

Creative placemaking: Integrating community, cultural and economic development

*A white paper for leaders, researchers, instructors and practitioners
to help build the field of creative placemaking*

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Because the Arts Build Communities

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Introduction

The purpose of this white paper is to further define the new field of creative placemaking by describing how it promotes sustainable outcomes in communities. This paper expands on such foundational works as [Creative Placemaking](#), by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa, which coined the term for the field, and Tom Borrup's *The Creative Community Builder's Handbook*.

In their widely-cited definition of creative placemaking, Markusen and Gadwa say:

“In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.”¹

This work and others explain the benefits of creative placemaking: for economic development, they include more jobs and more wealth (by attracting visitors and businesses and keeping more money in the community) and higher property values; for community development, they include more productive civic engagement, bridging cultural divides, and helping youth be better prepared for their futures. *The Creative Community Builder's Handbook* also contains steps for creative placemaking and producing sustainable impacts. This white paper provides a theory about why and how communities are impacted by creative placemaking processes.

Creative placemaking: Integrating community, cultural and economic development addresses a number of beliefs and cultural practices within communities that we believe hinder effective creative placemaking. Since 2006, the staff of Arts Build Communities has been studying the elements of creative placemaking. In addition to research on arts-based community and economic development throughout the United States, we interviewed dozens of elected officials, artists, cultural professionals, urban planners and other

¹ Gadwa, Anne and Markusen, Ann., *Creative Placemaking*, National Endowment for the Arts, 2010. Page 3.

public affairs professionals. We have also worked with several New Jersey communities through our community coaching program, and listened to the concerns, complaints and questions of those who want to do creative placemaking in their towns. Throughout, we came back to the same question: “Why are some communities so much more successful at creative placemaking than others?”

Arts Build Communities discovered that there are certain beliefs and practices of some community leaders (i.e., anyone who influences change in their community – be it artistic or civic) that hinder the effectiveness or momentum of creative placemaking.

These include:

- **A belief that “if you build it, they will come.”** This belief leads to an overreliance on focusing time and resources on creating large cultural institutions or designating “cultural districts” to be catalysts for creative placemaking throughout the community. These approaches may have very low or negative returns on investment for the community, and may divert resources that could have more widespread impact at less cost.
- **A belief that government need not be involved in creative placemaking because “the arts will happen organically.”** This belief leads to at best a benign neglect of the arts, which can contribute to a feeling among artists that they and their work are not valued. We believe that while creative placemaking should be organic, it is not often random.
- **Cynicism among creative sector professionals about their ability to influence public debate.** This belief tends to lead to apathy among artists, as well as silo formation, as artists engage only those who share their beliefs.
- **Concern that artists will create unwanted change in a community.** This concern, if left unaddressed, can lead to thickly structured narratives about the loss of a community’s

desired character.

- **Community practices and regulation that focus on preserving order, thus making the community less welcoming to arts and artists.** Zoning regulations, design guidelines, strict codes on the uses of public and private space – common in suburban communities – are examples of ways communities try to preserve order against unwanted change. Too many constraints can send a message to creative people that they are unwelcome.
- **A lack of awareness or concern about the negative effects arts-based economic development can have on disadvantaged communities.** Many placemaking professionals know the stories about gentrification caused after artists move to an area. (In fact, using arts and artists to revitalize low-income neighborhoods is a common practice in local economic development.) Less well-known is that the benefits of arts-based economic development can and do elude people who do not have good access to creative sector labor markets, or work in businesses that directly benefit from the arts. Richard Florida raised this issue in 2002 in *The Rise of the Creative Class*: “While the Creative Class favors openness and diversity, to some degree it is a diversity of elites, limited to highly educated, creative people... My own research shows a negative statistical correlation between concentrations of high-tech firms in a region and nonwhites as a percentage of the population, which is particularly disturbing in light of my other findings on the positive relationship between high-tech and other kinds of diversity – from foreign born people to gays.”²

A decade later, there is still surprisingly little analysis about how to ensure that arts-based economic development directly benefits low-income people in disadvantaged communities.

² Pp. 79-80

- **A lack of awareness among civic leaders and government officials about how the arts can impact positive outcomes at the local level.** National and state arts advocacy organizations do an excellent job of quantifying the large-scale benefits of the arts to society. But generally, the statistics and stories presented do little to answer the question of what benefits the arts can bring at the town or neighborhood level.

Creative placemaking: the intersection of community, cultural and economic development

While there is growing interest in creative placemaking, decision-makers and their advisers too often understand it only by its outputs. In other words, they might understand creative placemaking as “building a performing arts center,” “creating a cultural district” or “doing public art.” But the strength of creative placemaking as a vehicle for sustainable community, cultural and economic development is due largely to the processes that lead to the outcomes.

The value of creative placemaking is as much in the doing as in what is done. Our intent is to help creative placemaking professionals, funders and policymakers to make better decisions, to provide researchers with a more developed framework for pursuing their research agendas, and to help instructors and leaders develop more capable creative placemakers.

Creative placemaking describes a diverse array of strategies and processes designed to improve quality of life in a community through and with the arts. It combines the goals and methods of community development, cultural development and economic development with a place-based and asset-based orientation. In other words, creative placemaking:

- **Works to make places better meet the social and human needs of its stakeholders.** This includes such goals as increasing pride and stewardship in a community, building bridges across conflicting groups, enhancing the ability of

young people to handle difficult problems, and providing opportunities for all members of society to express themselves in positive ways.

