

A PLACE FOR PLACEMAKING IN SAN DIEGO



Executive Summary

Both in San Diego and around the country, there are signs that leveraging the power of arts and culture into traditional planning processes can improve neighborhoods while better serving community interests. This convergence of interests has created a field that practitioners are calling creative placemaking. The movement is growing rapidly in part because cities around the U.S. are looking for tools to redevelop communities in ways that not only increase economic development, but also build social capital among community residents.

In San Diego, the movement is grassroots oriented, bubbling up through community-led projects. As the projects continue, City staff is being asked to simplify the process to make community dreams, some of which are relatively simple, become reality. Examples include street paint, benches, art in vacant lots, murals, decorative crosswalks, alley activation, landscaping, wayfinding signage, and temporary mobility enhancements—all promoted to revitalize neighborhoods and jump start the building of social capital. As much as these projects are about the product, they are also about the process. That means an authentic, community-led process that respects community history and values.

As the City strives to implement the City of Villages, and Vision Zero strategies in a manner that aligns with the new Climate Action Plan (CAP), City leaders must find opportunities to deeply engage diverse communities about their vision and priorities for the future. The emerging field of creative placemaking offers San Diego a collaborative process to tap into the talents of its thriving arts community and achieve multiple city-wide goals.

This paper outlines case studies of successful placemaking projects in San Diego, and the challenges they have faced. The paper also offers recommendations on how the City can embrace creative placemaking, based on best practices in other cities. The case studies highlight the following recommendations:

1. Create a new, user friendly permit process to enable and encourage community led projects,
2. Pilot desired projects to determine if process is accessible to all,
3. Experiment with and formalize a partnership with local artists and integrate into the existing community planning process, and
4. Partner with a local arts organization or organizations to serve as a conduit for effective community engagement.

San Diego prides itself on its diverse, unique neighborhoods. Residents are willing to step up to implement their own vision of their space, especially in areas that are highly underutilized. One step the City can take to achieve its own goals, is to explore creative placemaking and not only allow, but also encourage communities to work together to create the places they want to see. This requires the establishment of a new creative placemaking permit process in partnership with multiple City departments, including Development Services, Neighborhood Planning, and the Commission for Arts and Culture.



Pacific Beach Mural. Photo Credit: Bill Ludwig

Acknowledgements

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Kathleen takes the lead for Circulate San Diego on building public support for active transportation, better transit, and sustainable land use throughout San Diego County. Her work with communities, city staff, and decision makers promotes policies that help make safe, vibrant neighborhoods the norm.

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Special Thanks To:

Special thanks to Circulate San Diego Executive Director Jim Stone and Policy Counsel Colin Parent for substantive edits. Special thanks to The Kresge Foundation and Transportation for America for funding to make this report possible.



Introduction

Both in San Diego and around the country, there are signs that leveraging the power of arts and culture into traditional planning processes can improve neighborhoods while better serving community interests. This convergence of interests has created a field that practitioners are calling creative placemaking. The movement is growing rapidly in part because cities around the U.S. are looking for tools to redevelop communities in ways that not only increase economic development, but also build social capital among community residents.

The term creative placemaking likely conjures up images of community art or neighborhood beautification, yet the movement goes beyond the notion of building physical art to drive a broader agenda that emphasizes the building of community trust and social capital.

“The science of how to do the technical parts of community development is well understood—how to build water infrastructure, housing units, transportation systems—but we as community development officials have forgotten about the ‘people’ part of the equation. How do we build places where people actually want to live their lives? How do we build strong social ties? The secret lies partly in the arts.”¹

- Jason Schuchbach

A preeminent white paper [Creative Placemaking](#) was published in 2010 for the Mayors’ Institute on City Design with the goal of demonstrating to civic leaders around the country the power of arts and culture in city design. The paper was a collaboration among

economic research and arts consultants to define creative placemaking, highlight challenges and successes with this work, and lay the foundation of a new movement. It made the case for a new hands-on approach to reinvent public spaces in ways that would promote economic development while also contributing to people’s health, happiness, and sense of connectedness.

