

MY MAIN STREET  
MA RUE PRINCIPALE

# PLACEMAKING TOOLKIT



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# ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

**We're looking to fund amazing, ambitious and impactful placemaking projects through the My Main Street Community Activator.**

The My Main Street Community Activator provides support for placemaking projects in Southern Ontario that are designed to draw visitors and increase local vibrancy. The program aims to support local initiatives to revitalize neighborhoods and reimagine centres of community and economic importance or potential, including main streets, downtown strips and plazas.

This Toolkit provides information and practical tips for developing a great project. It was developed for applicants to the My Main Street Community Activator program.

Great placemaking ideas and projects can come from anywhere, and we want our applicants to represent a diverse array of organizations, perspectives and partnerships. To help bring great ideas to life, this Toolkit outlines some processes and practical steps to bring a placemaking concept to reality.

The Toolkit includes:

- A definition of placemaking and other key concepts
- A description of the benefits of placemaking and how this applies to “main street” revitalization
- Practical advice, checklists and questions to consider at each stage of the placemaking process
- An explanation of how placemaking can create economic and social benefits
- Tips for how to ensure a project provides sustainable results
- Case studies that demonstrate best practices in placemaking

## ABOUT MY MAIN STREET COMMUNITY ACTIVATOR

My Main Street is a \$23.25-million investment to help drive business and restore vibrancy to local communities across southern Ontario in the aftermath of COVID-19. It is a partnership between the Economic Development Council of Ontario and the Canadian Urban Institute and is funded by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

My Main Street Community Activator is looking to support local placemaking projects that make a meaningful difference in local communities, drawing people out, strengthening feelings of connection and inclusion, and spurring economic activity. The program will provide support for at least 140 projects, with at least 25 per cent supporting communities with populations of 100,000 or less, in amounts of up to \$250,000.

Year Two (2022) applications are open December 1, 2021 to February 1, 2022. This will fund projects that are planned, completed or underway in 2022, with reimbursements offered for work completed between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.

Funding is being prioritized for projects that support sustainable placemaking strategies for their geographic area and that are designed to support economic and social benefits for equity seeking groups, including Indigenous communities, Black communities, other racialized groups, newcomers, youth (39 and under), people living with disabilities, the unhoused, low-income people, Francophone, women, Trans or non-binary people, and LGBTQ+ communities.

More information about the program and eligibility criteria can be found here: <https://mymainstreet.ca/activator-program>



# WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

# 2



## 2.1 PLACEMAKING IS..

Let's start at the very beginning. What exactly is placemaking? It's something policymakers and city planners talk about, but what does it really mean and why does it matter to Canadian communities?

**My Main Street defines placemaking as:**

**A process where people work together to reimagine and reshape their community in order to strengthen feelings of connection and spur economic activity.**

Placemaking is focused on specific geographic places – the streets, sidewalks, parks, buildings and neighbourhoods – that make up a community.

A neighbourhood “main street” doesn't have to run through the centre of town. It could surround the central gathering place of an Indigenous community, or a strip mall that's central to a certain community's shopping or recreational habits.

When people work together to improve these places and enhance the public realm, it creates strengthened connections between people and their community, promotes feelings of belonging and supports economic vibrancy by attracting more visitors.

The best placemaking comes from the ground up. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets and builds off the unique personality, history and qualities of a place. It requires looking at, listening to and asking questions of the people who live, work and play in that place to discover their needs and aspirations.

Placemaking projects often have a short-time frame, or can be completed quickly as compared to longer-term planning and infrastructure projects, but they are meant to build sustainable benefits to a community by making people think and feel differently about a place or space.

My Main Street is also committed to ensuring that this funding supports the work of Indigenous governments, corporations and organizations. In the Indigenous context, placemaking or placekeeping can be any work that seeks to reassert, maintain or celebrate the Indigenous identity, promote or expand cultural connection and support the ongoing efforts of reconciliation and self determination.

**A good placemaking project:**

- Is built on the unique qualities and character of a place
- Promotes collaboration
- Is inclusive and promotes equity by making everyone feel welcome
- Benefits local businesses and supports the economy
- Creates sustainable change

## 2.2 TYPES OF PLACEMAKING PROJECTS

In practice, placemaking can take many forms — events that draw people into a community, murals that brighten neglected streetscapes and celebrate local artists, seating and temporary patios that allow people to gather safely outdoors, new strategies for using neglected or empty spaces and more.

