

Placemaking Toolkit

This toolkit provides general information about placemaking and suggests ways to develop your own placemaking project. It is a living document that will be updated to reflect the evolution of placemaking in Hamilton and any regulatory changes. We welcome community updates and comments to help improve this resource.

Funding is currently available to support community run placemaking projects. **If you are interested in applying to the City of Hamilton's Placemaking Grant Pilot Program, visit www.hamilton.ca/PlacemakingGrant to review the funding guidelines including eligibility requirements and application details.** Applications must be submitted by:

1. Friday, April 9, 2021 by 4:30pm
2. Early 2022 – the exact date will be announced in Fall 2021.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the City of Kitchener's [Love My Hood](#) program for sharing their placemaking guide and allowing us to adapt so much of their great information, the CityLab student team from McMaster who created a toolkit for community art, and [100 in 1 Day Hamilton](#) for continually supporting placemaking initiatives in the city.

Questions?

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What is Placemaking?

In short, placemaking brings a neighbourhood to life by turning everyday spaces into destinations and gathering places. You don't need to worry if you're new to placemaking. It's something that happens regularly, whether you go about it intentionally or not. Chatting with neighbours, building a community garden and hanging out at a park all contribute to placemaking.

Project for Public Spaces, a world-leader in placemaking, describes the qualities of successful places in its thought-provoking placemaking resource section at <https://www.pps.org/category/placemaking>. They offer principles like “lighter, quicker, cheaper” and giving people at least ten reasons to visit a place. To them, placemaking is a community-driven process that “capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, and it results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and well-being.” In other words, it's your ideas and presence that make a great place (Project for Public Places, 2009. Learn more at <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>).

Placemaking projects can help you change the way you feel about the places in your neighbourhood. You're encouraged to think of ideas that reimagine every day public spaces and propose temporary activities that are creative and experimental. Ideas may be whimsical and fun or address larger, more serious issues. Need some ideas to get you started? See **Tool A – List of Placemaking Resources & Ideas**.

How is placemaking different than hosting a community event?

Placemaking interacts with the unique geography, culture, physical features, and / or heritage of a specific place. An event might be a type of placemaking if it encourages attendees to notice the place around them and think about its potential for more public use in the future. The best placemaking projects don't require an event of any kind at all, because people will want to spend time there year-round, no matter what is happening.

Why Placemaking?

Through placemaking, you may experience:

- Increased knowledge of your community
- Places that respond to the needs of you and your neighbours
- Opportunities to get to know people in your community
- Feeling welcomed and comfortable
- A sense of ownership and pride
- A new perspective
- How your actions make a difference in your city

Who can participate in Placemaking?

Anyone can get involved in a placemaking project in the area where they live, work, learn or play. Everyone is encouraged to seek support and participation from the broader neighbourhood or community currently using the area and / or those you hope will use the area in the future. Community partners may also provide valuable ideas, experience, support, and resources.

The City might have a role in your placemaking project. If you are using City owned land (parks, laneways, boulevards, etc) you will need to get permission to do your placemaking project. Email Sarah.Ehmke@hamilton.ca with your placemaking questions.

Where can Placemaking occur?

Placemaking can happen in any space that is accessible or visible to the public including:

- City-Owned – Any space accessible to the general public that is owned or managed by the City of Hamilton including but not limited to parks, road allowances, tunnels, boulevards, streets, courtyards, etc.

- Privately Owned and Publicly Accessible – Any outdoor space accessible to the general public that is private property such as courtyards, entrance plazas, lanes, etc.
- Privately Owned Visible to the Public – Public property and features such as building facades, retaining walls and fences that are visible from a public place and contribute to the character of the adjacent public space.

It's up to you to propose a site and obtain appropriate approvals from the owner whether publicly or privately owned.

Placemaking during COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, safety must be the first priority when planning and implementing any placemaking project. Please consult current safety regulations before starting your project and be ready to adjust as needed when regulations change.

- COVID-19 Hamilton's workplaces and public spaces: <https://www.hamilton.ca/coronavirus/workplaces-and-public-places>
- Reopening Ontario Act: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/20r17>
- City of Hamilton's [Event Planning webpage](#) for resources and information including the City's [Events on Public Property Re-Opening Guidelines](#) and [Guidance for Hosting Gatherings and Events](#).

Public Health asks that each organization prepare a Safety Plan for COVID-19.