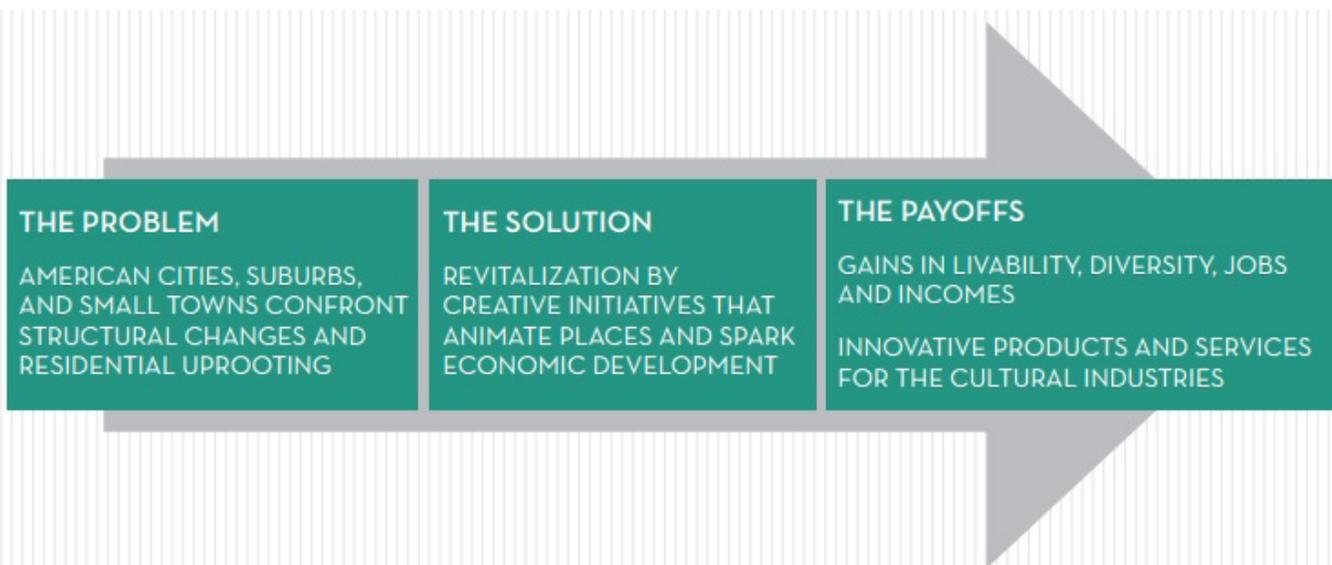
“In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city or region around arts and cultural activities...Together, creative placemaking’s livability and economic development outcomes have the potential to radically change the future of American towns and cities.”²

- Ann Markusen, Ann Gadwa

Most recently, Transportation for America, a national nonprofit that promotes mobility choices, published [The Scenic Route, Getting Started with Creative Placemaking and Transportation](#) to unite creative placemaking with transportation.³

“[Creative Placemaking is] an approach that deeply engages the arts, culture, and creativity in planning and designing transportation projects to better reflect and celebrate local culture, heritage and values. For people planning, designing, and building transportation projects, creative placemaking is an emerging approach that every community should consider.”⁴

- The Scenic Route



Transportation for America selected San Diego in 2015 as one of three U.S. cities (along with Nashville, TN and Portland, OR) to pilot the integration of creative placemaking with transportation planning. As the lead organization on this grant, Circulate San Diego learned the many benefits of this movement by initiating programs in the City Heights neighborhood with our partner the City Heights Community Development Corporation (CHCDC). In 2015 we worked with City Heights residents to define community assets, and discuss how the assets can be reflected in art to improve the overall transit ridership experience with Bus Rapid Transit on El Cajon Boulevard.

Most recently, CHCDC engaged the Somali community in City Heights to envision how art can be brought to University Avenue while integrating their culture and history with a safer streetscape. The long term result of this work will be a new cultural district collective work is featured in *The Scenic Route*.

Placemaking: A Movement to Grow and Nurture in San Diego

As the City of San Diego strives to implement the City of Villages strategy in its General Plan, and Vision Zero strategies in a manner that aligns with the new Climate Action Plan (CAP), City leaders must find opportunities to deeply engage diverse communities about their vision and priorities for the future. Creative placemaking offers San Diego a process that utilizes a collaborative approach to tap into the needs of the community with the talents of its thriving arts community while achieving multiple City-wide goals. Take for example this text from the City's General Plan:

"Each village will be unique to the community in which it is located. All villages will be pedestrian-friendly and characterized by inviting, accessible and attractive streets and public spaces. Public spaces will vary from village to village, consisting of well-designed public parks or plazas that bring people together."¹⁵

- City of San Diego General Plan

One of the first steps the City can take to explore creative placemaking is to not only allow, but to encourage community-led projects. The City's Development Services Department oversees development permits, and a separate entity, the Commission for Arts and Culture, oversees public art projects. The specific role of the Commission is to, among other things, integrate arts and culture into community life. Collaboration between these two departments would present an excellent opportunity to fund community led projects and embrace a new paradigm for creative placemaking while achieving City goals.