My Main Street Community Activator accepts applications for three categories of placemaking projects:

### Events and Activations

Short, limited or repeating community events or activations which intend to draw an audience, respond to an underserved market demand, enhance community connection or create an appealing destination, positioning the area as a center of community and economic activity.

Examples:

- A public market that celebrates local cuisine, supports local vendors and helps address food vulnerability
- A physically-distanced outdoor performance, featuring artists that appeal to specific demographics
- A visioning 'block party' that engages community members in identifying new ideas for a main street
- A campaign to attract an underrepresented demographic group of visitors, driving connection and feelings of belonging in a specific place
- Indigenous gatherings or celebrations intended to strengthen a sense of identity and culture



## Community Improvements

Above-grade enhancements to streetscape, design, landscaping and amenities that support the transformation of a specific geographic area by enhancing the physical and visual assets that can set the area apart.

- A series of pop-up parkettes on vacant properties and parking lots
- Comfort stations for vulnerable populations that include amenities such as showers, washrooms and hand washing stations
- An Indigenous led mural or art installation that celebrates and promotes feeling of identity and connection to culture
- Beautification of a local strip mall or shopping district that is central to a demographic of new Canadians
- Warming huts that encourage people to stop, rest and warm up on main streets during winter
- The installation of fairy lights in an underused lot or area, creating a sense of warmth, beauty and security



## Policy and Capacity Building

The development of strategies, partnerships and capacities that will facilitate a focused, deliberate path to revitalizing or strengthening a downtown or commercial district's economy through intentional and creative placemaking.

**Eligible work could include inclusion training, strategy development and recovery action plans.**

- A sustainable placemaking strategy for a downtown strip that engages stakeholders from various equity-seeking groups
- Establishment of a multi-disciplinary working group to develop a main street recovery action plan
- A study to identify barriers to main street businesses within municipal zoning standards (i.e., patio footprints, permissible industrial uses) and provide specific recommendations that could facilitate localized economic growth and support equity-seeking groups
- A series of workshops that build the capacity of businesses to manage local inclusion and safety issues
- A project that uses data and engagement to understand local demographics and the needs and aspirations of a community

For more project examples visit:

**<https://mymainstreet.ca/news/examples-of-eligible-community-activator-projects>**



## 2.3 IMPACTS AND BENEFITS OF PLACEMAKING

Placemaking yields a whole range of social and economic benefits, which makes it a powerful tool to support communities in recovering from COVID-19 and revitalizing main streets and commercial districts. An understanding of these benefits is important to a discussion of placemaking and helpful in designing projects that have the greatest impact.



Some of the ways placemaking can benefit main street communities include:

- **Increased social capital and new ideas.** When communities are empowered to shape their local neighbourhoods, they have greater voice, influence and stronger local connections. This leads to a unique sense of place and strengthens people's connection to their neighbourhood. The placemaking process also creates new partnerships and alliances that can help when tackling other complex problems – like public transportation, development and complete streets.
- **More inclusive communities.** Placemaking provides a platform for engaging traditionally underserved communities and can help address isolation and polarization. When done right, it can energize marginalized groups with a sense of belonging and ownership that traditional methods of engagement sometimes fail to achieve.
- **Increased footfall, business activity and business engagement.** A pleasant, well-maintained and well-programmed public realm increases the number of people who will visit an area, which leads to increased footfall and potential customers for local businesses. Places that are inclusive, where different groups feel comfortable, will attract a greater diversity of people and unlock more economic potential. Events and activations can also include opportunities for local vendors to participate. More broadly, placemaking projects can shape the image of a place and define its competitive advantage, which helps to attract tourists and visitors, as well as investors.
- **Spin off benefits to the local economy.** A high quality public realm and vibrant local culture can significantly improve the liveability of a local area, which has been shown to attract private investment, new businesses and skilled workers.
- **Increased opportunities for social activity and stronger community ties.** Placemaking projects provide an approachable way for people to come together. It creates opportunities for people to gather, socialize and exchange ideas, which builds trust and creates stronger community connections.
- **Improvements to mental and physical health.** Public spaces with good quality design, security, cleanliness and attractiveness have been shown to promote active lifestyles and improve people's mental wellbeing.