Templates are available at:

- <https://www.ontario.ca/page/develop-your-covid-19-workplace-safety-plan>
- <https://www.hamilton.ca/sites/default/files/media/browser/2020-12-04/covid-19-response-plan-template.pdf>

Staff will work with applicants to ensure that any project that receives funding can meet COVID-19 regulations and that projects have the flexibility to change and adapt to this situation as it evolves.

Six principles for Placemaking

Recognizing that each area is unique, these 6 principles are provided to help establish some common ground for all placemaking projects to incorporate and work towards. Placemaking can help you build a stronger neighbourhood that is more accessible, connected, inclusive, diverse and engaged. Placemaking is:

Asset-Based: This means you focus on the assets that are already found in your community and you mobilize your neighbours and community partners to come together and build on those strengths. Assets are both things (material objects) and people (skills, knowledge, experience). Examples may include physical elements such as buildings, parks, social connections such as personal relationships with your neighbours, or people's skills such as leadership. Strengths and successes in your neighbourhood can be used as a starting point for change.

Place-Based: This means you will get to know your neighbourhood spaces. You'll create a destination or a gathering place that is specific and incorporates unique traits (the physical features of the space, the culture, the people who live / work near by, the history, etc.). Projects may include a combination of temporary physical interventions (e.g. seating or signage), and social interactions (e.g. gatherings or events).

Resident Lead: You're the expert in your neighbourhood. You'll help to identify the collective needs, aspirations and visions for the spaces in your community. You or a group of your neighbours may take the lead, but you're strongly encouraged to provide opportunities for all neighbours to participate. Community partners may be able to help with ideas, planning or financial support.

About Creating a 'Place' with Simple, Short-Term Actions: Creating a great place doesn't need to be complex. Spaces should welcome all people and provide a range of reasons for you to spend time in your neighbourhood place. Think about different uses, activities, events and programs. You'll also want to think about creating a place that is

accessible and inclusive. Start with some simple, short-term actions to test what attracts your neighbours to a space like seating or murals.

Layered: Neighbourhood places can have different layers. The spaces themselves may be big or small or provide a few or many things to do. The key is to ensure there are multiple things to attract you and provide a reason for you to stay and interact with your neighbours. Experience in other cities suggests that groupings of three, also known as triangulating, can help create a great place. For example, placing a bench and garbage bin beneath a tree and beside a community garden may encourage gardeners and those passing by to take a break from the beating sun to chat.

An Ongoing Journey: One good idea often leads to another! Amenities wear out. Needs, aspirations and visions may change. Be open and flexible to this change. This is essential if you are going to receive a placemaking grant from the City of Hamilton as all projects are temporary!

Four steps to Placemaking

There are many ways to turn a space into a great “place”. The following steps are provided as general guidance to do just that. They are broad and flexible in an effort to provide guidance for any type of idea. The steps do not necessarily have to be completed in order.

- 1) Find a space
 - If you don't have a space in mind already, become familiar with the spaces in your community.
 - Find out who uses the space. Connect with the neighbourhood association, BIA or community groups that are active in that space.

- Find out who owns the property. If it's not clear, check with City staff. Please note: Where lands are held under private ownership, the City may not be able to release personal information about the owner.
- Seek permission from the land owner to use the space for placemaking.

Remember: Additional approvals from the land owner or the City may be required once the specific details of the placemaking initiative are known.

2) Generate ideas for the space

- Consider the current and desired function of the space.
 - What is it currently used for? What do residents want it to be used for?
 - What's there now? What's happening now?
 - What works well? And what doesn't?
 - Who uses it? And who doesn't?
 - What could it look like in 5 years? What do you want it to look like?
- Placemaking projects are better when more people are involved. Fine out what people in your neighbourhood think.
 - Think about the diversity of your neighbourhood and make sure everyone's voice is heard. Check out **Tool C – Valuing Inclusion and Diversity in the Neighbourhood** for tips on how to involve everyone in your neighbourhood.
 - Ask your neighbours for their input and how they want to be involved.
 - Talk to children, youth, adults and older adults in your neighbourhood.
 - Seek input from your neighbours who may have disabilities.
 - Reach out to your neighbours who are new to your neighbourhood and who have been long-time residents of your neighbourhood.
 - Include your neighbours who you have not met or don't normally get a chance to connect with.
 - Encourage your neighbours to help spread the word about your placemaking idea.
 - Don't forget to ask the property owner what they think too!