- **Works to improve the standard of living for all members of the community.** This includes such goals as generating employment opportunities for residents, enhancing the climate for local entrepreneurship, and building resources within a community to sustain the multiple goals of creative placemaking.
- **Works to build and sustain environments in which the arts – and by extension, creativity – can flourish.** This includes such goals as generating and maintaining spaces for creative expression, increasing opportunities for artists and arts organizations to prosper, and increasing (or sustaining) the value of arts and creativity to communities and their leaders.
- **Is asset-based.** Traditional approaches to [placemaking](#) through the arts focus on what a community is lacking in terms of arts and cultural spaces. This is reflected in common phrases like “bringing the arts to _____” or the over-reliance on new cultural institutions or cultural districts to jumpstart creative placemaking. Asset-based approaches focus on activating the creative potential in communities and elevating creative outputs to further other placemaking goals.
- **Is place-based, rather than space-based.** Spaces are geographically-designated areas. Places are made up of physical *and psychological* connections among people and their environment. Objects alone do not make a place. It is how people feel about and respond to the elements in their environment, as well as other people who share their space, that help determine what a place is. Traditional approaches to placemaking through the arts are guided by physical

determinism (the “build it and they will come” theory of placemaking). This leads decision-makers to concentrate resources on physical development in small spaces – such as building a performing arts center or creating a “cultural district. While these efforts have helped the artists and arts organizations inside these areas, it is unclear if they have widespread positive social and economic impacts in communities. (In some cases, such as with Lincoln Center in New York City, this approach replaced an existing working-class community with an arts center meant for the wealthy – a demolition and rebuilding of both space and place.)

The last two elements distinguish creative placemaking in the 21st century from its early incarnations, such as the Municipal Art movement of the 19th century and the City Beautiful movement of the early 20th century.

As with community and economic development, creative placemaking is more about intent than action. Public art, cultural districts and performing arts centers are not the outcomes of creative placemaking – they are strategies. The success of these strategies depends on their ability to improve quality of life, improve standards of living and enhance the environment for cultural expression throughout a place.

Creative placemaking and its elements



The value of creative placemaking

Creative placemaking is an intentional process to do what has been done for thousands of years without, or in spite of, the intervention of authorities: promote creative expression and build communities.

Skeptics could argue that because creative expression happens organically, creative placemaking should by extension happen without intervention. Why should a community and its leaders engage in creative placemaking?

- Creative placemaking, like all forms of planning, is designed to reduce risks and costs. **It is possible that the goals of creative placemaking can happen without intervention, but the desired results are more likely if there is a shared will among stakeholders to guide market activity, minimize negative impacts, and address unintended consequences as they arise.** As more communities engage in creative placemaking, competition for funders, consumers and artists will grow. This will make it even less likely that a community can succeed solely through serendipity.
- **Creative placemaking can help community leaders better adapt to change, and make their communities more sustainable.** As Jared Diamond has shown in *Collapse*, and organizational change theorists have shown through their research, groups tend to flail and fail when they continue to approach new problems with the same strategies. The psychological element that helps individuals create order out of chaos also tends to guide individuals to engage in consistent behavior and to rationalize that behavior even as conditions change. Those who are less tolerant of risk and those who benefit from existing conditions tend to build and institutionalize processes that marginalize new ideas and innovative actions. Creativity challenges these processes -- which is why creativity is inherently disorderly and why creative people are sometimes seen as deviant or threatening to established cultures. To accept creative people as full partners, communities and leaders must be open to new ways of seeing their environments. With awareness and a questioning of assumptions and internalization of new beliefs come actions that facilitate the development of new ideas, and accept the people who bring them.
- The arts support individual needs for self-actualization, a critical element of [sustainable placemaking](#). **Creative placemaking strives to balance two conflicting needs of individuals in society – self-actualization and safety.** Self-actualization is the individual's desire for independence

and self-determination. Self-actualization is manifested through, among other activities, creative expression. Safety is manifested in society through the preservation of order. This is done by communities through such actions as social rituals, the preservation and restriction of privileges, regulatory restrictions on the uses of public space (i.e. zoning, design regulations) and urban design that reduces opportunities for unauthorized activities. The ‘brain drain’ that has happened to so many communities – from medieval villages to today’s small towns – reflects how creative people resolve this conflict: by voting with their feet.

- **The arts can provide among the greatest returns on investment for the goals of both community and economic development.** There are many strategies that can have a bigger immediate impact on community development goals, such as building affordable housing and parks and improving schools. In economic development practice, attracting a large employer would have a bigger immediate impact than many arts initiatives. But as communities such as Madrid, New Mexico and Frenchtown, New Jersey have shown, very little start-up capital, and little space, is needed to engage in creative placemaking. With the exception of building large cultural centers, many creative placemaking strategies involve adding some inexpensive programming, or reducing barriers to creative expression.

Though individual arts organizations and artists may not bring the same gross revenue to a community as a biotech facility, collectively they can make significant contributions to local economies. As Markusen says works such as *The Artistic Dividend*, creative professionals are both producers and consumers of a type of product that increases the more it is consumed. (Consider this scenario: A painter produces a painting. It is bought by a musician, who is inspired by it to compose more music. The music is enjoyed by a playwright, who is inspired to develop a play around it. The play is seen by the painter, musician, and many other creative people – some of whom are affected by it in ways

that are unquantifiable.)

Through tax breaks and other types of assistance, states and local communities spend or forego large amounts of dollars to attract and retain businesses. This can be risky because most businesses are mobile. Only a few industries are distinctly place-based. They include those involved in the extraction of natural resources (e.g. manufacturing, forestry, agriculture); those in shipping and to a lesser extent, freight hauling (which rely on natural geographic features or expensive manmade transportation networks); businesses oriented to the service economy (which tend to follow population trends); and the [experience economy](#). Of these, the experience economy is the only one that does not depend on pre-existing geography or large concentrations of people in a small service area. (Cultural tourism brings people to the experience, so small cities like Austin, Texas; Santa Fe, New Mexico and Asheville, North Carolina can get relatively high inflows of private-sector dollars.)

It is important to note that in most communities in the United States, the creative economy is unlikely to directly generate more than a small percentage of jobs. But as Richard Florida has shown in works such as *The Rise of the Creative Class*, the arts – like roads – can be an important infrastructure to attract a wide variety of businesses. These include restaurants seeking to serve arts patrons and cultural tourists, office supply retailers serving the needs of creative professionals, and biotechnology firms whose highly valuable and in-demand employees prefer to be in environments with a wide variety of cultural activities.