# IDEAS FOR AN EFFECTIVE PLACEMAKING PROCESS

# 3





Every placemaking project is unique and will follow a slightly different process. But generally, whether it's an event, community improvement, policy or capacity building initiative, projects will go through the same steps: Ideation, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation. Engagement usually happens throughout the entire process.

This section includes some ideas on how to execute each step, and questions to consider as you are planning and implementing your project.

## A PHASE 1 IDEATION

Placemaking projects usually start with identifying a change you want to see — a challenge that you are trying to solve or an opportunity you are trying to seize. *My Main Street is looking for projects that draw visitors and increase local vibrancy to help drive business and restore vibrancy to local communities in the aftermath of COVID-19.*

Once you have an idea, or even before you have a solid idea, you will want to speak to local stakeholders. This can be a formal ideation workshop, but may be as simple as doing on-site interviews or picking up the phone and calling some local community groups and business owners. You may also identify particular groups that you want to be part of your core team and establish partnerships during the ideation phase.

The ideation phase should also involve identifying local assets — the people, resources and unique qualities that can be leveraged and built upon as part of the placemaking project.

### Questions to answer during Ideation:

- Is there a particular place (street, public space, area) that would benefit from investment of time and money? What challenges are local businesses and communities in this place facing? What are the opportunities to draw visitors and increase the local vibrancy of this place?
- What are the local assets, strengths and unique qualities of this place that should be celebrated and/or leveraged?
- Who are the stakeholders that would know most about the space/issue and how can you learn from them and/or involve them at this early stage?
- Are there groups or organizations that would help to make the project a success (i.e. as partners, sponsors, funders)?
- What change are we hoping to achieve?
- Do we want to enhance something we have done before or try something new?

### Who Are Your Stakeholders?

Stakeholders are anyone who might have a direct connection or interest in the project or space. These may include:

- **Community.** Residents, resident groups, neighbourhood associations, interest-based community groups, condo associations, individuals and groups representing equity-seeking communities.
- **Business/private sectors.** business improvement areas (BIAs) / business improvement districts (BIDs), local businesses, local developers, co-working spaces, entrepreneurs, landlords.
- **Institutional.** Area schools, nearby post-secondary educational institutions, cultural or religious associations that operate in or near the space.
- **Government.** City staff, councillors, public health authorities.

## B PHASE 2 PROJECT PLANNING

The planning phase works out the details that will enable successful implementation of an idea. It includes developing a detailed vision, work plan, budget, funding strategy and evaluation plan. The plan may include details about maintenance, evaluation and project sustainability.

Engagement of community, businesses and other local stakeholders is almost always a critical part of the planning phase. A stakeholder mapping exercise may be helpful to identify the people, businesses and organizations you want to engage with and how they fit together.

You will likely want to consult with Indigenous leadership or city staff at this stage (i.e. departments of urban planning, community services, transportation, parks), as well as the local Councillor and possibly technical experts (planners, architects, engineers, landscape architects) who can help transform the idea into reality.

As you are planning your project, you will need to identify and apply for any necessary permits and approvals, such as events permits and street occupation permits. Liability insurance is often a requirement of city permits. If you don't have insurance yourself, you may be able to partner with a local organization such as the BIA and use their liability insurance.

*My Main Street requires that applicants have the ability to obtain all necessary licences and permits in relation to their project, satisfying the requirements of all regulating bodies of their appropriate jurisdiction. These permits do not need to be in place when applications are submitted, but applicants must have an understanding of what permissions will be required and a plan to attain them.*

### Questions to answer during Planning:

- What are the specific steps that need to be taken to implement the project?
- What ongoing management, maintenance and resourcing is required to ensure the project is a success?
- Who are the individuals or groups that would have an interest in this project?  
How can we engage or collaborate with them during planning and implementation?
- Which city departments should be informed and/or engaged in the project?
- Are there any technical experts that would help to make the project a success?
- Are there permits or approvals needed? Do we need insurance?
- How much will the project cost? How will we fund the project?
- How will we measure success? What baseline information do we need to collect?



