

Northern Michigan Community Placemaking Guidebook



Creating Vibrant Places in Northwest Lower Michigan

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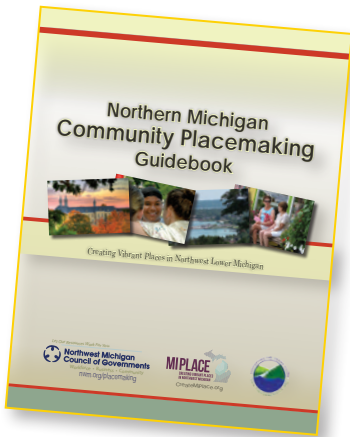
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“Neighborhoods, cities and regions are awakening to the importance of ‘place’ in economic development. They are planning for a future that recognizes the critical importance of quality of life to attracting talent, entrepreneurship and encouraging local businesses. Competing for success in a global marketplace means creating places where workers, entrepreneurs, and businesses want to locate, invest and expand. This work has been described as a “sense of place” or “place-based economic development” or simply “placemaking.”



Economic development and community development are two sides of the same coin. A community without place amenities will have a difficult time attracting and retaining talented workers and entrepreneurs, or being attractive to business.

Each community contributes to the overall success of its region. People, companies and talent do not move to specific communities—they move to regions. Being globally competitive as a region requires understanding, mapping and pooling regional resources and assets. Local governments, the private sector, schools, higher education and nongovernmental and civic organizations must collaborate to make Michigan’s economic regions, and ultimately the state, competitive.”

—Governor Rick Snyder

*Special Message on Community Development and Local Government Reforms
to the Michigan State Legislature, March 21, 2011*

Prologue

Public spaces enrich our social and personal lives. They are where life unfolds—where we take our dogs for a walk, take our kids to the park, have community meetings, meet friends, relax, have a barbecue and more. Collectively, these public spaces greatly impact our communities' sense of place, local identity and quality of life. Often times when there is an issue, problem or shortcoming in the management of these spaces, it may not be easily remedied by traditional methods as laid out by local government or other authorities. The Community Placemaking Guidebook is a resource provided to bridge this gap.

This Guidebook was born out of the Growth and Investment Network, which is part of the overall Grand Vision. The Grand Vision is an ambitious, citizen-led vision for the future of land use, transportation, economic development and environmental stewardship across six counties in northwest lower Michigan. More than 15,000 citizens got involved, and voiced their opinions about this vision. Ultimately, this Guidebook is intended for any person in northwest lower Michigan wishing to create vibrant, prosperous communities.

The Community Placemaking Guidebook follows the tenets of New Designs for Growth and The Grand Vision. It is designed to empower local citizens and unique collaborative groups in communities across northwest lower Michigan with the community pride and Placemaking toolkit that offers critical approaches to creating and managing successful public spaces. The level of a community's local pride plays a significant role in the quality and maintenance of local places, an overall sense of place and identity, and ultimately economic prosperity in the global economy.

The Northern Michigan Community Placemaking Guidebook

I. About this Guidebook

Introduction

“Placemaking” is a term that is not limited to one definition, rather it is associated with a wide range of community improvement strategies/initiatives. These include, but are not limited to, targeting urban and rural community investments that support improvements and expansion of their natural asset-based economies; expanding affordability and type of housing and transportation choices; preserving the scenic beauty of a place; increasing the visibility and connectivity of public art; marketing local products to attract tourists; providing broadband connection in all public places; and implementing “smart growth” practices that allow for appropriate growth that mitigates the negative impacts of sprawl to maintain the identity of communities. The success of a placemaking campaign in Michigan’s new economy depends on places where talented people and their families want to move, stay, and create jobs.



Intended Guidebook Use and Audience

Despite the aforementioned various definitions to placemaking, the Guidebook is designed for anyone who is interested in creating a great public space in their community. It is a tool for those who wish to take a leadership role in placemaking to transform public spaces into great places that increase quality of life and quality of opportunity.



Source: Northwest Michigan Council of Governments

Subject Matter

Section I of the Guidebook defines “placemaking” and its general principles, describes the attributes of successful places, and presents the expected outcomes of placemaking. Section II highlights local examples of placemaking in northwest lower Michigan. Section III offers the placemaker or placemaking group a look into the process of making great places, offering two basic approaches to community placemaking that are broadly applicable and easily adaptable. Community placemaking resources are available in Section IV.

What is Placemaking?

Placemaking is the act of creating great places! Great places share four characteristics: They are easy to get to; they are safe, clean and attractive; they are full of fun activities, and they are friendly places where people want to be.

A space is not a place. In the context of this guide, a “space” is a geographic location on a map. A “place” is not just a geographic location on a map. It also serves numerous community functions and makes people feel good and emotionally attached. Great

places act as drivers of economic development, are a source of community pride, and enrich the quality of our lives.

Placemaking involves identifying spaces that need improvement, assessing their current condition, visioning the future condition, and developing action plans to transform public spaces into great places.

The focus of placemaking in this Guide is on public spaces. Local governments and citizens have the authority to determine the use and design of public spaces, and therefore are capable of transforming the space into a great place. In the context of this guide, placemaking is a citizen-led, grassroots strategy that fosters partnership with public agencies to fulfill community-envisioned outcomes for public spaces.

Examples of public spaces that can become great places are libraries, parks, marinas, public buildings, great vistas, special natural areas, trails, and publicly-owned developable space. Placemaking strategies can be narrowly focused on an intersection or a public park, but can also be focused on an entire community or region. Each strategy will be unique to the community or region's context and needs.



Why is Placemaking Important?

The benefits that yield from grassroots community placemaking go far beyond the development of better spaces for people to enjoy. When public spaces become great places, they tell the story of the community. They become the places where people meet their significant other, diverse cultures are celebrated, and entrepreneurship and ideas are born.