Turning Spaces into Places

Creative placemaking refers to a wide spectrum of activities and a broad integration of arts and culture into community planning and development projects. This report focuses on the physical aspects of placemaking, specifically community-led efforts to improve their neighborhoods through art, or the creation of new gathering places, turning empty spaces into meaningful places.

In communities such as Linda Vista, Southeastern San Diego, City Heights, and Pacific Beach, residents are lifting up local art not only to beautify a specific place, but to address larger community issues such as public safety, and strengthen community relationships. Most of these initiatives faced numerous regulatory barriers in order to succeed, and others were shut down. Collectively, they indicate the growing demand for creative placemaking, from deep community engagement.

The following section presents brief case studies on creative placemaking projects that were successfully completed, despite the barriers encountered. This section starts by framing the subject by introducing local practitioners' definitions of creative placemaking, and ends with an analysis of the major barriers faced during the process.

In Their Own Words - Placemaking Defined

To understand the local context, Circulate San Diego conducted a series of interviews with local residents who were involved with a variety of projects. In these interviews, Circulate San Diego asked practitioners to define the benefits of creative placemaking in their own words. The following statements are some of the definitions given:



Somali cultural celebration. Photo Credit: Nehmo Hassan

“[R]esidents are lifting up local art not only to beautify a specific place, but to address larger community issues”

- *Placemaking is the process of creating a stronger sense of place for a community—and accordingly is a grassroots, community process that is focused on improving a physical location for the community’s enjoyment. Placemaking fosters an increased sense of ownership and pride from community members, by allowing the community to take part in the evolution and improvement of their community space.*
- *To me, placemaking is the creation of a public space dedicated to bring community together, to engage with one another, and to be a part of something bigger than the individual.*
- *It’s a new form of public engagement that really creates trust. The community is part of the entire process and because it’s a small-scale project and can be done in a short period of time, they are part of the change.*
- *Placemaking brings beauty to the community and invites people to socialize.*
- *Arguably, the process of placemaking is just as important as the resulting product. Placemaking promotes community health, wellness, and quality of life by turning otherwise unappealing, uninviting, and sometimes unsafe locations into areas for community engagement. It develops the community and it encourages community members to love and respect their neighborhood—to have ownership of and investment in their community.*

Case Studies

Linda Vista, Linda Placita

Neighborhood residents worked in partnership with Bayside Community Center, and the Linda Vista Branch Library to convert a section of the library’s parking lot into a “pavement park,” the community later dubbed Linda Placita (Beautiful Little Plaza). The project idea emerged around a shared goal of creating an outdoor gathering place. Library staff wanted to extend the library out into the community, and residents including Linda Vista Town Council and Linda Vista CDC wanted a place to gather in a central area of the community.

A \$5,000 contribution from the area’s City council office

allowed the community to repaint a section of the parking lots, purchase benches, tables, trash cans, and small trees. The community came together in May 2014 to build the new space, and celebrated with an opening festival in August 2014. After its construction, the community held dance concerts, kids activity days, movie nights, and as many as 40 gatherings with food trucks to bring residents together.

According to Jeffrey Davis, Linda Vista Branch Library Manager, construction of Linda Placita and the subsequent events helped to build relationships among community members and create a center of gravity geographically for the large community. It also helped create a safe connection between the library and surrounding destinations.

In May 2016, City staff arrived at the library to paint over the park citing danger between people and moving cars as a reason. Removal of the park happened just as the community was beginning to talk about Phase II of the project, or how to make the gathering space more permanent. Community members are still discussing how to bring back a small gathering space in this area. This unfortunate outcome underscores the need to have a clear process communicated.



Linda Vista, Linda Placita in Action

Encanto, Chollas Creek Crossing

Chollas Creek Crossing was named by the community for its location and crossroads of four neighborhoods in Southeastern San Diego. Historically a site for gang activity, fires, and crime, neighborhood residents envisioned a vacant lot at 47th and Castaña as an open air community gathering space where the hundreds of nearby residents and students could gather.

With aid from the now-closed Civic Innovation Lab and local non-profit Groundwork San Diego, 300 community

volunteers helped design and build their dream gathering space in 2014. Groundwork San Diego raised \$50,000 in funds initially and then another \$35,000 to fund the effort. The revitalized lot served as a gathering space for the community and helped to build relationships according to the director of Groundwork San Diego.



Cholla Creek Crossing Space, Before



Chollas Creek Crossing Place, After

Because the space has not yet been officially transferred to City Parks and Recreation inventory, residents have assumed responsibility for its stewardship. On any given morning, elders are out watering the new plants or emptying the new trash cans. The University of California at San Diego Center on Global Justice embraced the space for ongoing research focusing on the conversion of blighted areas into spaces where natural resources, quietude, and public programming can transform communities.