The variety of social benefits of the arts has been well-documented by established researchers working with such organizations as the National Endowment for the Arts and the University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact of the Arts initiative. Their studies show that communities with more access to cultural activities tend to sustain higher property

values, have more people involved in civic activities, and have a higher percentage of students that do well in school.

Achieving the community development benefits of creative placemaking is often a matter of integrating creative activity into existing community development programming, or adding a community development extension to an arts project. Project Row Houses started as an art project using vacant properties in the depressed Third Ward of Houston. Due largely to its leadership, Project Row Houses evolved into a community development program that included services to women and children and community-based planning.

- **Creative placemaking enhances the creative economy, which provides more entryways to prosperity for individuals and communities.** For most of the 20th century in the United States, there were more pathways to middle-class status for more people. Adults could pursue careers in manufacturing, transportation and other fields that did not require college degrees to be successful. With more hands needed to do work, from typing letters to moving crates, there were more opportunities for people with otherwise limited means, connections or education to have financially stable lives. Over the past 40 years, several factors reduced the number of opportunities for economically disadvantaged United States residents. Information technology and automation reduced the number of people needed to do tasks. Also because of technology, some jobs that had required little initial levels skill or education now demand high degrees of them for a person to be immediately productive. Globalization made it easier for companies to outsource – that is, move operations such as manufacturing and customer service to countries with much lower labor costs than in the United States. The professionalization of many disciplines promoted a class system in knowledge economy organizations – i.e., opportunities for entry and advancement went to those with significant education in the particular discipline. Even the retail sector as an entryway

is in danger of shrinking as more consumers purchase products online.

The loss of industrial anchors caused a ripple effect of closed or relocated businesses throughout the United States. The knowledge and service economies created more businesses and jobs, which tended to follow people out to the suburbs. Public transportation networks are designed primarily to get people to centralized places in urban areas. Low-income and inner-city residents without access to reliable cars have trouble accessing these new opportunities, regardless of their education.

Trying to restore old jobs to old locations would be both costly and risky to local communities. In the case of older industrial facilities, the amount of land and property needed may not be available without expensive clean-up or redevelopment of the land and neighboring properties.

Creative placemaking addresses all of these issues in several ways. With the exception of large performing arts spaces, very little space has to be created or reallocated for creative uses. In most cases, creative activities can reuse space at little direct cost to communities. There are no educational requirements to be a producer of creative products. The manufacturing of creative products, which can be done in small facilities, does not often require higher education. While creativity and technical skill are barriers for designing creative products, much of the work of transporting and managing creative products, as well as supporting the operations of creative economy enterprises, can be done without a great deal of these skills. Many creative activities tend to be more labor-intensive than capital-intensive, so the financial barriers to entry are lower than for other types of industry.

- **Creative placemaking can elevate the status of arts and artists in a society.** Businesses and businesspeople have had a privileged place in American society since the founding

of the United States. There are many government policies and practices that subsidize the operating costs of businesses, from tax credits to the capacity building, research and marketing supports provided by publicly-funded economic development agencies. Chambers of commerce and other merchants' associations are among the most influential groups in their communities. Government infrastructure projects, from the Erie Canal to downtown street-scaping, are often promoted as much for their value to the business sector as to society as a whole.

Professional artists are businesspeople. They demand the same things as all other businesses – ready access to consumers, suppliers and resources; a healthy, affordable climate for developing their goods and services; and connections to a supportive community of peers, other businesspeople and leaders.

Too often, “the arts” and by extension, creative professionals, are not seen this way by other businesspeople, local leaders, and the people who influence them. For example, politically conservative activists and elected officials routinely call for reduced funding for agencies such as the National Endowment for the Arts (or their state-level equivalents), yet there are often no parallel calls for de-funding of the Commerce Department or state economic development agencies.

By demonstrating that the arts bring the same (or in some cases more) net economic value to communities, and that creative professionals have the same concerns and interests of many other businesspeople, creative placemaking can help to elevate the stature of both the producers and products of the creative economy.

How creative placemaking leads to sustainable results for community, cultural and economic development

Creative placemaking can work best to sustain impacts when it is a transformative process designed to influence awareness, beliefs and actions. The following lists the many ways this can happen:

Awareness

- Helping leaders and stakeholders become more aware of how creative placemaking can occur with little capital investment can help them see new opportunities for their communities.
- Increasing the visibility of creativity and creative sector professionals in a community can help leaders and stakeholders – and even other creative sector members – recognize that a significant creative element exists within the community.
- Describing the benefits of creative placemaking can increase its value among leaders and stakeholders.
- Analyzing assets and unmet demand for creative expression helps leaders and stakeholders recognize opportunities and constraints for creative placemaking.
- Promoting the act of creative placemaking increases awareness of the community by those who are active in the creative sector market: artists, businesses that benefit from the presence of artists, nonprofit organizations, funders of nonprofit organizations, and cultural visitors.
- Creating a diverse team of leaders representing different interest groups in the community can increase awareness of a creative placemaking process within the community.

Beliefs

- Becoming aware of the wide variety of ways communities can engage in creative placemaking can build the confidence of leaders who want to engage in these efforts. It can also challenge the assumptions that leaders and stakeholders

have about arts, artists and how places can nurture creativity.

- Bringing together creative sector professionals with other members of the larger community in safe and productive ways can reduce tensions and address stereotypes among members of competing groups.
- Promoting the successes of creative placemaking enhances the community's attractiveness within the creative economy and among those who profit from the creative economy. Market actors, especially those who are more risk averse, are more likely to invest their resources in the community because they see it as a safer location for their investment.
- Developing a diverse team of leaders to catalyze and steward creative placemaking builds confidence in the marketplace that the changes made through creative placemaking will be sustained.
- Addressing the concerns of the various leaders and stakeholders in the community can help leaders be more comfortable with the unpredictability of creative expression as unintended consequences arise.
- Promoting the successes and addressing productively any negative consequences of creative placemaking can help leaders be more comfortable with the challenges of leading diverse communities.
- Building a collective will for action and developing an internally supportive team to guide actions can help leaders and stakeholders become more patient and tolerant of errors and unanticipated consequences.