These places strengthen community by building bridges and civic engagement among residents and visitors alike, by nurturing community identity, values

and vision, and by creating an environment that welcomes and attracts ideas and talented people. All of these attributes create a community sense of place that reflects economic prosperity. Having a sense of place not only preserves local quality of life, but also increases economic opportunity and sustainability.

Communities with a strong sense of place each have a unique attractiveness, and when put together, make up a whole region that invites high quality places to live, work, play and visit. As more communities in northern Michigan adopt placemaking strategies and embrace their own unique local sense of place, a regional character that enhances our quality of place, quality of life, and quality of opportunity is linked together. Our regional sense of place and unique identity are vitally important in a globally-competitive economy. Regions, like ours, with a strong sense of place are able to retain and also attract talented workers and employers/entrepreneurs that drive economic innovation, advance our standard of living, and increase prosperity for communities and residents.

Goals of the Guidebook

1. Foster an understanding of the 11 Principles of Placemaking.
2. Introduce the basic elements that create a place where people want to meet neighbors and business may be conducted.
3. Advance the role that placemaking plays in community vitality.
4. Learn steps associated with "creating a great place" in your community.
5. Bring groups of interested residents and elected/appointed local leaders and community leaders together on improving public space.
6. Develop a plan for quick, short-term and long-term ideas and projects to improve a selected public space.
7. Build consensus for future local spaces and places worthy of placemaking and of value to the community.
8. Create a common language helping to communicate the value of placemaking and helping to build placemaking community coalitions.

What Makes a Place Great?

Great places are where people get together for celebrations, social and civic events, and economic activities, as well as where friends run into each other and diverse people have the opportunity to mix. They are the places where we interact with each other and government. These places surround our public buildings and institutions like libraries, field houses, local schools and community colleges. When the spaces are functional and memorable, they strike visitors with an emotional response and the space becomes a "place." How can this emotional response be measured? How can the success of places be measured?

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a nonprofit planning, design and educational organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities. They employ the placemaking approach to help citizens transform their public spaces into vital places that highlight local assets, spur rejuvenation and serve common needs. PPS was founded in 1975 to expand on the work of William (Holly) Whyte, the author of *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. Since then, they have completed projects in over 2,500 communities in 40 countries and all 50 U.S. states. Partnering with public and private organizations, federal, state and municipal agencies, business improvement districts, neighborhood associations and other civic groups, they improve communities by fostering successful public spaces. The PPS diagram depicts the four key attributes of a successful place and the associated intangible qualitative characteristics and key quantitative measurements that can be used to judge the success of a place.



Source: Project for Public Places 2012

II. The Principles of Placemaking

The 11 Principles of Placemaking outlined here have been successfully practiced during nearly four decades of citizen-led community planning and projects by the nonprofit organization, Project for Public Spaces. Each Principle may be different for your community and not all may apply to every project. These Principles also outline much of the philosophy and value of placemaking.

The Eleven Principles

1. The Community is the Expert
2. Create a Place, Not a Design
3. Can't Do It Alone
4. There Will Always be Naysayers
5. Learn by Observing
6. Develop a Vision
7. Functionality Trumps the Form of a Space
8. Critical Mass of Places Creates Synergy
9. Start Small
10. Money is Not the Issue
11. The Work is Never Finished

Source: Project for Public Places 2012

The Community and Residents are the "Experts"

Citizens that regularly visit the public spaces within their neighborhood, village, township, or city are poised to provide the most valuable perspectives and insights into how the local area functions. Community members can also help identify the issues associated with public

spaces throughout their local area. Understanding their talents and ideas and integrating them is essential in the process of creating successful and vital places.

Create a Place, Not a Design

Design is a component of creating a place, but it is not the most important element. Providing clear and open access and creating active ways to utilize the space through social events, recreation, and other enterprises and activities are often more important than design.

Can't Do It Alone (Seek Partnerships)

A successful place requires a dedicated group of interested citizens and local elected/appointed community representatives who are willing to contribute creative ideas to the process. Local people and public/private partners are needed to focus on the health of their community place(s) and consider all the positives that impact the creation of a special and attractive civic space.

There Will Always be Naysayers

Most communities will have some local residents who are uncomfortable about making any changes in the civic spaces that surround them. Hear their voices and consider their concerns. Identify those who share the possibilities and vision for making civic spaces great places—and work together with elected/appointed local representatives to help move the ideas, planning, and process forward.

Learn by Observing

Careful observation of a public space will significantly inform placemakers about how the space is utilized. People will go to great lengths to adapt space to fit their community's needs—the job of the placemaker is to understand these needs and make them easily achievable in the public space provided.

Develop a Vision

Developing a vision for public space(s) in a community is key. It is suggested that the vision address the character, activities, uses, and meaning

of the different spaces in the community as well as be defined by those who utilize them most. A community-level vision can be reached, or a vision that focuses on an individual space. Also, it is important to be honest about the capacity and capabilities of a public space, neighborhood or community when defining a vision of its future. For example, a rural village of 300 people in northwest Michigan might not have the same vision for its public spaces as a neighborhood in mid-town Cadillac.

Functionality Trumps the Form of a Space

Often people think and become concerned about how they will use a space after it has been designed and built. Taking into account the activities that will occur in a space when designing or rehabilitating it can save time and resources through discouraging unnecessary landscaping and other spatial components as well as potentially eliminating the need to retrofit the space in the long-run.

Critical Mass of Places Creates Synergy (Linking Places Attracts People)

When there is a critical mass of things to do within a small walkable area, it creates a sense of place that has buzz and allure, and tends to foster an ever-present bustle of activity. For example, a dog park, coffee and hot dog stand, natural area, and a beach adjacent to one another along a bike path creates synergy where people can constantly be churning in and out of the space as they pass by on their bikes socializing or walking their dogs.