Pacific Beach, Intersection Murals

beautifulPB, a neighborhood based non-profit organization that is advancing the Pacific Beach EcoDistrict initiative, used placemaking as a way to engage the community and raise awareness of sustainability issues that address environmental and social equity. The idea of intersection murals emerged from a community process to create a network of safe streets connecting neighborhood schools. Murals were sought in order to beautify and distinguish school street crossings while also providing traffic calming to slow and alert motorists that more children and families were likely to be walking. Artwork for these murals was provided via

student competition from local schools, who then worked with local artists to finalize the design for mural painting.

With architects and urban planners on beautifulPB's board of directors, they were able to navigate through the City to acquire appropriate permits. There was no placemaking guide or informational bulletin to guide the process. To their credit, city staff worked with neighborhood residents within the existing permitting framework to bring the project to fruition. At a cost of \$1,600, beautifulPB was able to acquire the appropriate permits and get official permission from the city to paint.

Subsequent to completion of the first project, beautifulPB created a *fact sheet* outlining the maze of staff and permits required. Their fact sheet became a go to document for other organizations interested in painting similar projects.

City Heights, Manzanita Gathering Place

Manzanita Gathering Place sits on a 1,500 square foot lot, within one quarter mile of four schools and surrounded by residential and mixed-use development in the urban community of City Heights. Owned by the City of San Diego, the undeveloped lot served as a dumping ground for old electronics, furniture, shopping carts, fences, and needles. Neighbors, business owners, schools, community artists, non-profits, contractors, and representatives from the City of San Diego worked together to transform a dead end space in a local canyon into a safe gathering place, while also improving the overall ecological health of the area. Using a participatory design process, engagement included an intensive week of community input and design workshops followed by community art making days, and a four-day community build event.



Manzanita Gathering Space, Before

A \$5,000 grant from the San Diego Foundation allowed the community to come together in 2013 to create change, and an additional \$50,000 was eventually obtained to complete the project.⁶ According to residents involved, the project showed the neighborhood that big change can happen with a small budget, and empowered residents to be part of the change. It also convened community members to collectively develop art that reflects local culture and creates neighborhood identity.



Manzanita Gathering Place, After

The community had the help of an experienced landscape architect to guide the process, as well as long-time community members who have built relationships with City staff over the course of many years. According to interviews with participants, the community leaned heavily on the expertise of these individuals, and staff in the District 9 council office to complete the project. City staff in Development Services worked with the community to seek the appropriate types of permits needed to finalize construction. A local non-profit partner provided the necessary \$1,000,000 liability limit insurance policy.

A majority of participants reported they are working more with their neighbors and colleagues as a result of the project.⁷ In addition, most say they have stayed in touch with someone they met during the project, and will be more actively involved in community-related activities and civic discourse as a result of the project.

Barriers to Success

Residents and organizations involved with these projects faced numerous barriers to succeed. Based on interviews with multiple organizations, three primary challenges exist for creative placemaking in San Diego:

1. **Complex and Expensive Permit Process** - Placemaking project permits are treated as development projects, and the process is often complicated and expensive for residents.

2. **The process is not equitable** - Residents who can navigate the political system are more likely to succeed than those without the same experience.
3. **Funding for permits is difficult to find** - The City does not currently provide financial assistance to encourage more projects.

Complex and Expensive Permit Process

San Diego's permitting agency is the Development Services Department. Department staff worked with residents and organizations to provide the appropriate type of permit for a wide variety of projects based on the City's existing framework. These efforts include permits for benches in the public right of way, neighborhood gathering spaces, privately maintained neighborhood art structures, parklets, and intersection murals.⁸

Yet residents interviewed for the local placemaking case studies feel the process is so complex they do not even know where to start. They feel success only comes to projects where volunteers with professional backgrounds have participated. Existing permit language and the application process is not tailored to residents, but rather to developers.

beautifulPB, after successfully receiving permits to paint pedestrian crosswalk murals, developed their own how-to *guide* for other residents interested in completing a similar project. Other communities looking to implement similar projects consider this unofficial guide as their best resource for fees and an understanding of the process.⁹ Their guide states "permit types are selected depending upon location of road closure and type of event." Navigating these nuances has been challenging to residents.