Actions

- Leaders and stakeholders who are more aware of the various ways they can nurture creativity in their communities have more confidence in creative placemaking processes; have greater trust in their counterparts from other groups; are more likely to take actions that lead to more support for the

arts; and help foster healthier climates for creative community building and creative economic development.

- Market actors who believe that creative placemaking efforts can succeed and will be sustained are more likely to invest their resources in the community, thus expediting and amplifying the benefits of creative placemaking.
- Positive actions – those that achieve expected results – reinforce beliefs and help to increase awareness about creative placemaking processes.
- Negative responses or unintended consequences to actions create opportunities for leaders to reflect on creative placemaking efforts and determine if changes need to be made to awareness, beliefs, or strategies. The effectiveness of negative responses or consequences to lead to positive change depends on the capacity of leaders and stakeholders to address changes in productive ways.

Characteristics of creative placemakers

Creative placemakers include everyone who is actively involved in creative placemaking, as defined above. To achieve their mission, creative placemakers:

- **Are collaborative.** Just as no single person can lead and manage all aspects of a society, creative placemaking by one person or one interest group is unsustainable. Collaboration should be shared among as many groups as possible within a community.
- **Are creative and compassionate creators.** Creative people can see opportunities and connections that others might not. Creators generate ideas that lead to new ways of thinking and doing. Creative placemakers are not mere facilitators or technicians; they are actively involved in creating from the beginning of the initiative. But because they are also collaborative, creative placemakers use compassion to

temper any desires to make their ideas rise above others.

- **Are culturally competent.** Creative placemakers recognize that artists, developers, and elected officials, as well as distinct communities, can have very diverse hierarchies of values and tolerances of risk. Effective creative placemakers understand and respect these differences, and engage in strategies that meet the diverse interests of stakeholders to build consensus for action.
- **Intend to guide, but not control, market activity.** No one can accurately predict the comprehensive array of transactions that is called “the market.” But all human activity is guided by awareness, intent, action, reflection and response. Through such activities as market analysis, thought leadership and place marketing, creative placemaking works to understand the values, interests and concerns of audiences, and address them in sustainable (i.e., ethical) ways.
- **Recognize that shaping awareness and beliefs is as critical to creative placemaking as shaping the built environment.** One of the reasons that the Municipal Art and City Beautiful movements could not achieve broad, sustainable results is that their members put too much emphasis on physical determinism – the theory that social behavior could be predicted and directed through changes in the built environment. A person’s willingness to risk time, energy, money and other resources depends on his or her values, beliefs, perceptions, tolerance of risk, and experiences. The physical environment is only one of several elements that impact a person’s willingness to engage in a place.
- **Value, and promote the value of, creative processes and creators.** Creative placemakers seek to produce sustainable and predictable outcomes through processes that have internal order and can be managed. Creativity is inherently

disorderly and unpredictable. Creative placemakers strive to balance idea generation with idea resolution, and seek to build the capacity of others to get more comfortable with the yin and yang of creative placemaking.

Elements in the creative placemaking process

Arts Build Communities does not believe that there is a useful algorithm to creative placemaking. There are too many factors that can affect the timing, momentum, public support and success of creative placemaking initiatives. However, we have identified six key elements that are likely to lead to more effective and efficient outcomes.

- The development of a network of community and cultural leaders who share interests in creative placemaking, and are willing to support one another's interests.
- A thoughtful understanding of the various types of assets for creative placemaking initiatives (e.g., artists, spaces for arts) as well as demands by arts patrons and arts producers.
- The development of a clear vision for creative placemaking outcomes. This helps to provide direction and focus for implementation.
- The provision of financial, in-kind and other types of support for the arts by local leaders and decision-makers.
- The development of an environment that promotes community development through the arts. (For example, providing space for more arts education in schools.)
- The development of a climate that promotes economic development through the arts. (For example, providing tax incentives for artists or arts-related activities.)

Key references

This concept paper is based on years of research in the area of creative placemaking, as well as reflections from experience with elected officials, cultural professionals, urban planners and others from dozens of communities in the United States.

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Appendices

5. How Arts Build Communities builds the field of creative placemaking
6. Principles of human needs placemaking
7. Principles of culturally competent planning and placemaking
8. The experience economy: concepts and implications for placemaking

Appendix 1: How Arts Build Communities builds the field of creative placemaking

Rutgers University’s Arts Build Communities serves creative sector professionals, elected officials, economic development professionals and placemaking professionals (urban planners and designers, architects and community development professionals) in several ways. These include capacity building, continuing education, practical research and thought leadership.

<i>Capacity building and continuing education</i>	<i>Practical research and thought leadership</i>
<p>Creative Placemaking Conference The CPL conference brings together creative sector professionals, elected officials, and placemaking professionals to explore ways to build, grow and sustain creative communities and economies.</p>	<p>New Jersey Creative Vitality Index The CVI is a series of reports exploring the economic health of the creative sector in New Jersey, as well as keys to success in creative placemaking .</p>
<p>Community Coaching Working with diverse teams that include elected officials and artists, ABC guides and supports community leaders as they work on cultural plans and address other community and economic development issues involving the arts. Leaders learn while doing, and build their capacity to move from idea to action.</p>	<p>Creative Placemaking Toolkit This is an online database that describes the wide variety of activities that can be done to build, grow and sustain creative communities and economies. The database covers more than two dozen strategies, from simple and easy (in-kind services), to complex and high-impact (arts-friendly land use regulations).</p>
<p>Creative Placemaking Leadership Program Planners, architects and public affairs professionals can build their technical and leadership skills in this 10-month Bloustein Professional Certificate program. This mostly online program is designed to build creative placemaking leaders. Program participants learn techniques and best practices for arts-based community and economic development while building their ability to influence communities, clients and colleagues.</p>	<p>ABC NJ-Art iFacts This blog explores connections between the arts and community and economic development in New Jersey, and offers advice for cultural and civic leaders.</p> <p>Sustainable Jersey ABC is actively involved in efforts to better connect the arts and sustainability. ABC is leading the arts task force of Sustainable Jersey and helping define actions municipalities can take to promote sustainability through the arts.</p>

Appendix 2: Principles of human needs placemaking

By Leonardo Vazquez, AICP/PP

From: *PDI Advisor*, April 22, 2010.