Start Small

Simple, short-term and small-scale actions in a public space such as planting flowers can be a great way to show community members that their ideas can have an impact. Immediate and short-term action takes minimal or no financial investment, and creates flexibility for the space through temporary experiments that can be evaluated and incorporated into successful long-range planning.

Money is Not the Issue

Lack of funding is often used as a reason for community stagnation. Resources are often scarce for specific improvements to public spaces, so remembering that there is inherent value in shared public spaces is critical when working to identify innovative solutions for improving them. Location, level of activity, and public visibility of public spaces, paired with a willingness to work closely with local partners, can elicit opportunities for improvements.

The Power of Linking Numerous Places

“Power of Ten,” a term coined by the Project for Public Spaces, refers to the synergy that results from having a multitude of nearby places and activities.

The “Power of Ten” suggests that every region have 10 major hubs of places to visit. Each of those hubs, such as a city, village or natural area, have at least 10 places to visit within them, and each of those places within the city, village or natural area, offer ten things to do while you visit them.

Ten is a good target, but is not a magic number. The key is to have varying and diverse uses and activities within all places to attract people, give them reasons to spend their time there and motivation to return.

Source: Project for Public Places 2012

The Work is Never Finished

According to the Project for Public Spaces, roughly 80% of the success of any public space can be attributed to its management. The reason this occurs is that a successful place is dynamic and uses are changing on a daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal basis, making the management of the space critical. Since it is certain that changes in the use of a successful place will occur, the challenge is to create a management plan that is flexible enough to respond effectively.

Placemaking Case Studies in Northwest Lower Michigan

Six local examples of successful placemaking across the northwest Michigan region are provided in this section. With every example there is a story of the significance of the place and the corresponding communities that made the place happen. Additionally, specific principles of placemaking as defined by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) are highlighted for each example.

1. The Breezeway



Principles:

The Community is the Expert

Local leaders identified community assets and developed ideas for celebrating those assets to attract visitors and increase community pride.

Start Small

The Breezeway Task Force's first event was The Breezeway Cruise featuring convertibles. They also started a farmers market in Ellsworth and held a Breezeway Garage Sale. Now, six years later, they have received statewide press and visitors drive hours to Breezeway attractions and patron shops along the route.

Money is Not the Issue

The zealous volunteers behind The Breezeway are the key to its success. This is a very motivated group that has the ability to affect positive change!

Background:

"The Breezeway" is a rural ride along County Road 48 (CR-48) from US-31 in Atwood, through Ellsworth and East Jordan, and ending in Boyne Falls at US-131.

The rural route boasts scenic views, recreation amenities, working farms and orchards, galleries, shopping, lodging, and restaurants. The Breezeway brand links the special sense of place that is shared by the rural villages, cities and townships along C-48.



The Breezeway concept came out of the findings of the Chain of Lakes marketing study that identified natural alignments among the communities of the East Jordan Area Chamber of Commerce (Atwood, Ellsworth, and East Jordan). These communities share an agri-tourism industry base, recreation amenities, and a labor market. The communities realized that if they worked together, they could achieve greater prosperity, especially in light of the economic downturn. The Village of Ellsworth had especially seen hard times; the Village's only grocery store and restaurant had been shuttered and action was needed. The community leaders decided that if they wanted to work towards prosperity, they would need to let people know how

Placemaking Case Studies in Northwest Lower Michigan

to get there, and that could happen best through a joint branding initiative.

A zealous group of community leaders, business owners, local officials, and residents got together in 2006 to vision how to brand this stretch of road to get people to travel C-48, stop in the small towns, and visit the local attractions along the way. The Breezeway Task Force was born. Through volunteer marketing initiatives, community-organized events such as farmers markets and festivals, and Chamber-organized events such as business workshops and networking, Breezeway communities have seen an uptick in business activity, including Ellsworth, which in 2011 had fully occupied storefronts.

The Task Force's efforts have allowed them to successfully compete for some grant dollars: They received a \$25,000 grant from Michigan's Centers for Regional Excellence program in 2008 to continue marketing efforts and to add The Breezeway mile marker signs, and a \$5,000 grant from the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments in 2011 for development and marketing of the Ellsworth Farmers Market. Nonetheless, the majority of the work was and continues to be done by the communities' "zealous nuts" with support of the East Jordan Area Chamber of Commerce.

For more information, visit: ridethebreezeway.com or contact the East Jordan Chamber at 231-536-7351.

"If you start with the idea that you focus on place you can turn that to your advantage and realize that every building, every bench, every tree has an opportunity for helping to create place."

—Fred Kent, Project for Public Places

2. Clam River Greenway



Principles:

Can't Do it Alone (Seek Partnerships)

The Project may have been championed by a single individual, but it took the work of hundreds to build and fulfill the community vision.

Start Small

The Greenway Project took more than 10 years to complete, and it was built one segment at a time. The Project partners used early successes to galvanize support.

Background:

Citizens in the City of Cadillac transformed the inaccessible and long neglected Clam River into a beautiful, walkable "green" and "blue" space. The Greenway features a two-mile, ten-foot wide paved trail, boardwalks, and natural areas that runs through the heart of the city. The trail connects a major outdoor sporting complex at the north end with the Keith McKellop Walkway around Lake Cadillac, which in turn connects with the White Pine (State Park) Trail heading south to Big Rapids and Grand Rapids.

Many people did not even know that a river flows

Placemaking Case Studies in Northwest Lower Michigan

through the City of Cadillac. In many areas, dense development abutted the river and it was reduced to a drainage ditch where debris accumulated. In the 1990s, a local citizen and Rotarian, Ed Stehouwer, recognized the Clam River for the asset that it could be and began to organize other community leaders around his vision. As Stehouwer explains, "When you have a good idea, good people are attracted to it."