## C PHASE 3 IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation phase is when you get to see your project come to life. Ideally, implementation looks a lot like the work plan you already developed, but most likely there will be a need to make adjustments along the way. It's important to monitor progress, and be open to adapting your project to make it work better. This can come from your own observations as well as feedback collected from stakeholders as the project is being carried out.

As your project is happening, you will want to document and share your successes in order to continue to generate enthusiasm and support for the project. This could include taking pictures, collecting and sharing stories on social media or other forms of communication.

*My Main Street is looking for applicants who are willing to participate in announcements, events and storytelling initiatives related to their project, its impact on community vibrancy and its funding through the My Main Street program.*

Questions to answer during Implementation:

- What is working well? What changes can I make to make the project more effective?
- Who would benefit from hearing about the project as it progresses?
- How can we best document and communicate the results of the project to maintain momentum and enthusiasm?



## D PHASE 4 MEASURING SUCCESS

It's important to start thinking about measuring success well before the project is complete. Well measured and evaluated project outcomes can help to provide a sense of accomplishment for stakeholders and participants, and make the case for ongoing intervention, future funding and permanent projects.

Evaluation starts with asking what change you are trying to make and then collecting evidence – through data, stories, images and other means of feedback that show how things went.

Below are some examples of the types of data that can help to demonstrate the success of your project.

Measuring your success is one of the most important things you can do to build sustainable support over time.

*My Main Street asks applicants to define success in terms of outcomes and then identify a clearly articulated plan to measure success.*

Keep in mind that the benefits of placemaking can be as much or more about the processes as the end product. So when you're evaluating outcomes, think about who and how many people were involved, the partnerships that were built, and any positive outcomes that result from those partnerships.

### **Questions to answer in Phase 4:**

- What change were we hoping to achieve?
- How will we know when/whether the change happens?
- What do we need to measure to know whether this change occurred?
- What baseline data do I need to be able to show how things have changed?
- What data is easily available? What information can I collect myself?  
Who else can help us collect this data?

## Types of Measurement and Examples of Indicators

<b>QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of visitors/participants</li><li>• Increase in pedestrian activity (pedestrian counts)</li><li>• Increase in people on bikes</li><li>• Increase in parking</li><li>• Longer stays in the area</li><li>• Decrease in vacant storefronts (vacancy survey)</li><li>• Jobs created</li><li>• Revenue increase</li></ul>
<b>OBSERVATIONAL/ QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Better quality of urban environment</li><li>• More public space</li><li>• More active frontages</li><li>• New functions or more diverse functions</li></ul>
<b>THIRD-PARTY DATA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Real estate data</li><li>• Cell phone data showing visitor activity</li><li>• Data or other information on local retail spend</li></ul>
<b>SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New social encounters</li><li>• Stronger sense of belonging</li><li>• Increased feeling of safety</li><li>• Increased sense of identity</li><li>• Distance travelled</li></ul>
<b>ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase in social media hits</li><li>• Positive business and retail impact</li><li>• More engaged local stakeholders</li><li>• New partnerships created</li><li>• Increased number of equity seeking groups engaged</li></ul>

For most projects, engagement will take place at various points throughout the placemaking process.

Stakeholder engagement ensures a project is aligned with the needs of the community. It increases the likelihood that project outcomes are widely accepted and successful and creates more effective solutions by drawing on local knowledge from diverse groups.

*My Main Street is looking for projects that are being led collaboratively with other local community delivery partners.*

How engagement is done and who is engaged can vary based on a project's starting point and goals but typically placemaking projects look to be on the right side of the Community Engagement Spectrum (Involve, Collaborate, Empower). The goal is to not be one-directional (informing community of project efforts) or even two-directional (informing community and listening in return) but to actively cultivate real involvement and ownership of the project within the community.

This may sound intimidating but it doesn't need to be. It is really about asking and listening to what communities know, want and need without attachment to preconceived project objectives or outcomes, valuing community members as experts and actively cultivating meaningful relationships with them.

