well used places have

several common characteristics including a mix of people (more couples, people in groups, more people meeting other people or saying "good bye," and generally more social interaction). They also have a larger proportion of women than men (women are more particular about the quality of the spaces they choose to use), and a higher presence of children and seniors (because they can often be in a place when others are working). Physical elements such as seating, water, food, and shade (especially movable seating, water that people can touch, food, and a choice of sun or shaded places) were found to be critical to the use of a place. In addition, other qualities were important such as the combination and location of physical elements such as seating, the relationship between a space and its edges, and the relationship between elements in a space such as a bus shelter, a waste basket, and a bench or ledge (Whyte 1980).

Why don't we have better public spaces? The need for a new approach

Many public spaces never evolve into being "places" because they were never conceived that way. For example, many of the plazas adjacent to office buildings built in New York City in the 1970s were lifeless and devoid of activity even though they represented the state of the art of public space planning and design at that time. Ironically, such places mushroomed in the ensuing decades all over the United States and even abroad.

An example is the sunken plaza that was built in front of the RCA Building at Rockefeller Center (now the General Electric Building). Originally designed as an entrance to the underground shopping concourse and subway, it failed to entice people to descend from the street. Later, efforts were made by the Rockefeller Center to improve the plaza by first adding a roller skating rink and later an ice skating rink in the winter. Many years later, outdoor dining was added to the sunken plaza in the summer, as well as temporary exhibits and events such as Orchid Shows, etc. These uses drew people down into what was an unsuccessful public space, mainly because it was located below grade. However, although the space did not function in its initial form, it was imitated all over the world.

The adjacent street level Channel Gardens (named as such because it is the walkway between the British and French buildings) evolved in a similar way. In the mid-1970s, the Rockefeller Center Inc. (RCI) management was concerned because people were sitting on the ledges of the planters, damaging the yew trees planted behind them. In determining a solution to this "problem" they asked Project for Public Spaces[1] (PPS) what kind of spikes to place on the ledges to discourage sitting. After studying how the space was used, PPS found out that a wide variety of people were using the ledges simply because there was nowhere else to sit. Rather than preventing people from using the space, PPS recommended adding benches to legitimize sitting and encourage people to stay in the plaza. The experiment was a great success – people sat on the benches and the use of the space increased. Seeing the benefit of attracting people who would sit and also perhaps shop, RCI removed the yews and replaced them with horticultural and art displays that change eleven times per year. The entire area soon became a destination, and the ground floor retail spaces facing Channel Gardens – previously occupied by banks and travel agencies – were filled by retail tenants such as the Metropolitan Museum Gift Shop. As time progressed, other ground floor spaces also filled with new tenants including NBC's Today Show, the auction house Christies, and Dean and Deluca grocers.

By starting with the simple idea of providing benches next to the planters in Channel Gardens, which created demand for other amenities, Rockefeller Center has become one of the top destinations in New York City, and indeed, the entire United States. This success is the result of the management's ability to respond in a creative manner to the issues at hand, demonstrating how a simple process based on observing how a space is used can yield unique and vital insights into the success and failure of particular spaces.

Project/discipline driven approach

Broadly speaking, the process that leads to failed spaces tends to be "project driven" and is initiated in response to a predetermined problem (Figure 50.3). This process starts out with fairly narrow goals, such as the need to widen a street. As described in the diagram below, input is provided by the "community" or stakeholders after the project has been defined, which is generally late into the process. Sometimes, but not always, modifications to the plans are made.

The problem with this approach is that it does not begin with what the community has defined as an issue. It leaves the community or stakeholders no opportunity to raise issues they are concerned about after the project has been initiated, and as a result, important questions are left unaddressed. This process is used in many government funded projects such as building roads or improving streets.