<http://rutgerspdi.blogspot.com/2010/04/principles-of-human-needs-placemaking.html>

Psychologists say humans have four sets of needs: To be safe and secure, be loved and feel connected to others, to express their power and individuality, and have access to sensually appealing environments. By focusing on these sets of needs in planning, design and development, we can help build places that are more equitable, efficient and sustainable.

This essay explains and connects the concepts of human needs and placemaking, then offers guidance for practitioners. It is meant to provide a framework for planning practice and a launch pad for more conversation.

The human needs framework can help us avoid spectacular failures (such as the promise of urban renewal to enhance low-income communities), get good ideas integrated into places more effectively, and help us better adapt to changing interests and demands in the communities we serve.

Human needs theories

No amount of urban planning and placemaking can meet all the needs of every individual at the same time. People are far too diverse and complex, and we all are limited in what we all can know. But we can strive to increase the number of opportunities for people to meet their needs and enhance the access to those opportunities.

We begin with psychological theories because ultimately it is individuals who decide whether to support, use and sustain placemaking efforts.

There are many theories of human motivation. Alfred Adler wrote that everyone has a 'will to power' – a desire to express their individuality (for example, through various types of art, career success, or leadership). Carl Rogers shared a similar view, and theorized that individuals are satisfied to the extent that what they experience is consistent with their desires for their protection and growth. Perhaps the most famous theory is the hierarchy of needs,

by Abraham Maslow. He initially created a five-tiered structure of needs, ranging from physiological needs (food, safety, etc.) to self-actualization (the desire to 'be all you can be.'). Later he added two more needs – the need to know and understand (which appear to be strategies toward self-actualization than separate needs). Maslow's concept of a hierarchy is controversial, and criticized as being too focused on a male Western-oriented viewpoint. (Gender researchers and those who study collectivist cultures argue that for many people, the need to maintain strong relationships with others is at least as important – if not more so – than standing out. However, the three dimensions of human needs have been widely shared among psychologists. In recent years, as a result of the growth of the environmental movement, some psychologists have added a fourth dimension of the need for appealing environments. Ecopsychologists have argued that humans feel happier and more satisfied when they feel connected to their natural environment.

The evidence for these theories can be found in societies around the world. The basic physiological needs are indisputable. The lack of food and shelter can lead to hunger, illnesses and death. Connecting products such as alcohol, cars, and clothing makes advertisers reach.

Self-actualization needs epitomized

Though it is difficult to measure self-actualization in individuals, there are many symptoms of its absence in society. Korean immigrants and their descendants in the United States are considered model minorities, with higher than average educational outcomes and business creation. [i] Korean immigrants also do quite well in China. But the experience of Koreans in Japan is far different. Denied full citizenship rights and opportunities as their Japanese neighbors, Koreans there had social and educational outcomes similar to African-Americans and Latinos in the United States. What makes the Japanese Korean experience more interesting for this discussion is that unlike African-Americans in the United States, most Koreans physically resemble their Japanese neighbors -- and like some Jewish-Americans in the early 20th century, some Koreans have changed their names to ones that fit more in their mainstream society. Pyong Gap Min, who studied the experiences of Koreans in Japan and China, argues that Koreans did better in the latter country because they could exercise their cultural beliefs and practices without the pressure of giving those up through assimilation, as in Japan. In other words, the ability of Koreans to self-actualize as a group empowers and enables them to succeed. [ii]

The connection between the arts and participation in civil society also shows the importance of self-actualization. Numerous studies show that where there is more activity in arts, there is more volunteering and participation in other community activities.[\[iii\]](#)

Relational needs epitomized

Robert Putnam's oft-cited book *Bowling Alone* stokes fears that Americans are becoming more isolated and less communal.[\[iv\]](#) Intuitively, it seems that the growing number of options for at-home entertainment (television, computers, recorded movies), and the growth of suburban and exurban communities would lead to a society of isolated families. But as William Whyte showed in *City: Rediscovering the Center*, people prefer to be around other people. In his observations, Whyte and his researchers found that when given a choice of sitting locations, most people will seat within a few feet of others. People also preferred to sit in moveable chairs rather than stationary benches, which is symbolic of a self-actualization need.[\[v\]](#) Though Whyte's research was primarily in New York City in the 1980's, the growth of cafes in the suburbs, and the revitalization of hundreds of aging downtowns in the face of increased competition from malls and big box stores strengthens Whyte's theories of an urban design that promotes close human interaction.

There are many other examples of the power of relational needs in society. Youth gangs and organizations that provide volunteer opportunities both offer their members ways to connect with others in affirming and esteem-building ways. Not surprisingly, both gang membership and volunteerism has been on the rise in the first decade of the 21st century.[\[vi\]](#)

Environmental needs epitomized

From an economic perspective, one of the best indicators of demand for a quality of life element is in property values. There is ample research showing that enhancing the environmental quality of a place increases property values. Looking at the literature in real estate journals, Laverne and Winson-Geiderman reported that having trees on a residential property can increase its sale price by 4% to 19%. Their own analysis of office buildings in the Cleveland, Ohio, area found that "landscaping with a good aesthetic value" added 7% to the property's rental rates.[\[vii\]](#) In a wide-ranging study of the literature on environmental amenities, Jackson found evidence that landscaping, signage, and other amenities that make built environments greener, more interesting and easier to navigate have significant benefits for public health.[\[viii\]](#) Grill argues that

adult education in natural environments, such as those provided by the residential retreat center The Omega Institute, can help adults learn more effectively. [\[ix\]](#) In effect, furthering one human need can help to further another.