## Community Engagement Spectrum

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT	
INFORM	Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
CONSULT	Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
INVOLVE	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
COLLABORATE	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of preferred solutions.
EMPOWER	Place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

## Practical Ideas for Effective Placemaking Engagement

- Go where the community is, rather than making the community come to you. Where possible incorporate engagement into existing events or meetings, such as community gatherings, neighborhood councils or events.
- Consider alternative means of engagement beyond conventional meetings, such as door-to-door or online surveys, one-on-one interviews and small group discussions.
- Host meetings in locations that are actively used, trusted and familiar to the community.
- Host meetings at different times – understanding the work, day-to-day life or religious timing constraints of various groups.
- Partner with local community-based organizations (for example, advocacy groups and faith-based groups) to lead meetings, or if you are a community-based organization, bring local government representatives in on your objectives early.
- Manage expectations by being upfront and honest. Let participants know of any “non-negotiable” aspects of the project.
- Be transparent in describing roles and responsibilities, as well as capacities and limitations. Ensure that promises and commitments made are kept.



### Questions to answer as part of your Community Engagement:

- What does the community I'm thinking about know, want and need?
- How can we gather input from this community?
- How can we actively cultivate meaningful engagement and shift power to the community?
- How are we ensuring that diverse groups within this community know about opportunities and can participate?
- Is the information about the project accessible and understandable for all community members?
- Do community members have opportunities to participate that work for them?
- Will all groups feel welcome and able to participate and if not, what barriers can we address and how can we make them feel more welcome in the process?





# EQUITY & PLACEMAKING

# 4



Placemaking can be an effective tool for inclusive social and economic development. The emphasis on community dialogue, partnerships and an appreciation for historical and social context provide opportunities to empower equity-seeking groups and increase access to economic and social opportunities.

But placemaking isn't a foolproof model for addressing inequality in public space planning. Placemaking projects must for example acknowledge people's unique situations, work to address or navigate systemic barriers and ensure everyone has access to the benefits and outcomes.

*My Main Street is prioritizing projects that are designed to support economic and social benefits for equity-seeking groups, including Indigenous communities, Black communities, other racialized groups, newcomers, youth (39 and under), people living with disabilities, the unhoused, low-income people, Francophone, women, Trans or non-binary people, and LGBTQ+.*

This means we want to see projects that are led by equity-seeking groups, projects that are led collaboratively with these groups and projects that are designed to benefit these groups.

If your project team represents an equity-seeking group, we encourage you to apply and to use this funding opportunity to attract the support of your local municipality or BIA. Understanding that there may be tensions with these relationships, this placemaking program could help facilitate opportunities to engage in dialogue on the deeper history of a place/issue, and how past experiences and barriers may have impacted your community.

If you are not from an equity-seeking group and/or are from an organization who has typically had the balance power in the planning and designing of the public realm, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with how equity issues can play into placemaking and ask yourself how your project can address some of these issues by thinking creatively and ambitiously about how places can support people of all backgrounds and lived experiences. We also encourage you to seek out partnerships with organizations or groups that are led by or specifically serve equity seeking groups.



## Dimensions of Equity and Key Questions to Consider

- **Structural.** Which groups have been represented overwhelmingly in placemaking projects and planning initiatives in the past? How can we acknowledge the past histories and commit to not perpetuating harm towards groups that have been excluded?
- **Spatial.** How has the space been shaped by intangible heritage and untold stories? How does the design of the space exclude or disadvantage people from equity-seeking groups? How can the space be planned or programmed to challenge these power relationships and entitlements?
- **Procedural.** Which groups have historically and traditionally been excluded from planning and engagement processes? How can we approach our engagement processes in an inclusive and equitable manner where everyone has an opportunity to contribute?
- **Distributional.** Which groups have historically and traditionally been excluded from benefiting from similar types of projects and initiatives? How can we ensure we prioritize groups in placemaking that have been underserved or misserved?



## Practical Ideas for More Equitable Placemaking Projects

This list was developed primarily for those who are from non-equity-seeking groups but may also be helpful for equity-seeking groups who are looking to make their projects more inclusive and collaborative.