The Clam River Greenway Project became a joint effort of the Cadillac Rotary Club, City of Cadillac, Visitor and Convention Bureau, Cadillac Area Community Foundation, and the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy. A wide variety of people contributed to the effort, including local businesses, youth groups, City officials, employees of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, MSU Extension, and more. Each partner contributed specific skill sets, including river restoration and research, fundraising, grant writing, acquiring easements and rights-of-way leases, conducting promotional educational programs, volunteer management, acting as fiduciary and contracting with designers and engineers.

Funding came from grants and community donations. "Selling" bricks with one name or business printed on them became one of the long-term fund-raising methods for most of the years of the project. Once those first segments were completed, further support galvanized as people saw and appreciated the potential. With the first segments completed in 2001,

it then became a process of "connecting the dots" to produce a continuous line of trail through the city. Although there were issues of right-of-way (needing to obtain leases from adjacent property owners), bridging over protected wetlands, and similar, Stehouwer, a local who grew up in Cadillac and had made his home in the community, remained the principle champion to its completion in 2009.

The trail is now about two miles long with a total cost of \$800,000. The trail is maintained by the City of Cadillac. Where the Clam River Greenway crosses dense commercial development along Business US-131 the route follows existing city sidewalks – labeled with signs and painted blue footprints as a "portage." A long-term goal is to accommodate the Greenway when that commercial area redevelops.

For more information about the project, call the City of Cadillac at 231-775-0181.

"To be successful we simply have to build better places. We have to build places where young entrepreneurs want to live."

—Bill Rustem, Director of Strategy for Governor Snyder

Placemaking Case Studies in Northwest Lower Michigan

3. Fishtown



Principles:

Create a Place, Not a Design

Fishtown in Leland is a distinctive place because it was created as a working port. The facilities were constructed for practical purposes, and that's one reason why Fishtown's authentic feel compels visitors and locals alike to recognize and appreciate its unique sense of place.

Linking Places Attracts People

An abundance of activities can be found in Fishtown's ¼ square mile of space, and these activities find synergy with neighboring activities at Leland's marina and park, downtown shops and restaurants, Lake Michigan beach, and on the Leland River that connects the "Big Lake" to Lake Leelanau.

Background:

Fishtown is a unique historical attraction at the mouth of the Leland River in Leelanau County. Fishtown is one of the few remaining, unmodernized, active commercial fishing communities on the Great Lakes. It is home to weathered fishing shanties, smokehouses, overhanging docks, small shops, historic fishing tugs and charters. A true working waterfront, Fishtown is one of the only places that the public can still see and feel an

authentic connection to Great Lakes maritime culture. At one time, many waterfronts along the Great Lakes had commercial fishing villages, but nearly all of them are gone, either by neglect or because they have been developed for another purpose. Fishtown in Leland exists because the community and thousands of visitors feel a special connection to the rare historical site. Thanks also go to the Carlson family, a fifth-generation commercial fishing family, and other fishing families, that maintained Fishtown for decades.

The current steward and caretaker of Fishtown is the Fishtown Preservation Society (FPS), a private nonprofit organization formed in 2001 by dedicated community volunteers to promote and preserve the fishing heritage of Fishtown. In 2004, the owners of a large portion of the Fishtown property, the Carlson family, proposed selling their property on the north side of the river. The family and the community were concerned that the property might appeal to developers who would not value the site's historical significance and sense of place. The FPS became the vehicle for the community to acquire Fishtown. In 2007, FPS took over ownership of the two fish tugs, the commercial fishing licenses, and most of the shanties and docks and is still raising funds to complete the purchase and renovations.

Through donations and grant funds, the FPS maintains and protects Fishtown to preserve it for future generations and offers educational and interpretive programs to build awareness and to celebrate one of the Great Lakes last historic fisheries. Each year Fishtown attracts 200,000 visitors, many that return year after year because of Fishtown's unique sense of place.



Visit fishtownmi.org for more information about Fishtown and the Fishtown Preservation Society.

Placemaking Case Studies in Northwest Lower Michigan

4. Grass River Natural Area



Principles:

Functionality Trumps the Form of a Space

Early champions of the Grass River Natural Area (GRNA) knew they wanted to protect the space AND utilize it for educational purposes. With this in mind the trails and facilities were designed around how people would use the space.

The Work is Never Finished

GRNA, Inc. is responsible for the ongoing management of the place, including daily activities and events.

Seek Partnerships

Hundreds of individuals, businesses and foundations have contributed to the success of the project over the past 42 years. Government agencies (Antrim County provides an annual appropriation), foundations, businesses and private individuals by the hundreds have generously supported the initiative making it a truly collaborative community undertaking.

Background:

Nestled in the hills of Antrim County in the northwest corner of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula, the GRNA encompasses lakes, a meandering river, rushing streams and crystal clear creeks — a haven for plant and animal

life, including both rare and endangered species. This natural eco-guardian project lies midway on the renowned Chain of Lakes waterway, a connector of Torch and Clam lakes, and Lake Bellaire.

In the 1960’s, land developers began filling the wetlands in preparation for building sites. A handful of concerned county residents feared that destruction of the natural habitat and ecosystem would harm water quality, wildlife, flora and fauna. Their grassroots efforts and vision, led by Warren Studley, a soil scientist at the Antrim County Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, resulted in a plan that created one of Michigan’s premier nature preserves. Part of Warren’s vision to protect the wetlands was to create environmental education programs to teach future generations about the importance of caring for the wetlands.

Dozens of Antrim County residents supported Warren’s initial efforts to acquire four contiguous parcels of land that were to become the core of the Grass River Natural Area. The Nature Conservancy acquired the land and transferred it to Antrim County in 1977, where



Placemaking Case Studies in Northwest Lower Michigan

it is managed by a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, the Grass River Natural Area, Inc.