- Identify your neighbourhood's needs, aspirations and visions for the space.
 - Be open to different peoples' needs in your neighbourhood.
 - Acknowledge that there may be multiple ideas for the same space.
- Check in with City staff before moving on to the next steps, so they can:
 - Flag any by-laws, restrictions, or planned construction that may impact your ability to make your idea happen.
 - Let you know if any approvals are required.
 - Share other ideas that are being implemented by other neighbours in the area or by the City.
 - Connect you with people who can help – neighbourhood associations, community partners or other City staff.
- Research interesting ideas from Hamilton and other cities.
 - Need some help? See **Tool A – List of Placemaking Resources & Ideas.**
- Choose the idea(s). Prioritize each idea. What should happen first? When should it happen?

3) Make it happen

- Create a description of your placemaking idea to share with others.
 - This could include a simple sketch, drawing or picture to show what is planned.
- Identify the steps required to make the idea(s) happen. See **Tool D – Planning and Maintaining your Placemaking project**
- Determine how much it will cost. Expenses may include park rental fees, insurance, project materials, artist fees, etc.
- Seek funding sources.
 - Check out the City's Placemaking Grant Pilot Program at www.hamilton.ca/PlacemakingGrant.
- Obtain approvals from the land owner and / or the City.

- For park rental and events on City property information, visit:
<https://www.hamilton.ca/attractions/festivals-events/event-planning-information>
- City of Hamilton's [Decorative Crosswalk Guideline](#)
- Make a list of things to do to complete your idea.
- Bring your idea to life!

4) Use the neighbourhood place

- Tell your neighbours about the place.
- Visit it often.
- Keep it maintained and looking good.
 - If you are applying to the Placemaking Grant Pilot Program, include maintenance costs in your budget proposal.
- Host gatherings and events (when it is safe to do so).
- Share stories.
- Keep it animated.
- Think about the future of the place.

Tools to help you

Sometimes it helps to see what other people have come up with to get the creative juices flowing. We've collected a number of resources and tools to help you brainstorm ideas and involve your neighbours.

Tool A – List of Placemaking Resources & Ideas

Tool B – List of Potential Community Partners

Tool C – Valuing Inclusion and Diversity in the Neighbourhood

Tool D – Planning and Maintaining your Placemaking project

Tool A – List of Placemaking Resources & Ideas

Local Placemaking Examples:

- James Street North Art Crawl
- Hamilton Wayfinding by Hamilton Spin (directional signs at SoBi stations)
- Painted crosswalks
- Interventions as part of 100 in 1 Days
- Business Out of the Box on Barton Street by the YWCA
- Woodland Park legal graffiti wall
- Carter Park mural
- Roxborough Avenue street hockey
- Pop up park at John and Rebecca
- Pipeline Trail - pollinator gardens, Pipeline Trail Parade and Geraldine Copps Parkette
- Bike repair stations
- Little Libraries
- McQuesten Urban Farm
- City Hall Forecourt – Hamilton sign, Ralph the Dog, temporary seating
- Matilda Street natural playground in downtown Dundas

More Ideas

We're open to your creative ideas! You know your neighbourhood best and how people would like to interact with the places within it. We've come up with a starting list of ideas just to get you thinking:

- Community-made identifying or wayfinding signs along trails or on street light poles
- Physical art or sculptures
- Murals
- Unique features at bus stops

- Naturalizing an area: bird houses, butterfly gardens, panels for learning about the natural environment
- Turn a parking lot into a beach
- Outdoor reading room, complete with a little library, seating, carpet
- Lifesize games
- Benches, hammocks, umbrellas, etc.
- Chalk designs on sidewalks or streets
- Host improv acting classes
- “Yarn-bombing” or costuming benches, fences, posts, etc.
- Movable planters to beautify a space or mark it differently
- Historic interpretation panels or re-enactments of what the site may have looked like in the past
- A dance party, complete with a dance floor, jukebox and maybe even some instructors
- Set up love letter writing stations – addressed to all the great places in your neighbourhood!