- Take the time to learn which Indigenous group(s)' land your project takes place on (Many resources exist locally and online. See for example, [Native-land.ca](http://Native-land.ca))
- Include an Indigenous land acknowledgement in your materials and events and ensure that acknowledgement considers the actions your organization and/or project are taking
- Identify and include equity-seeking groups in consultation early and on an ongoing basis over the course of your project
- Go beyond consultation, and look for ways to redistribute real decision-making power to those who have traditionally been excluded
- Look for ways to celebrate the perspectives, histories, cultures, and local activities of equity-seeking groups with your project, and ensure that content is developed in collaboration with those groups
- Create spaces for equity-seeking groups to share work, stories and experiences
- Engage consultants and collaborators from equity-seeking groups to direct design and programming. Ensure they are paid, recognized and given credit for their work
- Identify and look for ways to address the unintended consequences of your project such as gentrification, displacement, and safety issues for all members of a community that may arise as a result of your project
- Translate materials in other common languages
- Ensure accessibility of meeting locations and materials
- Look for ways to develop new skills or capacities among equity-seeking groups
- Provide opportunities for a wide variety of community members to participate in your project
- Use your project as an opportunity to engage in dialogue on the history of a place/issue



# SUSTAINING THE IMPACTS OF A PLACEMAKING PROJECT

# 5





Placemaking projects often have a short time frame, compared to larger infrastructure and planning projects, but the goal is still to create meaningful, sustainable change over time. When a project is designed well it can have both short-term impacts, and at the same time contribute to the social and economic vibrancy of a neighbourhood over the long term, by changing how people experience the location.

*My Main Street is looking for projects that support sustainable placemaking strategies for their geographic area and will contribute to sustainable economic and social vibrancy.*



Some of the ways you can help to ensure the sustainability of your placemaking project include:

- **Building strong relationships and local capacity.** Even when a project is complete, the relationships established as part of a project remain and can lead to future projects and work in the area. When communities are engaged in decision making for a project, it is more likely to be adopted by the community, which ensures long-term use.
- **A good maintenance plan.** Maintenance of the public realm and amenities is important for ensuring that a space is well-loved and well-used over time. Thinking through how you will maintain the space and materials over the course of the project and beyond will improve its sustainability.
- **Effective monitoring and evaluation.** Monitoring ensures that a project can adapt to changing circumstances and be refined throughout implementation to create more lasting impacts. Evaluation can also help to ensure that the learnings can be taken and reapplied to the next iteration of the project for ongoing success.
- **Positioning the project as a catalyst for further investment.** A placemaking project can be a catalyst for more permanent change and investment. This can be built into the plan from the start —by selecting a site, partners and materials that could be made permanent and developing a strategy to build community buy-in and political support. Data, survey feedback, photos and stories from the project can also help to make the case for continuing the project.
- **Identify future funding sources.** For some projects, it's important to think through how the next phases of the project will be funded. Consider whether there are sustainable funding sources — such as ticket sales, membership fees or if there are partners or sponsors who can contribute financially.
- **Creating a strong place brand.** Placemaking can be a powerful tool for raising the profile of a place and changing the way people think and feel about it, well after the project is complete. Look for ways your project can enhance a place's identity in order to attract users, visitors and tourists.



# PLACEMAKING CASE STUDIES

# 6



# EVENTS AND ACTIVATIONS

## COMMUNITY VOICES UNITED WAY PERTH HURON

### What

A multimedia project that activates vacant storefront windows in busy downtown Stratford, ON, shopping areas, displaying short documentaries about underrepresented voices to highlight economic disparity.

### Placemaking intention

Led by United Way Perth Huron, the project was conceived by a collaborative group seeking to reshape public spaces to maximize their shared value. As part of a longer vision to brighten neglected streetscapes in Stratford, the group decided to begin by using a temporary installation to help bridge the divide between haves and have nots. Eight storefront windows were illuminated with powerful cinematic images that tell a story of those who struggle in the community, with the aim of changing how people feel about supporting marginalized residents. The initiative launched during the important pre-holiday shopping season in December, aiming to capture high traffic moments to change the way people think about their community.

### Equity impacts

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic increased inequities across the Stratford region that submitted this project, resulting in growing concerns about long-term access to service, social-economic vitality and social cohesion. The applicants described challenges in terms of investments in critical infrastructure, demographic change, and greater distance to markets and decision-making centres. To break through inaction and increase empathy and social cohesion, the project gave a voice to those who weren't being heard in conversations about the downtown.



### **Collaboration and partnerships**

To gain support for the project, the applicant United Way Perth Huron branch formed a cross-sector committee including representatives of local social services, police services, economic development agencies, tourism boards, planning departments, universities, municipal bodies and libraries.