The work of GRNA is accomplished through the leadership of an eleven person board of directors, a full-time executive director, a part-time education director and maintenance supervisor, and four part-time naturalist teachers. GRNA is open seven days a week from dawn to dusk and currently receives 30,000 visitors per year to its seven miles of hiking and cross-country skiing trails. Over 1100 school children attend GRNA educational programs during the school year, and hundreds of children and adults attend the over 85 classes and events that are held in the summer. Part of GRNA's mission is to offer free classes and events. In 2011, local schools were granted 383 scholarships so students could attend classes at little or no cost. In October 2011, after 10 years of fundraising, the GRNA opened an educational center.

In the future, GRNA's sustainability will rely mainly on its many volunteers as it has for the past 42 years. The organization is fortunate that so many residents and visitors remain staunch supporters. Most GRNA donors have strong emotional ties, through childhood and family memories, to the natural area. They help sustain GRNA by passing those memories on to their children and grandchildren, thus creating new GRNA supporters.

For more information, visit grassriver.org or contact GRNA at (231) 533-8314.

“Place shapes us. Place defines us.
Place is what forms our identities, our
attitudes, and our relationships.”

—Peter Kageyama, Author, Community Development Expert

5. Honor Area Restoration Project (HARP)



Principles:

Community Vision

HARP has engaged hundreds of local citizens to determine the future of the Honor area.

Money is Not the Issue

Although HARP has now received some grant funds to further the community's vision, the key to the Honor area's success is and will continue to be its people.

Background:

The Honor Area Restoration Project, or HARP, is a private nonprofit organization formed by local residents to return prosperity to the village of Honor and its surrounding areas. HARP's mission is three-fold: preserve history and protect local resources; encourage informed growth and development; and promote fiscal, recreational, and educational initiatives that benefit citizens of all ages. Since 2010, HARP has organized an "Envision Honor" community visioning exercise and has received grants to support the development of a plan and implementation strategy for restoring Honor.

Shantel Seller, a native of Honor, returned to her hometown after spending some time away, and found that it no longer had the strength and activity that she remembered. In an effort to do her part to restore Honor, she renovated her childhood home in

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the downtown. This was a notable improvement to the community, but it was not enough. Shantel realized that it would take the involvement of the entire community to better the area. In 2010, Shantel organized a group of people, mostly family and friends, to discuss how to restore Honor.

From an initial conversation with a small group of family and friends came a formal nonprofit organization that has engaged hundreds of citizens, dozens of businesses, and area local governments for the betterment of the Honor area. Two organizations helped to formalize citizens' efforts into a tax-deductible nonprofit: The Alliance for Economic Success facilitated community conversations and helped formulate the organizational structure and NorthSky Nonprofit Network assisted the then citizen group through the process of forming the nonprofit, HARP. The organization, in partnership with the Village government, has received grants from Rotary Charities of Traverse City, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development, and Northwest Michigan Council of Governments to further their vision and create an actionable plan for restoration of the Honor area.



HARP now meets monthly and maintains three committees—the Garden Club, Historical Society, and Fall Festival Committee. All business is conducted in the manner of HARP's five core values: positive approach, nonpolitical, volunteer-based, community-driven, and complete transparency. As Ingemar Johansson, president of HARP, explains, "Everyone is a part of the process and everyone's opinion is equal."

Visit restorehonor.org for more information.

6. The Village at Grand Traverse Commons



Principles:

There will always be naysayers

The Minervini Group and the Grand Traverse Commons Redevelopment Corporation worked together to develop a common vision.

Linking Places Attracts People

The Village has a buzz of activity that creates an alluring vibe and gives it a "sense of place."

Seek Partnerships

Public and private interests converged to make the redevelopment possible.

Background:

The Village at Grand Traverse Commons is a cluster of mixed-use residential, retail, and office spaces in the former, and fantastically renovated, State Hospital (Traverse City Regional Psychiatric Hospital), set among 480 acres of preserved parkland. The Village is home to unique shops and eateries, residential condos, professional services, and is host to a variety of festivals, concerts, farmers and artist markets.

The State Hospital in Traverse City was closed in 1989 following changes in patient care. Due to enormous pressure from citizen groups and local governments, the state transferred the historic property to the

Placemaking Case Studies in Northwest Lower Michigan

City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield (and later, Grand Traverse County) under the management of the Grand Traverse Commons Redevelopment Corporation. For the next 10 years, numerous developers, state and local government entities, and citizens were involved in formulating plans for the then vacant and quickly deteriorating buildings and surrounding land. Contentious issues and financial challenges nearly resulted in much of the complex being leveled.



In July of 2000 developer Ray Minervini, along with his team, The Minervini Group, began negotiating with the Grand Traverse Commons Redevelopment Corporation to secure a Redevelopment Agreement to renovate the historic buildings in a way consistent with the Commons District Plan. After several months of negotiations, and with intensified public support, the Commons Board voted to approve The Minervini Group proposal. In May 2002, The Minervini Group acquired the property and immediately began to replace the roof on Building 50, the Chapel, and two cottages to preserve these assets while the phased redevelopment could be completed.

By 2011, 30% of the redevelopment was completed or in progress. The first phase residential and commercial units had full occupancy. When the redevelopment is complete, The Village will encompass almost 900,000 square feet, will have generated approximately \$180 million in investment, and will create nearly 1,000 jobs.

Mr. Minervini and associates are committed to the success of this project because they believe in putting people first. Mr. Minervini has traveled Europe and witnessed firsthand villages that have thrived for hundreds of years because they provide spaces and services to enhance conviviality among people. The Village is a multi-economic, multi-generational place that nurtures social gatherings and diverse interests. The Village is a beautifully designed space that simultaneously celebrates and transcends its asylum history, but the real key to its success is that it is a functional place that fulfills a community-oriented vision.

The success could not have been achieved alone: This private sector-led redevelopment was done in concert with public bodies of the Grand Traverse Commons Redevelopment Corporation and relies upon public and private financing. The Village at Grand Traverse Commons is the only Renaissance Zone in northwest lower Michigan, which allows residents and businesses to live and operate virtually tax-free through 2017. Financing for the project was secured through the Grand Traverse County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority; the former Michigan Department of Environmental Quality; Federal and State Historic Preservation Tax Credits; other tax abatements, public sector grants and loans; reservations from commercial and residential buyers; and other private investment.