Place/community driven approach

A different approach grows out of the experience and vision that the community has for a particular place in a neighborhood and is essentially opposite from the approach described above. At its simplest, a place oriented approach (or *Placemaking*)

Figure 50.3 Project Driven Design Approach. Source: Project for Public Spaces – used by permission.

starts with the community or stakeholders who evaluate a particular place and develop a vision for it. Professionals then function as implementers of their vision (Figure 50.4).

Generally speaking, this approach has several benefits: it results in more flexible solutions; evolves over time rather than being built all at once; leads to a stronger sense of ownership of the place and of the improvements; ensures community support and leverages stakeholder time; and often generates financial support to make the improvements. For example, if a main street is the project being considered, local retailers might be inclined to make improvements to their façades because the vision is the result of their own evaluation, which consequently allows them to see the direct benefit.

The idea and relevance of "the power of ten" to urban design

A great city requires many different places, with a multitude of activities or reasons to use each one, in order to thrive. By extension, a great city should have at least ten successful public spaces. The term the "Power of Ten," first coined by Charles and Ray Eames in their seminal film of the same name, provides an excellent framework for thinking about the city as a whole and for evolving a community engagement process into a larger public space plan for that city.

When a city is fortunate to have ten good places, it is likely that each of these places offers at least ten things to do or ten reasons to be there. Each place is also characterized by its *accessibility*, the range of

Figure 50.4 Place/Community Driven Design Approach. Source: Project for Public Spaces – used by permission.

activities that people can engage in, the *level of social interaction* such as talking, shaking hands or kissing, its *image*, and *comfort*. Comfort is essential and having comfortable places to sit, art to touch, water to play in, food to purchase, etc. will encourage people to use the space. It follows that if there are ten of these great places with many things to do in each of them in a neighborhood, then a broader, more successful district and a great city would ensue.

Having a number of dynamic and interesting destinations within a city can define the public's experience of a city because the result is that people would keep coming back, and the district and city would keep evolving. In terms of real actions that can change the direction of urban design, the "Power of 10" is a simple way for citizens and urban designers to understand the potential of their city. Not only is it a common sense approach for communities to think about their neighborhoods, but it is also an effective tool for leaders to communicate with communities and professionals (Project for Public Spaces 2000).

An example of this concept in action can be found in downtown Houston at the newly created Discovery Green. Project for Public Spaces facilitated a place-oriented process to develop a program for a new park, which was conceived as "Houston's backyard." Building on the idea of the Power of 10, the local community outlined a number of irresistible destinations or "places" in the future park. The ten places identified included places for people to meet each other, places to eat, areas for children to play (Figure 50.5), and places to showcase the assets of the community. As built, Discovery Green includes a family destination on a small "lake" with a café, playground and interactive fountain, library branch, and a stage for performances. There is also a restaurant with a

Figure 50.5 Discovery Green, Houston. Source: Jim LaCombe.

treehouse terrace and an oak shaded promenade for markets, fairs, exhibits and other events. In winter, there is an ice rink which has become a major attraction combined with movie showings, holiday markets, and concerts. By embracing the Power of 10, Discovery Green has become a major destination in downtown Houston and has already attracted new investment surrounding the park, including plans for a retail center, office building and convention hall.

Implications of a placemaking approach for the field of urban design

> Placemaking is turning a neighborhood, town or city from a place you can't wait to get through to one you never want to leave.
>
> (PPS Survey Respondent)

The aforementioned principles of Placemaking suggest a new and broader role for urban designers that centers around using design skills to build places and destinations based on a community's vision. This new role requires turning the typical planning process upside down and allows the community to take on a new role as the "expert" or the people who know the place best. Urban designers and other professions then act as resources to respond to the community's unique vision for itself. A program that is grounded in the community's vision challenges professionals, encourages them to be more creative and in many ways, allows them more freedom. It also results in greater public benefits and creates more demand and a more positive role for the skills of urban designers.