In one example, the City made an effort to clarify the permit process for parklets, or what they call "Pedestrian Plazas." The name itself is a curious exercise in bureaucracy-speak, using a particular made-up name to describe what is commonly referred to around the U.S. as a "parklet." Development Services Department developed an *Informational Bulletin* for pedestrian plazas, outlining requirements to install a parklet. Complex permit language makes it difficult to understand and a multitude of permits are still required from multiple departments. Further, the total cost is a minimum of \$4,000. Despite the City's best efforts, these factors have led to the construction of only two parklets since launch of the Pedestrian Plaza program in 2013.¹⁰

In another example where residents contacted the City to install neighborhood benches and artistic crosswalks to improve an intersection, they quickly grew discouraged by

the maze of staff and permits required to acquire the right type of permit. A staffer in traffic engineering said he could look into the benches. The crosswalk proposal would need to go to another section, for which he provided contact information. A different staffer in traffic engineering said the proposal should go to Development Services for further review. A third staffer in traffic engineering responded with crosswalk signaling guidelines from the federal government and suggested they drop that idea entirely.¹¹

Because placemaking projects are often a result of a grassroots effort, they depend on volunteer time and donations. The costs associated with traffic control and special event permits, which easily exceed \$1,000, are significant barriers to the implementation of placemaking projects.

City permits may take up to three months for approval—community interest, momentum, and confidence in a specific project is difficult to sustain when there is minimal feedback from the City over extended periods of time. The minimal feedback is perceived as lack of support and lack of interest on the City’s part in community efforts to improve their neighborhoods. Residents become cynical and doubtful their efforts will be successful, and without the help of an experienced leader, they burn out and the project withers away.

An interview with one of the community leaders from City Heights’ Manzanita Gathering Space says it all. When approached by community members to build another gathering space, her response, “I tell them how difficult it is and I would not attempt it again.”

“[R]esidents interviewed for the local placemaking case studies feel the process is so complex they do not even know where to start.”

The Process is Not Equitable

Because there is not an established placemaking program or permit at the City, applicants must navigate from one office to another to understand the correct permit type and criteria. Even when staff is willing to work with the residents, just getting started is daunting. Requirements change for each type of permit pursued which makes the process more lengthy and confusing. Placemaking projects that are guided by an experienced professional can navigate the complex process, but residents and even long time

non-profits without the same experience have leaned on local City council offices to help steer through the process.

Communities with more resources have a better chance for success than others thereby extending the cycle of inequity in the City. Most troubling, in at least two examples during the last year, the City removed a completed project.

An interview with a community leader from City Heights’ Manzanita Gathering Space says it all. When approached by community members to build another gathering space, her response, “I tell them how difficult it is and I would not attempt it again.”

Funding is Difficult to Find for Projects

Permits required for each intersection mural cost \$1,600 according to beautifulPB, the organization with the most experience for this type of project. In each of our case studies, funding was provided mostly through grants and some through donations. While this may not sound like a lot of money, these costs are in addition to materials, and it can be cost prohibitive for communities. Other cities with exemplary projects have much lower associated fees. In San Diego, higher costs are related to the complex process previously outlined. Producing a separate process for creative placemaking would also allow the City of San Diego to lower associated costs and as a result, encourage more projects.

A Creative Path Forward

Cities around the country with successful placemaking initiatives use different approaches. Cities on the forefront established a process that engages the entire community with arts and culture organizations to create projects valued by and representative of the community where they are located.

This section presents four case studies of U.S. and San Diego regional cities that found success at creative placemaking. These case studies can serve as models to San Diego leaders on how to develop an effective creative placemaking program with a community driven process to implement genuine community valued projects.

The case studies highlight the following recommendations:

- Create a new, user-friendly permit process to enable and encourage community-led projects,
- Pilot desired projects to determine if process is accessible to all,
- Experiment with and formalize a partnership with local artists and integrate into the existing community planning process, and
- Partner with a local arts or community organization to serve as a conduit for effective community engagement.

Recommendation: Create a new, user friendly permit process to enable and encourage community led projects

Los Angeles, People St.

Los Angeles, *People St.* is a program of the City's Department of Transportation (LADOT) and was created to be a one-stop shop for information, resources, and materials on implementing plazas, parklets, and bicycle corrals. People St. provides an application-based process for community partners to receive approval to install a plaza, parklet, or bicycle corral.

Each project type includes a webpage where residents can download applications and information on the process, responsibilities, requirements, and prior successful projects. People St. compiled the application process into three separate detailed documents for plazas, parklets, and bicycle corrals.

The program also provides a user friendly overview of the application process within a visual flowchart. Each year, LADOT's People St. program opens an application window to allow community organizations to submit an initial project proposal. Using a set of established criteria to assess each proposal, LADOT selects a limited number of applications with which to move forward.

People St. allows LADOT to meet their current permitting rules while also giving residents the ability to experiment with creative placemaking projects. People St. does not have the capacity to accept a wide range of projects throughout the year but the program allowed LADOT to learn about creative placemaking while it grows. The City released its first seven pilot locations in January 2015.