Visit thevillageetc.com or contact Ray Minervini at 231.941.1900 x16 for more information about The Village at Grand Traverse Commons.

“People pick place now. People pick place over jobs, people pick place over a whole bunch of different things. So we’ve got to have competitive places. We’ve got to have places people want to be in.”

—Dan Gilmartin, Michigan Municipal League

III. The Community Placemaking Process

Community placemaking is a fluid process with a variety of steps. The sections outlined in the Guide are suggestions on engagement techniques and material resources for community placemaking strategies. It is important to note that placemaking is not a “one size fits all” prescriptive process, but rather it must take the form of the general make-up of the community to determine:

- **Formality of the process** — will meetings be held at a coffee house, bar, or community facilities?
- **Level of engagement** — will this be action oriented or a purely informative placemaking campaign?
- **Size and scope** — to what magnitude will a place be created?



Source: Northwest Michigan Council of Governments



Build Partnerships

The effectiveness of a community placemaking process is largely a result of a community’s level of engagement, commitment and flexibility to cater to the process that fits to their unique situation. Building partnerships with key stakeholders from both the business or nonprofit sectors and uniting members of the community that are committed to implementation efforts around a common goal are the beginning stages of a placemaking campaign. This common goal may include anything from improving a local park, to starting a broad-based community-wide branding campaign.

Helpful methods used to enlist stakeholders in the community to become active participants in the placemaking process include:

- Mentioning efforts in the local newspaper;
- Writing a letter or email to community stakeholders explaining the benefits of the community placemaking process;
- Undertaking a phone call campaign to inform community stakeholders;
- Giving a presentation (or have one facilitated by NWMCOG and/or partners) on the advantages of placemaking at community meetings.

“Programs like Michigan Main Street provide downtown communities with the tools needed to develop thriving downtowns. In turn, these tools can be used to create jobs, provide desirable places to live and build a sense of place for Michigan residents.”

—Gary Heidel, Executive Director, MSHDA

Community Placemaking Group

After a group of stakeholders, citizens and volunteers who are interested in actively engaging in the placemaking process are identified, a coalition of these interested participants may want to take form for the purpose of leading the community placemaking charge. A collection of interested stakeholders that are actively seeking to bring about a formal change in their community through the placemaking process are commonly referred to as a Community Placemaking Group (CPG). Effective CPG meeting activities typically include:

- *Meet in a public place.* Placemaking is all about increasing the viability of public places, and by meeting in a public place the group may attract new members as curious individuals may ask questions and ultimately want to become more engaged.
- *Introductions and personal mission statements.* A productive way to start the first placemaking meeting is by having all members introduce themselves, where they live within the community and why they are in attendance. This is a helpful exercise to have people become familiar with each other and can assist in the discussion of determining the community's critical spaces.
- *Brainstorming sessions* where all group members should share their thoughts openly.
- *Utilizing maps* and multi-colored dots to decide on the "best," "worst," and "most potential," spaces in a geographic area for improvement. The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments can help facilitate this aspect of the meeting through the provision of general maps which can include areas currently zoned as public spaces in the community.
- *List changes* that the community would like to see and the spaces that would be impacted by those changes the community wishes to implement.
- *Inventory public and shared community spaces* that were identified as high priority improvement areas. They should not be limited to a fixed number, but rather continue to be dynamic in time if necessary.

The Placemaking Workshop

Once the Community Placemaking Group is established along with set geographic boundaries and list of public spaces, the public will be able to engage in a workshop setting to identify and prioritize public spaces in need of improvements. A placemaking workshop may help to provide a more complete list of places in the community and help prioritize places. It is critical to identify and determine the challenges and issues associated with the targeted sites. It would also be valuable to list the basic shortcomings of those sites (i.e. amount of shade, condition of benches, underutilized space, etc.).



Placemaking Workshop Preparation

1. Community members are experts about the spaces they use most often. Their input is crucial to determining the most appropriate action to be taken within these places. Offering the opportunity for public input and involvement will garner more support for a vision than a closed process carried out by few individuals.
2. Leveraging network resources or finding ways to raise funds for materials may be necessary. There are numerous organizations that offer grants and technical assistance opportunities for Placemaking processes—contact the NWMCOG or see the Resources chapter to locate organizations with services that may help.
3. Members of the CPG should be able to accurately articulate the placemaking process. It is important that the placemaking workshop is held in a well-known community space that is large enough to accommodate all attendees. Contact the NWMCOG for services related to consultation and facilitation of the placemaking workshop.

Workshop Execution

1. Public input offered at the placemaking workshop will play a critical role in defining whether a community is geared towards a single-place or a multiple-place approach to placemaking. This event should represent a diverse public cross-section from a defined community area. Groups will form during the workshop and prioritize the need for placemaking strategy at select locations. This community-wide prioritization process should result in a single or multiple placemaking preference. Promote this workshop as an all-inclusive community effort to improve and enhance local places. By garnering community support initially, efforts can be maximized as the community develops places. This support will be critical during the implementation phase.

2. Before deciding on a placemaking strategy, assess momentum, input, and level of commitment of community members. A post-placemaking workshop meeting of the CPG would be appropriate in deciding which approach is most relevant in a given community.



Follow-Up

1. Summarize activities of the placemaking workshop and distribute amongst attendees as well as potential funding sources. This level of community commitment can be leveraged into funding opportunities for place improvements.

2. Keep the momentum going by continuing the conversation with the staff from the local government and elected body and inform them of how the process is moving forward. Local government officials are critical stakeholders as they are responsible for overseeing

zoning regulations, permits, and ordinances that may affect short or long-term plans for a public space. NWMCOG can assist in contacting and presenting the placemaking process to public elected/appointed officials.