More Reading

Project for Public Spaces <https://www.pps.org/>

City of Kitchener <https://www.lovelyhood.ca/en/cool-ideas/ideas-and-inspiration.aspx>

The National Endowment for the Arts’ “How to do Creative Placemaking”

https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/How-to-do-Creative-Placemaking_Jan2017.pdf

Design for reconciliation: The Indigenous Place Making Council reclaims public space for First Nations <https://spacing.ca/toronto/2017/07/13/design-reconciliation-indigenous-place-making-council-reclaims-public-space-first-nations/>

Equitable Development During & After COVID-19: Five Takeaways

<https://www.pps.org/article/equitable-development-during-and-after-covid-19-five-takeaways>

Placemaking When Black Lives Matter <https://www.pps.org/article/placemaking-black-lives-matter>

Creative Placemaking <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/CreativePlacemaking-Paper.pdf>

Tool B – List of Potential Community Partners

- Cultural groups
- Neighbourhood associations
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Co-operatives – housing, grocery, agriculture, artists, etc.
- BIAs
- Libraries
- Local businesses
- School boards & local schools
- Service clubs
- Faith-based groups
- Foundations (e.g. charitable foundations)
- Social media networks
- Social service agencies
- And many more!

Tool C – Valuing Inclusion and Diversity in the Neighbourhood

The following tool provides tips and suggestions for being inclusive in your neighbourhood. The tips encourage you to think about the different types of people who live in your neighbourhood – youth, people with disabilities, seniors and people of diverse cultural backgrounds.

The tips were excerpted and adapted from the Neighbourhood Activity Guide produced by Kitchener’s Festival of Neighbourhoods and from the Community Engaged Education Toolkit from McMaster University’s Office of Community Engagement.

Respectful Relationships

We can’t have a community without relationships - these are the connections that build community. Any successful partnership must be built on trusting and respectful relationships guided by integrity.

Reciprocity

From design to participation, to the outcomes of a project, we strive to work together for mutual benefit. Striving for reciprocity within your partnerships entails respecting that all partners bring valuable knowledge, skills, experiences, and resources to any partnership. Inviting everyone in your neighbourhood helps to ensure that everyone feels truly welcome and involved and builds a stronger community.

Equity

We are conscious of the historical and structural inequities that exist in society and strive to provide access and opportunities to all residents and members of our communities. Equity entails striving to reduce barriers of participation as much as possible.

Continuity

Acknowledging that different communities work on different timelines and schedules, we strive to consider both the short and long-term implications of our work.

Reaching Out to People with Disabilities

Consider accessibility to make it easier for people with disabilities to participate. For example, is the information about the event being distributed in large font or alternative formats, upon request, for people with visual disabilities or for people with different reading skills? Is the location of your gathering barrier free? If the event is outdoors, is the ground level enough for people with physical disabilities to access?

Reaching Out to Seniors

Consider ways to include seniors and support senior participation in neighbourhood events. Seniors might have mobility or other barriers to participating. Be attentive to their needs, offer them a chair if they want to sit, bring the food or the activity to them, or simply ask if there is anything that they need.

Reaching Out to People of Diverse Cultural Backgrounds

Be sure to include neighbours who may not share your language or cultural background. Can you reach out to someone in the neighbourhood to help you with translations? You might want to encourage your neighbours to share their culture through the neighbourhood activity being organized.

Openness to Learning

Change takes time. We are committed to continually learn from and evaluate our work, reflecting on and sharing both our successes and failures to grow as individuals, partners, and communities.

Commitment to Act

We aspire to make a positive difference in our community by sharing and acting on our knowledge to contribute to the greater social good.

Tool D – Planning and Maintaining your Placemaking project

Since the final product is in a public place, it will begin to deteriorate after its installation. Depending on the timeline of your project, you may need to develop a maintenance plan. If you are applying for funding from the Placemaking Grant Pilot Program, make sure to include these expenses in your budget.

Project organizers should decide:

- Does our project have elements that will need constant maintenance or replacing? Are there pieces that could be removed and go missing?
- Are we trying to keep plants alive? Who will water and maintain the plants?
- Is our project made from material that can survive the elements? Will rain wash it away? Is it attached securely to endure high winds?
- Who will be maintaining the work (including graffiti removal and any other vandalism)?
- Is the project built for being in a public space without being watched? Can people climb on it? Will it break? Are there sharp edges that would hurt a child?
- Is someone prepared to set up and tear down the project on a regular basis if it can't be safely installed for long periods of time?
- Who from your team will check in on the project? How often?
- What condition will trigger maintenance?
- Who is responsible for removing the work at the end of your project period?
- Have we budgeted enough money for maintenance materials and services?

Once these questions have been answered, it can be helpful to have a form to record its condition. Sourced from Mural Production: A Resource Handbook.