Neither people in communities nor professionals, however, have much experience developing programs for public spaces. Although common for architectural and interior design projects, it is not as common to develop a program for the activities that occur in public spaces. Yet it is the program that ultimately defines how a space or street is to be used, and is the essential component for developing both design and management solutions that result in successful public spaces. In the future, well-trained representatives of community based organizations can be responsible for facilitating a *Placemaking* process and developing a program for many different types of public spaces. If urban designers take on a new role, they could have a great impact on how cities evolve in the future.

Conclusion

> Placemaking is a dynamic human function: it is an act of liberation, of staking claim, and of beautification; it is true human empowerment.
>
> (PPS Survey Respondent)

There are several key elements that, if taken into consideration, could fundamentally change how urban design is carried out. First is an agreed upon definition of a successful "place" as one that is well-used. Second is consensus that a different process is necessary where the professional is the facilitator and implementer of a community's vision rather than the one who defines the vision. Third is the acknowledgement that post-construction evaluation and other research into models of successful urban spaces can legitimately inform decisions about that place. Finally, it is the acceptance that both design and management are key ingredients in creating a successful urban space.

If urban designers were to adapt this more holistic view and learn to become generalists in *Placemaking*, they may be able to create an entire agenda around urban places that is transformative in affecting how people live in cites in the future. The result can be new and more meaningful opportunities for professionals and a better and more livable public realm for people who live in communities.

Acknowledgment

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Note

1 Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating and sustaining public places that build communities. Established in 1975, PPS has built on the techniques of William H. Whyte's Street Life Project, and elaborated the principles of placemaking to help communities envision and build successful public spaces. PPS has written several publications describing a variety of tools for analyzing spaces including "User Analysis in Park Planning and Management", "Main Street – a Look at How they Work" "Film in User Analysis" "Achieving Great Federal Spaces," "Placemaking in Chicago: A Guide to Neighborhood Placemaking" and, most recently three books about how citizens can get involved in transportation related issues in their communities.

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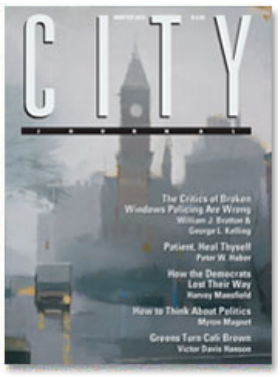

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Eye on the News

ANDREW M. MANSHEL

A Place Is Better Than a Plan

Revitalizing urban areas is best done through small improvements, not grand designs.

19 October 2009

The importance of small ideas to urban revitalization isn't widely appreciated. Particularly in the most recent real-estate cycle, many planners, design professionals, and developers produced grand schemes instead. But profound change is more likely to result from a deeply considered idea that alters an essential component of an urban environment than from an elaborate master plan that requires abundant resources and considerable political capital. While some large-scale plans, like Rockefeller Center, are successful, most become impersonal, overbearing failures—or, even more often, are stillborn, the victims of the long process of assemblage, environmental remediation, community participation, zoning adoption, and the securing of financing.

For a striking example of the power of an apparently small idea, consider urbanist William H. Whyte's suggestion that in public spaces, people prefer movable chairs to fixed seating. People like to control their own space, and movable chairs allow them to do just that. Movable chairs let people face one another and interact in different ways, not just the ones that landscape designers have in mind when they arrange fixed furniture. Having chairs scattered around sends a message of trust that people won't steal them. And chairs' historical associations convey the sense that a space is civilized and of high quality—like the European areas that use them, such as the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris.

Whyte first suggested movable chairs for Paley Park, a small park in Manhattan's high-end Plaza District. After their success there, he recommended that they be a key element in the restoration of squalid Bryant Park during the 1980s. Some regarded that suggestion as naive; failing to tie down chairs amid the bustle and grunge of 42nd Street would surely spell trouble, they said. But the chairs—the same model used in the Luxembourg Gardens—were a key element of Bryant Park's hugely successful reintroduction in 1992. One now finds movable chairs in public spaces across the country; in fact, many designers have chosen the same $30 chair that Bryant Park uses, apparently finding in its design something essential to its success. Most recently, movable chairs can be found in the recaptured pedestrian spaces in Times Square, though they

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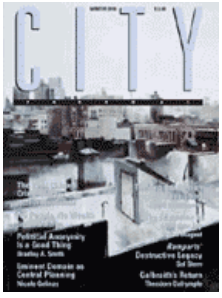

are slightly different models.

