

Placemaking

SUMMARY

This Community Transformation Strategy focuses on developing an inclusive environment that in return brings people together. When utilizing this strategy, consider how your built environment can contribute or be enhanced to attract and to engage visitors and residents alike. While Placemaking is an exciting strategy around which the community can rally, consider how new initiatives will work in tandem with existing events and programs to support and to elevate the visibility of local businesses. This strategy at its most successful level works to activate underutilized spaces and buildings to create a thriving downtown district.

KEY DESCRIPTORS

Active environment, participation, engagement, identifying needs, visibility, vibrancy, infill construction, space activation and utilization, creativity, arts, tactical urbanism, health, happiness, well-being, family, community, greenspace, programming, events, people, excitement, fun and unique.



Cultures and climates differ all over the world, but people are the same. They'll gather in public if you give them a good place to do it."

—Jan Gehl

PROS

This strategy activates underutilized spaces.

This strategy can drive tourism.

Placemaking creates excitement.

Placemaking sets your downtown apart.

Placemaking can help to create or solidify your identity.

This strategy is a great way to test ideas or concepts.

CONS

Taste is subjective.

Placemaking can be viewed as frivolous.

Placemaking can seem sporadic and unfocused.

Placemaking can seem to be a standalone strategy that does not contribute to the overall downtown environment.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

This strategy doesn't have to be permanent.

Placemaking can be high impact and low cost.

You need to know your audience.

This strategy requires public buy-in to be effective.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

What outcome(s) are you trying to achieve?

What support is there for this strategy?

How does it fit in to your downtown master plan and future vision for the district?

How will this contribute to other attractions and economic drivers?

Monroe, ExploreGeorgia.org



FOUR-POINT APPROACH ACTIVITIES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Encourage pop-up shops to activate vacant storefronts and to encourage new potential entrepreneurs to locate downtown.
- Encourage the development of businesses that can support your downtown's existing attributes. Examples include bike shops along a trail system or sporting goods stores along the river.
- Encourage an "experience economy" in which businesses sell not only goods and products, but also an experience.
- Develop a local artist database to connect local business owners with creative people for when projects arise.
- Offer incentives to drive the development of particular niche businesses based on market research, existing economic drivers or natural resources.
- Offer a creative marketing workshop for existing businesses to educate them on alternative means to reach their target audience(s).

DESIGN

- Encourage temporary art installations to activate public spaces and to bring new life to vacant storefronts.
- Re-purpose under-utilized fixtures and spaces for art and interaction.
- Develop "third places" in which people can sit, stay and hangout. Third places are the social surroundings separate from the two usual social environments of home ("first place") and the workplace ("second place"). Examples of third places would be environments such as churches, cafes, clubs, public libraries and parks.
- Create a permanent sculpture garden.
- Develop unique wayfinding signage that is brand specific to your downtown.
- Enhance light fixtures, or crosswalks to act as public art.
- Reactivate alleyways so that they may serve as additional means of egress for downtown businesses and access to alternative parking lots.

PROMOTIONS

- Create "selfie" spots utilizing a downtown specific hashtag or ZIP code.
- Build a website that highlights retail, restaurants and downtown experiences.
- Work with partners to develop an online community calendar.
- Create a downtown discovery map or scavenger hunt that highlights architectural features, murals, found art or community specific amenities.
- Develop a unifying brand for downtown. This should include but not be limited to a logo, a catch phrase, a color palette, a website, social media platforms and signage.
- Create programing around what makes your community unique and consider arts beyond painting and sculpture. Think music, performing arts, history, film, sports, etc.
- Develop quick and simple programming to activate spaces, e.g. corn hole, beach balls, chalk and hopscotch.

ORGANIZATION

- Engage local artists through Main Street standing committees and the board of directors.
- Adopt a mural ordinance.
- Adopt event ordinances to encourage partners outside of Main Street to host events downtown.
- Adopt alcohol ordinances to support open container districts downtown or to allow alcohol to be served at events hosted by Main Street.
- Create an ambassador program to serve as your downtown greeters.
- Develop a young artist program in conjunction with the schools or local cultural arts centers to showcase the art of students downtown.
- Work with the Georgia Department of Economic Development to host a Tourism Product Development Team.
- Adopt an overlay district to support an arts and entertainment district.
- Install "little libraries" or "little food pantries" to serve the community.

PARTNERS

- Local arts alliance or artists guild
- Georgia Council for the Arts
- Community foundations
- Educational institutions
- National Consortium for Creative Placemaking
- Local convention and visitors bureau
- Georgia Department of Economic Development
- Georgia Cities Foundation
- Georgia Placemaking Collaborative
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Project for Public Spaces
- Local association of real estate professionals