San Francisco, Pavement to Parks

San Francisco's *Pavement to Parks* program seeks to test the possibilities of underused areas of land by quickly and inexpensively converting them into new pedestrian spaces. Each Pavement to Parks project is intended

 <p>PLAZA Converts redundant or underused portion of a street into a public space with tables, chairs, and other furnishings.</p>	 <p>PARKLET Expands the sidewalk into one or more on-street parking spaces to create people-oriented places.</p>	 <p>BICYCLE CORRAL Installs bicycle parking within on-street parking spaces, making room for sidewalk activity and creating a business district trip attractor.</p>
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to be a public laboratory for the City to learn how to work with local communities and temporarily test new ideas in the public realm. Stated program goals include:

- Reimagine the potential of city streets
- Encourage non-motorized transportation
- Enhance pedestrian safety & activities
- Foster neighborhood interaction
- Support local businesses

Materials and design interventions are meant to be temporary and easily reversible, should the trial run demonstrate the need for design changes. After testing their performance, some spaces are reclaimed permanently as public open spaces.

Similar to People St., Pavement to Parks uses three project types including *Parklets*, *Plazas*, and *Prototyping*. The home page of the Pavement to Parks webpage is organized appropriately to make navigating to one of the three project type webpages simple. The Plazas and Parklets webpages were designed to give users a one stop shop to download manuals, applications, and more information on process, responsibilities, and requirements. The Prototyping webpage provides residents flexibility as a catchall for projects that are not parklets or plazas. Finally, the Plazas webpage presents a number of links to successful past projects and related details.

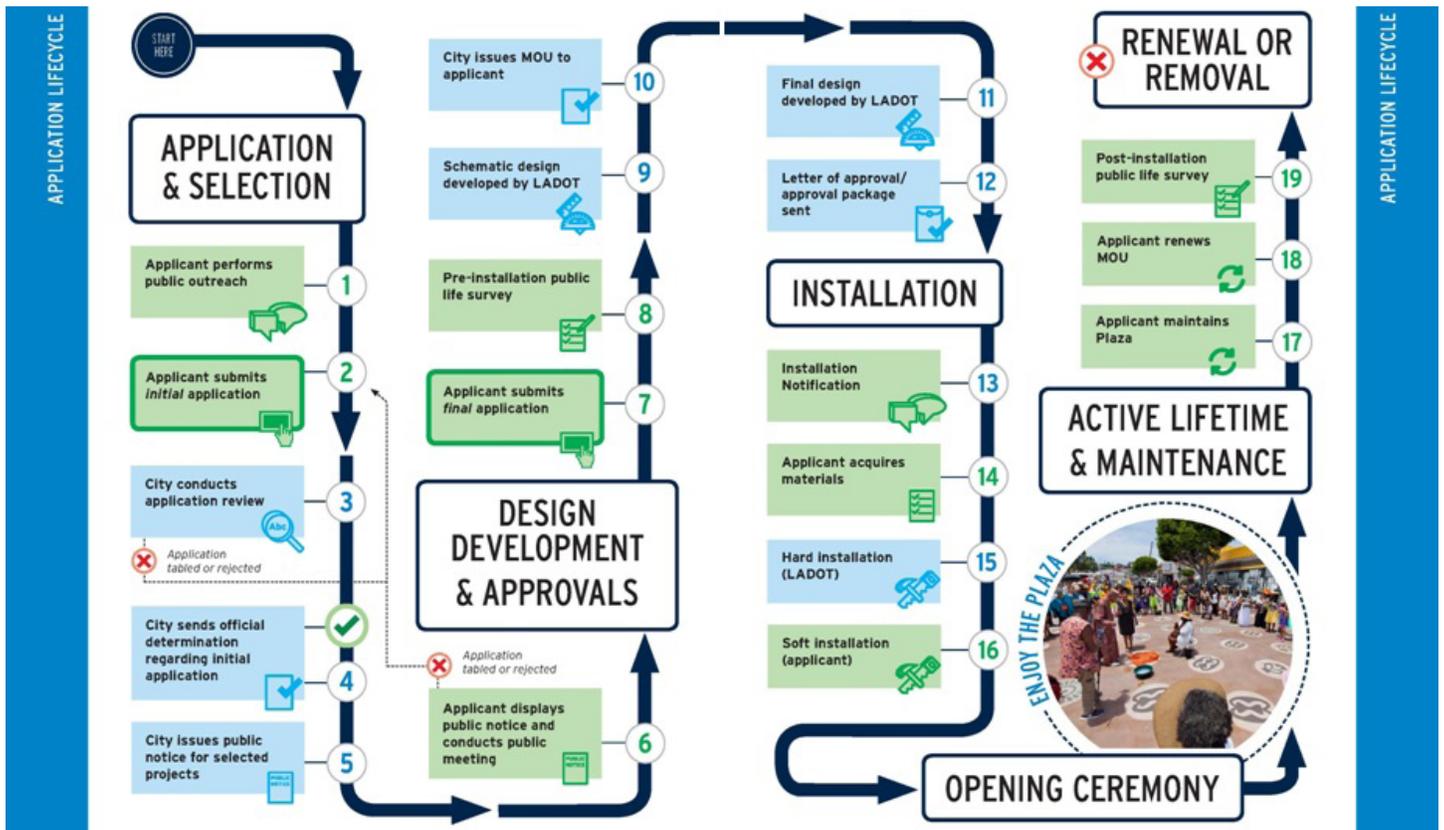
Recommendation: Pilot desired projects to determine if process is accessible to all