Connection to placemaking

Placemaking is a process by which a space becomes a “place” – a physical area that is seen by its users and others as distinct from other areas. This comes largely from the place’s history, combination of uses, and the feelings it evokes among the people who know of the place. All major cities around the world have similar objects and uses. Yet Paris, France is widely seen as a different type of place than the city of Los Angeles, California in the United States. In the United States, a place’s image plays an enormous role in revitalization efforts. Compared to their suburban neighbors, communities in New Jersey such as Paterson, Trenton, Newark and New Brunswick have far more of the kind of physical resources that in theory. Placemaking is often an organic and unintentional process that happens without the active knowledge of the people who give a place its identity, and help retain it.

For most of recorded history, intentional placemaking was a craft practiced by kings, chief clerics and wealthy landowners through (and sometimes led by) their architects and engineers. As monarchs and clerics gave way to committees and associations in the 20th century, these professionals continued to lead placemaking efforts. Their focus has and continues to be on the physical elements of place: buildings, infrastructure, and the spaces in between. [\[x\]](#) Early urban planning theory followed in the footsteps of architecture and civil engineering.

But by the mid-20th century, some elegant physical design theories failed in practice – the Radiant City produced more crime-filled housing projects than towers in the park; Broadacre City generated more wasteful urban sprawl than Jeffersonian green spaces. In the early 1960s, a working-class self-described housewife and activist with no architectural training suggested paying more attention to people than broad theories. Jane Jacobs and her followers challenged architects, planners and engineers to put people in their places.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, more people who weren’t focused on physical design – social workers, community organizers, lawyers and business development professionals – added more dimensions to placemaking practice.

Placemaking now is a craft focused on the relationships among people and their built environment. It fills in the gaps between the scopes of architects, civil engineers, social workers, and other professionals who each have a role in shaping places. This view of placemaking helps to justify collaborative planning practices: Even if the design proposals generated from all those public workshops is not much different from what a small committee generated in a half-day meeting, the proposals are much better because the workshops helped people feel that they designed their place themselves. In other words, the workshops furthered the self-actualization needs of residents, and therefore would be more likely to be supported within the community.

Meeting human needs through placemaking

The following table provides a matrix of sample elements that help meet the four dimensions of human needs. There are two categories of elements: Land use, which comprises objects in physical space, such as roads or parks; and associational/ psychosocial, which comprises human activities and social beliefs that support human needs.

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Typical land use elements</i>	<i>Typical associational/ psychosocial elements</i>
Physiological needs	Roads, stores, food production and distribution facilities, waste management facilities, energy generating facilities, auto-oriented uses, transportation-related facilities, hospitals	Emergency services Job opportunities Equitable distribution of public services and publicly available resources Equitable access from residence to elements that meet all four human needs dimensions
<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Typical land use elements</i>	<i>Typical associational/ psychosocial elements</i>

Relational needs	Plazas/public squares, bars, residential enclaves, business districts, places of worship, community centers, theaters, historic and cultural sites	Social clubs Civic organizations Arts associations Festivals Community rituals
Self-actualization needs	Schools, museums, galleries, passive recreation, business incubators	Competitions Openness to diversity Fair opportunities to engage in governance Openness to diversity and change
Environmental needs	Parks, open space, streetscaping,	Conservancies Neighborhood associations

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- [x] It's not surprising that English translations of European documents equate 'plan' and 'map'.

Appendix 3: Principles of culturally competent planning and placemaking

By Leonardo Vazquez, AICP/PP

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Cultural competency defined

Cultural competency is a set of knowledge and skills to help individuals engage more effectively in culturally diverse environments. Culture has many definitions, but in the realm of social sciences, it usually refers to a shared set of beliefs of behaviors exhibited by a distinctive group. (Schein, 1992; Rice, 2008) Culture is manifested in many ways, including through language and non-verbal communication, customs, religious exercise, and bodies of knowledge passed on by mentors and teachers. Objects, symbols and other elements of the physical environment reflect cultural values. The red brick (or stamped red concrete) sidewalks in the suburbs of New York are not simply design features. They are meant to evoke a romanticized image of what many residents might consider a simpler and more orderly period in American history.

Culture also serves as a touchstone to help individuals connect themselves to the larger world. When someone introduces him or herself as “I’m a _____,” that person is connecting to a group that has a distinct cultural identity. This aspect of culture is particularly important to community-level urban design, in which physical elements of a place are either destroyed or preserved.

When cultures intersect in groups, organizations, or societies, there are dominant and subordinate cultures. Dominant cultures tend to have the greatest array of political, financial, or other capital. One of the privileges of dominance is to establish the frame of reference for the collective. Their cultural view becomes the “correct” view while diverging perspectives of subordinate cultures are seen as odd or deviant. Typically, members of the dominant culture are unaware of their biases. When that happens, they become less culturally competent.

This helps explain why multiple cultures persist, even as societies work to become more inclusive. For people who feel disenfranchised, their group identity provides a source of validation and empowerment. Where a society or organization imposes restrictions on individuals, culture provides an opportunity for individuals to reach their higher level psychological needs – personal growth, self-actualization (being ‘all that you can be’) and transcendence (helping others meet their higher level needs). (Huitt, 2004) Historically, churches in African-American communities provided such opportunities. A man who because of racism could not reach his personal or professional goals in the larger, White dominated society, could become a deacon or other position or prestige within the church. It is not surprising, that Fox News, known for its conservative and libertarian commentators, saw ratings jump in the first few weeks after Barack Obama became the United States President. (Shea, 2009)

The White (Non-Hispanic) American urban planner who says “If they don’t show up at the charrette, they don’t care”¹ epitomizes this lack of cultural competence. The planner bases his judgment on his own frame of reference: If you care about your place, you participate in civic life. The planner had not considered that some stakeholders may feel intimidated or uncomfortable expressing themselves among design professionals.