Another small idea that produced an outsize effect in improving public places was the high-quality trash-can design employed in 1993 by the Grand Central and 34th Street Business Improvement Districts, which were run by the same staff as the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation. The idea of a well-designed trash can was unusual at the time; the Gotham standard was made of battered metal mesh. But an attractive trash can sends a powerful message that public spaces are well maintained and under social control, and as a result of its successful implementation in midtown Manhattan, communities across the country and in Europe have adopted the very same design. Other widely emulated ideas that grew out of the work of the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation and its affiliates include showing films in public spaces, using streetlamps that emit high-quality white light (as opposed to high-pressure sodium lamps' yellow light), and planting gardens to soften streetscapes.

Campus Martius Park in Detroit is a dramatic example of how the Bryant Park model has been adopted elsewhere. Detroit is a museum of failed, expensive, large-scale urban fixes that were à la mode in planning circles at different times over the past half-century: a decrepit and underused people mover, the gigantic and isolated Renaissance Center, and the equally huge and isolated Comerica Park (sometimes derided as Comerica National Park), where the Detroit Tigers play. The stadium looks like a spaceship that descended on the city after the surrounding blocks were leveled and turned into parking lots. Campus Martius, by contrast, is Detroit's liveliest and most humane public space. Based on Bryant Park, it is tremendously popular with pedestrians. The park includes movable chairs, a fountain, food concessions, regular arts programming, and high-quality horticulture.

Of course, urban planners are perfectly capable of ignoring the proven place-making techniques of the last 15 years. The park built atop Boston's Big Dig, after the expenditure of billions of dollars, is a hot, forbidding wasteland on a spring day. There is nothing to draw visitors in: it contains limited, fixed seating, has no shade or water, and appears unprogrammed. While from a distance (and perhaps from an airplane) its design is attractive, from a pedestrian's perspective it is cold and uninviting. When I visited this past spring, it was essentially empty, while adjacent attractions like the Quincy Market bustled with visitors.

Small changes are appealing for many reasons. They're cheap, for one thing. Also, what works can be easily expanded, and what doesn't work can be as easily terminated or altered. One successful food concession can become two; an unsuccessful stall selling local crafts can be replaced; a planter made from a material that discolors or chips can be replaced with a better one. Contrast that with grand schemes, which can attract broad opposition and be subject to complex political, logistical, and financial obstacles. Once an elaborate design has been committed to, backing away from it—or even altering it—becomes both politically and mechanically complicated. Further, planners have a limited capacity to predict how people will respond to their designs. The larger the project, the more likely unintended consequences become, and the more difficult it is to change course.

Above all, small ideas for revitalizing urban areas *work*, as the success of Bryant Park and its emulators has demonstrated. Why? Because, as Whyte (and Jane Jacobs as well) understood, people in public spaces respond to

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thousands of subtle visual and aural cues, and successful places manipulate these cues (often without premeditation) to provide familiar assurances of comfort and well-being. The cues prompt a person who encounters a new place to predict a positive experience there—above all, that he will be safe. The most important cues transmit a sense of order and social control. And the best new or restored spaces, like Bryant Park, Campus Martius, Discovery Green in Houston, and most recently the High Line park on Manhattan's West Side, provide their patrons with the premonition of an enjoyable experience.

Those engaged in the work of downtown renewal and urban revitalization should always remember that truth. It will help them identify, and integrate into their projects, the helpful small ideas that can make cities more enjoyable places.

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