Los Angeles, Great Streets Initiative

Mayor Eric Garcetti expanded the reach of People St. with the launch of the Great Streets Initiative in October 2013 to help re-imagine neighborhood centers and city streets with community engagement and collaboration. As part of the initiative, the Mayor’s office works in close collaboration with the City Services Department, related council members, and community partners such as business improvement districts, neighborhood councils, non-profit community organizations, and schools and universities to help design, develop, and implement street resurfacing, community programming, and business assistance.¹²

In 2014, Mayor Garcetti identified fifteen streets where re-imagining public space would activate neighborhood centers that met the following Mayoral goals:

- Increased economic activity
- Improved access and mobility
- Enhanced neighborhood character
- Greater community engagement
- Improved environmental resilience
- Safer and more secure communities
- Improved public health



One of the first steps for reactivating these 15 streets was to provide an example of how creative placemaking could activate public space along the corridors. The Mayor created the Great Streets Community Challenge Grant in 2015 to invite applications from teams of community organizations, schools, and business owners to showcase events on how Great Streets can “re-imagine our streets as vibrant public spaces.” A total of \$80,000 was awarded to eight grant recipients, and each award was capped at \$10,000. Applicants were also encouraged to leverage additional funds through an online crowdsourcing tool, which the City promised to match. Grant recipients raised \$95,592 through crowdsourcing, which the City matched for a total expenditure of \$175,592.

Winning events were evaluated based on their plans for community engagement, creativity/innovation, evaluation/data collection, and the long term impacts of projects. Criteria were initially provided so that applications would meet certain goals. A great deal of flexibility was offered to allow projects such as community-led street painting events, tactical urbanism block parties, alley enhancing events, and mural and public art events to be eligible. Successful applicants continue to work with City staff to identify and pursue resources that will permanently construct successful elements of each project.

Three prime examples of community engagement projects selected as winners were [RE]visit [RE]seda Blvd., YES! (Youth Envisioned Streets), and Connect the Dots. Connect the Dots featured three community workshops that sought to provide tools for Angelenos to reimagine L.A.’s public spaces. Over three days the workshops brought community members into contact with creative design teams as they conceptualized designs to encourage collaboration between active transit, healthy public spaces, and storm water capture.

The successful work on the Challenge Grant led Great Streets to collaborate with the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) to establish the Art Activation Fund (AAF). The purpose of the AAF is “to support creative, community-benefits projects on designated Great Streets.” AAF allows local artists to apply for up to \$15,000 to support temporary creative placemaking projects.

The projects are to be on a two to three month schedule. The artist will receive support from Great Streets, DCA, and the Arts Commission although the artists must still obtain and pay for the required permits.



San Francisco’s Pavement to Park’s Plaza Application



Los Angeles Great Streets

*“We develop Great Streets that activate public spaces, provide economic revitalization, increase public safety, enhance local culture, and support great neighborhoods. By reimagining our streets, we can create places for Angelenos to come together, whether they travel by car, transit, bike or on foot”.*¹³

- Los Angeles Mayor, Eric Garcetti

Recommendation: Experiment with and formalize a partnership with local artists and integrate into the community planning process

Minneapolis, Minnesota - Intermedia Arts

Creative CityMaking (CCM) in Minneapolis, Minnesota is an arts-based program within Minneapolis City government designed to advance City priorities through collaborations between City departments and highly skilled community artists.¹⁴ CCM was formed in partnership by the City and Intermedia Arts, the region’s premier multidisciplinary, multicultural arts center. In this capacity Intermedia Arts aims to provide people of all ages with the opportunities, tools, and support to come together across disciplines, sectors, and boundaries to connect, create, share, collaborate, innovate, think big, and act as catalysts for positive community-driven and community-defined change.¹⁵