Place Assessments and Place Audits

Specific tools designed to assess and audit the functionality of public spaces have been designed by the Project for Public Spaces, and augmented to fit the role of the Community Placemaking Guidebook.

Under a single-place approach, the CPG studies and analyzes the primary place as identified in the workshop by utilizing placemaking assessment and audit techniques.

Under a multiple-place approach, the CPG must create several site-specific action groups. The CPG will also act as the organizer of each site-specific group and schedule meetings so that each group may provide updates on their progress.

Site-specific groups will be able to conduct a more thorough assessment of each space in the form of the "Do-It-Yourself Checklist" (see Appendix, pg. 26). The checklist is a more detailed representation of how places fulfill the four criteria as depicted in the Place Diagram. Visiting the site will enable members to have a fresh perspective on the details of the place. A successful place audit includes observation at various times of the day, including weekends, especially during times of peak and low volume usage.

To complete a thorough place audit process, the following placemaking documents are available in the Appendix of this Guidebook.

- Place Evaluation Form (pg. 24)
- Behavior Mapping Form (pg. 28)

After communities complete a place audit, creating a summary report that contains information from the group's primary field observations, along with listing proposed mitigation measures and key partners and stakeholders will help to determine the next steps in the placemaking process.

Steps to Developing a Plan

1. Produce what the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) refers to as a Visual Concept Plan (VCP). Developing a VCP does not necessarily need to involve an architect, rather a person or group who has a good eye for what makes a space both appealing and useful. VCP helps to visualize proposed changes to the prioritized public space by incorporating pictures, renderings, charts, or text into the placemaking process.
2. Formalize action steps determined by the place evaluations and summary report.
3. List implementation partners and funding estimates.

	Contact Person	Implementation Partners	Status	Funding Estimate	Deadline for Completion
Activities and Events					
Amenities					
Other Improvements					

Short-Term Actions

Implementation

Adding new activities are among the best short-term improvements to a public place. Basic activities such as temporary projects (clean-ups/paintings), sidewalk sales, farmers markets, bicycle rides, etc. that will bring people together do not require much funding, and are fairly easy to organize.

Communication

Meet regularly to review progress updates on assigned actions, programming proposals, and management-related issues. Record and share successes through various means of communication (local news sources, The Grand Vision website, etc.) to generate enthusiasm for the placemaking process.

The Community Placemaking Group and site-specific action groups should meet to assess the results of the short-term improvements, revise the Action Plans accordingly, then develop long-term design and management plans.

“Stakeholders across Michigan are realizing that placemaking strategies can help rebuild our economy and encourage more people to live in our state.”

—Beth Foley, President, Michigan Association of Realtors

Long-Term Design Plans

A Long-Term Design Plan includes longer-term and more complex improvements. In order to ensure a thorough plan, there must be input from professionals, such as urban planners, engineers, architects, professors, etc. Some helpful tips to develop the next phase of improvements, as well as the longer term design plan include:

- Refer back to the Summary Report and use it to guide new partners that have been brought into the process.
- The site-specific action groups should be referred to as the “client” where the design team reports to them for the design approval.
- Hold regular progress meetings with the site-specific action groups and broader Community Placemaking Group and design team, with specific timelines and products to be reviewed.
- Use these meetings to conduct additional brainstorming with the established placemaking groups to address new issues that have been identified.
- Continue to reflect preferred improvements to a place (based on Place Evaluation Forms).
- Hold public meetings to present the work of the design team before everything is “final” to allow for new ideas and public reaction/changes.
- Build excitement about the proposed plan, using local media, public pictures, and illustrations from the plans.

Long-Term Management Plans

A Placemaking Management plan (PMP) is similar to a local government’s Capital Improvement Plan. However, instead of managing all infrastructure, a PMP, through the cooperation of the local community or business organizations, manages space on a humanistic level—the goal of which is to make a place inviting so that people will consistently want to re-visit. The strategy of this type of plan can be compared to the management of a good hotel that does everything it can to ensure their guests have a great experience. A good hotel not only cleans and maintains, but makes a concerted effort to draw in the public by providing an outside sidewalk café; answering questions and

responding to complaints; hosting events; addressing a range of other customer-responsive details; etc.

PMPs should be tailored to the function of space, i.e., a farmers market will employ a different strategy than a small urban park. The local unit of government may be able to help with some tasks from the placemaking process. Most other tasks should be led by neighborhood groups, volunteers, a local business group, institutions within close proximity to the place, or new organizations. Additionally, it is helpful to interview people who are currently managing the place to determine how the new PMP will impact the overall operations of the place.

Assess Results

Success of placemaking efforts in one area of the community or in one municipality will likely initiate other groups to start their own placemaking process. The following are ideas on how to continue implementation of the placemaking process and replicate:

- Add additional places, projects, necessary partners, and funds needed to the placemaking process material as it evolves.
- Hold public meetings to present any changes made to the Action, Design, or Management Plans. Suggest new places that could benefit from the placemaking process.
- The placemaking process should not prescribe outcomes, however information should be included in the Plans that outline the basic uses and functions of local economic development groups such as a Downtown Development Authority, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Charities, etc.