Because all people have multiple cultural characteristics that impact the way they experience and view the world, all groups have some amount of cultural diversity. Typically, discussions on cultural competency focus on engagement with individuals of different genders, races, ethnicities and sexual orientation. Less discussed, but equally important, are differences among professional and sectoral cultures – such those between a public sector urban planner and a private sector civil engineer.

Cultures are dynamic. Individuals are challenged to rethink their beliefs and behaviors in light of changes in the environment and within themselves, especially as they work to integrate their multiple identities. So, like defining the waves in river, it is impossible to accurately know every culture.

“It would be naïve to think that one could know the world from someone else’s shoes,” Umemoto says (2005: 187) Nor is it realistic to think that one could become conversant in an unlimited number of cultural paradigms. It is not unrealistic, however, to create the foundation for social learning that emphasizes multiple epistemologies² within planning processes.”

Cultural competency focuses on three dimensions: awareness, beliefs and behaviors

Awareness is the ability to recognize and understand the reasons for the actions of individuals from one’s own and others’ cultures. Awareness elements include:

- Self-awareness. Specifically, the individual recognizes that his or her own perceptions and ability to get new information are limited by his or her own experiences and prejudices. Individuals who are self-aware have a better understanding of how the world sees them, and how they in turn see the world.
- Awareness of others’ cultural beliefs and behaviors. This also includes an awareness of the social, economic and other environmental factors that maintain or change cultural beliefs and behaviors.
- Awareness of power relationships among dominant and subordinate cultures, and how they manifest themselves in beliefs, behaviors, and the physical elements of a society.
- Awareness that individuals are both distinct and have multiple cultural identities. Every individual is a member of multiple groups – gender, race, ethnicity and profession. The experience of having multiple identities, as well as innate characteristics – such as physical strength and intelligence – causes individuals to have beliefs and engage in behaviors that depart from the stereotype of a particular culture.

- Awareness that because of the complexities and dynamics of multiple cultures, organizations and individuals are never fully culturally competent. Cultural competency for individuals, groups and societies is a continual learning process.

Beliefs are the judgments about the world that shape how individuals determine what information is valid and what sources are reliable. Individuals rationalize their behaviors through their beliefs. Culturally competent beliefs include:

- Valuing differences among people and groups. Culturally competent individuals do not just tolerate difference – they seek it out because they believe that diversity will lead to better outcomes.
- Believing that individuals should suspend judgment when examining the beliefs and behaviors of other cultures. This is not to say that individuals should tolerate or support every behavior of every culture, but that every one should be assessed before it is evaluated.
- Believing that individuals act rationally according to their own sets of cultural beliefs. Individuals will act to get what they value most. The challenge to the culturally competent individuals is to understand the value structures and hierarchies of people who differ from them.

Behaviors are actions that flow from awareness and beliefs. Individuals demonstrate their cultural competency through a variety of behaviors, including:

- Communicating effectively across cultural boundaries. This refers to the ability to communicate effectively with others (both sending and receiving messages).
- Seeking diversity in problem-solving and group activities.
- Taking actions to promote cultural competency in others.

Cultural competency and placemaking concepts

Where cultural competency matters most is in the area of placemaking.

Placemaking is the set of processes by which a geographic area becomes more than the sum of its parts. New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco are major American cities with the same economic and social elements. But they are felt by many people to be different “places.” They have distinct meanings and cultural identities.

Neill (2004:112) identifies three key elements of placemaking:

“The first of these involves the functional city of jobs and services extending to environmental well-being. It is strongly influenced by economic positioning and social class. Civic identification and the feeling of stakeholding involves expressions of ‘pride in place’ and has a relationship to how local place-making decisions are made. Such processes can entail varying degrees of fairness, equality and inclusiveness. Cultural attachment to place goes beyond the city as a container or ‘theater’ for social activity. It involves an emotionally charged spatial imagination extending from the personal to the various collective manifestations, including spiritual and symbolic identifications. This often involves the endowment of space with deep meaning.”

Places reflect more than the collective values of a culture. They represent the structure of values (Lynch, 1981). This structure includes:

- Strong values – What a society (through its decision-makers) values most. Objects and other resources that represent strong values get more prominence and support from a society.
- Weak values – Other values reflected, to a lesser extent than strong values.
- Wishful values – Stated values, which are not well-represented in a place.
- Hidden values – Unstated values that are well represented in a place.

Consider a city in which the master plan calls for increased equity through more affordable housing. Only about half of the amount of housing called for in the plan is built. The units are in isolated and undesirable pockets of the city. Residents of the city have to travel farther and longer than wealthier residents to get to jobs, shopping and schools. “Increased equity” is a weak, or even wishful value. The hidden value in this example would be a preservation of economic privilege. The culturally competent planner would know how to assess the value structure within the community.

In downtown Detroit, near the City Council offices, there is a statue of a large black fist swinging in a triangular frame. In a predominantly African-American city facing a significant amount of crime, underemployment, and resident anger, the statue is not merely an aesthetic representation of a human body part. It is an expression of African-American power. (Neill, 2004)

Culturally competent planning and placemaking practice

Thus, culturally competent planning and placemaking would include the following knowledge and behaviors:

Awareness:

- Of one’s own theories of what “good planning” is, and how one’s own experiences and biases shape those theories.
- Of the cultural beliefs and behaviors of one’s own professional and sectoral cultures.
- That stakeholders are likely to have experiences and biases about planners and planning that will affect how they relate to planners. In other words, stakeholders may be responding more to the position than to the individual.
- Of the impact of land uses on people of different cultures, in particular members of low-income and disenfranchised communities.