One of the first steps that Intermedia Arts took to formalize collaboration between artists and City departments was in 2000 with the Creative Community Leadership Institute. The Institute, still active today, provides capacity building to community artists and leaders by training them with the tools and experiences to advance their effectiveness by leveraging the power of arts and culture. This Institute created a pool of leaders and artists who understood the creative placemaking process and how to work with the City and the community. This

allowed Intermedia Arts and the Institute to be a conduit between artists representing the community and City staff. In the early 2000s Intermedia Arts was able to participate in developing the Minneapolis Plan for Arts and Culture.¹⁶ During this process, Intermedia called for the plan to integrate artists into City departments.

In 2013, when the economic and political climate was right, the City wrote a grant to develop Creative CityMaking and place artists trained by the Creative Community Leadership Institute in the Long Range Planning Division of the City’s Community Planning and Economic Development Department to work directly with planners for one year on five area plans. The new program was meant to create new methods for incorporating creative processes into planning projects. This program was an opportunity for artists and planners to work together to enhance normal community engagement processes.

The results of this were powerful. The artists engaged more than 1,800 people, and completed 58 events and dialogues about planning issues. Artists came up with 22 new tools to engage communities. They discovered that planners were most successful in engaging communities of color. This inspired more than \$1,000,000 in grant funding as well as a different culture of integrating creative placemaking into ongoing planning processes. The initial success sparked more grant funding in 2015 for Creative CityMaking to expand into a total of five city departments. As of 2016, the City had started funding positions to sustain an embedded artist because of the value they provide.



Creative CityMaking Minneapolis

Recommendation: Partner with a local arts or community organization to serve as a conduit for community engagement

National City, California – A Reason to Survive (ARTS)

A local model for San Diego is being developed right next door in National City. In 2012, National City asked a local arts program, A Reason to Survive (ARTS), to move into a former library space and start an arts center in partnership with the City to beautify the City. ARTS worked with artists, students, and families to activate the Center and begin community art projects. These projects taught the two organizations how to work together. Together they built a process that utilized creative placemaking to assist students and the community in gaining skills, changing stories, and finding jobs, while also building a local creative economy workforce.

Over time, ARTS established a pool of local creative placemakers by having residents and artists go through an artist training fellowship to build the capacity of artists in the community to work in a grassroots creative placemaking process. The training fellowship became a part of ARTS larger and now well established program Creating Vibrant Neighborhoods Initiative (CVNI).

Through the training program and construction of pilot projects, ARTS built social capital in the community and provided evidence to the City they could be good facilitators for community-led creative placemaking projects. In early 2016, the City formalized the CVNI into a 3-year program to conduct 30 creative placemaking projects in National City.¹⁷

“This is how you build social capital.”
- ARTS CEO Matt D’Arrigo

ARTS established an outreach approach where each project goes through a similar process to ensure genuine community input and engagement. Each project consists of a steering group that has CVNI trained artists, community members, licensed landscape architects, City staff, and City engineers.

In addition to the process created around City funded projects, ARTS and the City are working to allow interested community members to propose, apply, and find funding for community led, City approved projects. ARTS is currently developing an application process and a toolkit with the City to make sure community projects go through an ARTS vetting process before being brought to the City for approval.

A committee called the Creating Vibrant Neighborhoods Steering Group was formed to ensure that the community-led process is multi-disciplinary, fair, and equitable. The steering group is made up of key leaders in government, business, education, nonprofits, and community members. This collaboration ensures that neither ARTS nor the City are making all the decisions for the community, but that the community is truly involved

and engaged. National City is addressing the entire spectrum of creative placemaking with its approach by first engaging and educating the community, building temporary projects, establishing a creative placemaking process for permanent pilot projects, and also developing a process for community-led City approved projects.



Placemaking, National City

Conclusion

San Diego prides itself on its diverse, unique neighborhoods. The City's General Plan is built around the fundamental idea of creating a City of Villages, where "each village will be unique to the community in which it is located. All villages will be pedestrian-friendly and characterized by inviting, accessible and attractive streets and public spaces. Public spaces will vary from village to village, consisting of well-designed public parks or plazas that bring people together."¹⁸

These types of public spaces are in high demand across San Diego's neighborhoods, and residents are willing to step up to implement their own vision of their space. One step the City can take to achieve its own goals, outlined in the General Plan, is to explore creative placemaking and not only allow, but to also encourage communities to work together to create the spaces they want to see. This requires the establishment of a new creative placemaking permit process in partnership with multiple City departments, wPlanning, and the Commission for Arts and Culture.

Endnotes

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