IV. Appendix & Resources

Place Evaluation Form

(created by the Project for Public Spaces and the Metropolitan Planning Council)

Site _____

Rate the Place

Comfort and Image	Poor			Good	Notes
Overall attractiveness	1	2	3	4	
Feeling of safety	1	2	3	4	
Cleanliness/Quality of Maintenance	1	2	3	4	
Comfort of places to sit	1	2	3	4	

Comments/Notes:

Access & Linkages	Poor			Good	Notes
Visibility from a distance	1	2	3	4	
Ease in walking to the place	1	2	3	4	
Transit access	1	2	3	4	
Clarity of information/signage	1	2	3	4	

Comments/Notes:

Uses & Activities	Poor			Good	Notes
Mix of stores/services	1	2	3	4	
Frequency of events/activities	1	2	3	4	
Overall activity of area	1	2	3	4	
Economic vitality	1	2	3	4	

Comments/Notes:

Sociability	Poor			Good	Notes
Number of people in groups	1	2	3	4	
Evidence of volunteerism	1	2	3	4	
Sense of pride and ownership	1	2	3	4	
Presence of children and seniors	1	2	3	4	

Comments/Notes:

Place Evaluation Form (continued)

(created by the Project for Public Spaces and the Metropolitan Planning Council)

Identify Opportunities

1. What do you like best about this place?

2. List things that you would do to improve this place that could be done right away and that wouldn't cost a lot:

3. What changes would you make in the long term that would have the biggest impact?

4. Ask someone who is in the place what they like about it and what they would do to improve it. Their answer:

5. What local partnerships or local talent can you identify that could help implement some of your proposed improvements? Please be as specific as possible.

Do-It-Yourself Checklist

(created by the Project for Public Spaces and the Metropolitan Planning Council)

Access

Yes	No	N/A		Notes
			Is the entrance visible from a distance?	
			Is it easy to identify what is going on in the place?	
			Is the primary use or mission of the tenant agencies easily identifiable? Are there signs or other visual cues that convey information about it?	
			Is there adequate directional signage, maps and location information?	
			Can people easily get there (e.g. they don't have to dart through traffic)?	
			Do sidewalks, paths, or roads match up with the directions in which people wish to go?	
			Can people use a variety of transportation options (bus, train, car, bicycle) to get to the place?	
			Does the place function for people with special needs (is it ADA-compliant)?	
			Do vehicles dominate pedestrian use of the space or prevent them from getting to it?	

Comfort & Image

Yes	No	N/A		Notes
			Does the place make a good first impression, both from afar and upon entering?	
			Are there more women present than men?	
			Is there a choice of places to sit (for example, either in the sun or shade)?	
			Is there appropriate weather protection (umbrellas, shelters, etc.)?	
			Is the space clean and free of litter?	
			Does the space and surrounding area feel safe?	
			Does the place meet the needs of the people using it?	

Do-It-Yourself Checklist (continued)

(created by the Project for Public Spaces and the Metropolitan Planning Council)

Uses & Activities

Yes	No	N/A		Notes
			Are people present?	
			Is the place used by a range of ages and types of people?	
			Do people tend to use the space alone, or do they cluster in groups?	
			Do several types of activities occur – for example, walking, eating, relaxing, reading, socializing, meetings, etc.?	
			Are many or most parts of the space used?	
			Are there obvious choices of things to do – that is, evidence of events and activities that take place (e.g. a schedule, a stage)? Is there information about who is responsible for events?	
			Does the place's design relate to and support events that take place there?	
			Is there a management presence or other evidence that someone is in charge of the place?	
			Do the uses and activities benefit building visitors and employees?	

Sociability

Yes	No	N/A		Notes
			Would you choose to meet your friends in this place?	
			Are people talking with each other?	
			Are they smiling?	
			Do people seem to know each other by face or name?	
			Do strangers make eye contact with each other?	
			Is there a mix of ages and ethnic groups that generally reflects the community at large?	
			Do people tend to pick up litter when they see it?	
			Do building employees volunteer to help program or maintain the place?	

Behavior Mapping Form

(created by the Project for Public Spaces and the Metropolitan Planning Council)

Pedestrian Count Form

Counting is a systematic method of gathering numerical data about people, vehicles, or anything else in a specific location. Use counts to determine instances as to how many people enter at a particular place, how vehicles use the streets, and whether or when a particular path is crowded. Counts may also be useful in identifying area demographics (e.g. the percentage of people over the age of 60). This is only a template and does not necessarily need to be used verbatim. Tailor each form to a specific place.

Date: _____ Duration of Count: _____

Location: _____ Observer: _____

Group #	Gender	Age						Activity							
		0-6	7-14	15-20	21-40	41-60	60+	Sitting Bench	Sitting Ground	Socializing	Observing	Eating	Sleeping	Reading	Sports
1															
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															
11															
12															

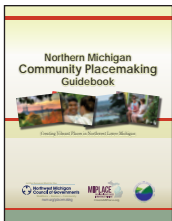
Local Resources

Let Our Resources Work For You.



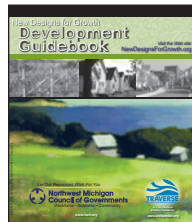
Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NWMCOG) is a 10-county public agency providing workforce development, economic development, and regional planning services in Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford counties. The NWMCOG's Regional Planning and Community Development Department's goal is to be a planning resource, enabling and enhancing the region's ability to preserve and create high quality of life conditions.

View the Placemaking video & Guidebook: nwm.org/placemaking
Visit the website: nwm.org



The **Northern Michigan Community Placemaking Guidebook** is intended to be the resource for communities who desire to transform their spaces into Great Places. The website provides access to the Northern Michigan Placemaking Guidebook and provides an opportunity to share and view placemaking best practices throughout the region.

Visit the website: CreateMiPlace.org



The **New Designs for Growth Guidebook**, designed specifically for northwest lower Michigan, stems from the premise that growth in the region is inevitable and that development, with good planning and design, can be compatible with the landscape. Communities in northwest lower Michigan have choices on how they want to grow, and the New Designs for Growth Guidebook serves as a reference manual on ways to achieve development which protects peoples' choices, community character, and economic opportunities.

Visit the website: NewDesignsForGrowth.org



For more information about placemaking in northwest lower Michigan, visit



Northern Michigan Community Placemaking Guidebook

Creating Vibrant Places in Northwest Lower Michigan

Let Our Resources Work For You.



**Northwest Michigan
Council of Governments**

Workforce • Business • Community

nwm.org/placemaking