- Of the roles planners have historically played in promoting and institutionalizing the interests of dominant cultures within communities.
- That members of cultures which have had little positive experience with urban planners are less likely to participate in collaborative planning engagements. As a result, planners may inadvertently prepare reports and plans that serve the needs of dominant groups within an environment.
- Of the distinct and overlapping cultures within a study area, and the ability to see the “cultures within cultures” (for example, national origin in Latino or Asian communities).
- Of the norms of different cultures, as a way of demonstrating respect and knowledge.
- Of the relationships of power among planning professionals and other actors in the development and maintenance of the built environment, and among planning professionals and the various communities with which they interact.

Beliefs:

- Planning is about making choices, and all choices in planning are normative. In other words, a choice is neither right nor wrong, but a better (or worse) way to further values.
- Cultural beliefs and behaviors have significant impacts on urban planning from the neighborhood to the regional levels.
- Cultural beliefs and behaviors are important sources of data to be ascertained prior to preparing a plan.
- The best ways to understand how people of different cultures would be impacted by planning is to engage them in collaborative planning practices.
- The best teams are diverse, and are led by individuals who value diversity and inclusiveness and have the skills to manage the conflicts that arise from diversity.
- Planners and planning organizations should seek to model the same kind of cultural competency they hope to see in

communities.

- Planners should seek to be both more self-aware and aware of other cultures as part of their own professional development.
- Planners must have the courage to reconsider and change beliefs and behaviors that are counterproductive or inefficient in the context of cultural competency.

Behaviors:

- In culturally diverse environments, significant amounts of resources are focused on engagement and collaborative practice.
- Planning directors and managers habitually build culturally inclusive organizations and teams. Directors and managers develop skills suited to lead such organizations and teams.
- Planners work to understand and be understood by culturally diverse audiences. Where planners are limited by their own communication skills, they engage others (individuals, organizations) to bridge communication gaps.
- Planners prepare documents that can be understood by as many people as is reasonably feasible.
- Planners and planning organizations engage in continual reflective practice so that they can become more aware and better adapt to new information and changing conditions.

Implications for planning education

Various authors have written about cultural diversity and communicative practice (Umemoto, 2005). These authors include Sandercock, Thomas, Forester, Healey, Baum and Friedmann. While the topics appear to be a growing part of the literature of planning, many planning skills do not require students to demonstrate their ability to work effectively across cultures.

By reframing the term cultural diversity as 'cultural competency,' it can be established as a knowledge base as critical to the planning practitioner in the 21st century as urban design, demography, or

qualitative research skills. This primer is also designed to help readers and educators operationalize cultural competency by providing measurable goals that educators and practitioners can use to test their knowledge and mastery of the cultural issues in planning.

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Appendix 4: The experience economy: concepts and implications for placemaking

By Leonardo Vazquez, AICP/PP

First [published as “You can buy anything on the Internet, except an experience,” March 16, 2010, in *The Placemaker’s Advisor*](#)

According to [Retail Traffic Magazine \(by way of Planetizen\), both foot traffic and sales are up at the largest mall in the United States](#). In these difficult times, the success of the Mall of America can offer some insights into the future of retail-based economic development.

The Mall of America shows the growing strength of the experience economy. A key to its success has been adding more rides to the large amusement park at the center of its complex. In the experience economy, consumers are willing to pay more for a good or service if they have a positive experience with the business. (That experience could be fun, pretty, stimulating, ego-boosting, etc.) Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, who coined the term in [The Experience Economy](#), were writing about the importance of businesses spending time on enhancing consumer experiences, even if those actions didn’t immediately ring up sales. (For example: a salesperson acting like your personal shopper in a store.)

Today, you can buy almost anything (that’s legal to buy), except for an experience.

For our field, participating in the experience economy means making our built environments more interesting, exciting, safe, surprising, or whatever the communities we serve enjoy. The ‘experience’ starts when the consumer feels he or she is in the place. If that person gets lost, it is going to affect his or her willingness to spend time and money – or to come back. In the experience economy, streetscaping, public art and architectural design are not just decorative; they are critical parts of the economic development infrastructure. Events are not public

relations gimmicks; they are important marketing tools.

Enhancing the public environment can especially help businesses that serve low and moderate-income communities. Because many of these businesses make their profits on volume, rather than per-capita sales, and they tend to be in older, smaller spaces, they tend to use more floor space for retailing or service activity. In other words, stores that cater to wealthier people, or that have higher profit margins, can afford to have more floor space available for experiences. (That's why the places that sell coffee for \$4 a cup have more chairs and nicer art than the places that sell it for \$1 a cup.) While all retail districts can benefit from enhanced physical design, businesses in lower income communities tend to have less capacity to do it on their own.

Many traditional downtowns and some cities, like Las Vegas, are succeeding through experience economy strategies. Urban design in highway commercial areas tends to ignore attractive site design (A key exception are upscale lifestyle centers, which are essentially lifestyle-themed open-air malls.) The oversight might be a costly mistake. Fifty years ago, traditional downtowns began to be threatened by malls. Thirty years ago, malls began to be threatened by big box stores. Today, those stores, and many highway retail uses, are threatened by the Internet. Internet shopping is growing rapidly; [two-thirds of all Internet users in the United States made an online purchase in 2009, said Internet Retailer.](#)

Of course, enhancing the visual environment is not enough. Consumers want to go where they feel welcome and safe. Circulation planning and the management of retail districts are key. Also, in age when anyone can have a public voice through the Internet, a key part of any experience economy strategy is keeping up-to-date with the changing pulse of stakeholders. In business, they call in market research. We can think of it as needs assessment or public engagement.

In many cities and communities, there are still elected officials and public administrators, as well as members of the public, who think that decisions on where and how long to shop depend solely on

price and convenience. Hopefully, this essay has given you some talking points.

For more resources:

Check out the [Urban Land Institute](#) or the [American Planning Association](#) for resources on urban design.

The Bloustein Online Continuing Education Program offers a number of courses on economic development, branding and other issues raised in this essay. Please visit <http://www.policy.rutgers.edu/bocep> to learn more.