The group collaborated with a local production studio to produce the work, emphasizing their track record of excellence, support for local artists and commitment to meaningful local projects.

### **Measurement approach**

The project had a well thought out approach to measurement, both for their physical activation and digital amplification of the work.

To measure success, the group tracked video views, social media engagement, donations and fundraising, and news and other media coverage.

### **Sustainability goals**

The physical improvements proposed in the application include the installation of permanent projections and specialized window projection assets that will provide the capacity for future initiatives.

The group intends to make the installation permanent, and to expand it to other jurisdictions and neighbourhoods, and will also use the documentaries and their metrics to support their presentations to stakeholder and municipal meetings, when they make the case for further investment.

The activation is part of a strategy to increase engagement with issues of poverty and social duress, breaking through a level of perceived passivity they have experienced from decision makers.

The activation is intended to kick start a more educated and motivated conversation around the issues of inclusion and economic barriers to access faced by many in their region.

### Why we loved it

The project has ambitious goals. By making the most of vacant storefront windows, the group seeks to tell a different and important story to the community, about the community. They went through a great process of partnership, collaboration, problem identification and ideation, and were mindful in their location selection and creative partners, ensuring that local vendors were part of the solution.

The project seeks to reconnect people with the less fortunate in their communities, not through lectures but by giving voice to those most affected in a visible, measurable way, and providing them with a place of prominence during a busy time of the year.

# COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENTS

## GEORGINA CROSSWALK CONNECTIONS TOWN OF GEORGINA

### What

The installation of an Indigenous mural crosswalk in Georgina, Ontario, at the harbour where the Aazhaawe Ferry crosses to Georgina Island, home of the Chippewas Nation.



### **Placemaking intentions**

The crosswalk installation is a public display of community partnerships and inclusion with the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation and the greater Indigenous communities of Canada. The mural will give people a moment to pause and reflect on the issues, raising awareness around inclusion, diversity and Truth and Reconciliation.

Currently, the commercial areas of Georgina rely on people arriving by vehicle and leaving as soon as their errands are complete. There is little motivation to stroll around and stay in the area for longer periods of time. The crosswalk mural will motivate visitors and residents to walk around the main streets, commercial centres, and parks. This increase in pedestrian traffic will lead to strengthening community and connecting residents, increasing economic activity and building the interest and infrastructure for community events such as concerts, art fairs and festivals.

### **Equity impacts**

In partnership with the local Chippewas community, the mural was designed to memorialize the children who died at Residential school. The mural crosswalk location was chosen because it sits at the Aazhaawe ferry gateway to the Chippewas Nation of Georgina Island. This location will raise awareness to the Chippewas' history, First Peoples of the Williams Treaties First Nations on which Georgina is located, Truth and Reconciliation, and the memory of the children who died in residential schools. There are approximately 200 Chippewas residents living on the island, and many more families living in close proximity. A plaque with description of the history, land acknowledgement, and Truth and Reconciliation statement will be installed on one side of the crosswalk.

### Collaboration and partnerships

The Seven Feather Every Child Matters mural was created in collaboration with members of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation.

### Measurement

To assess the project's impact on economic activity, the municipality surveyed store owners who reported increased visits in stores and higher sales after the crosswalk installations.

They also measured social media posts about the crosswalks and analyzed them against an increase in summer tourism.

To assess social cohesion, including support for Truth and Reconciliation and principles of equity and diversity, the municipality measured the following indicators:

- Number of public events executed at the crosswalk mural;
- Number of attendees at these events;
- Number of requests to replicate the Seven Feathers design;
- Number of requests for other placemaking projects by BIAs or citizen groups as this will indicate the level of interest and excitement for these kinds of projects; and
- Positive feedback from business owners, members of the Chippewa's Nation and interested citizens who will either complete an online survey or provide feedback at scheduled community meetings.

These data sources, the survey and community meetings were also designed to provide suggestions for future projects.



### **Sustainability goals**

The mural is one of six planned through a fulsome placemaking initiative intended to support and increase Georgina's reputation as an inclusive, welcoming community as the town continues to grow as a popular tourist destination and place to live.

### **Why we loved it**

This project demonstrated a large amount of awareness about the municipality's unique local character, understanding their important relationship with the Chippewa and responsibility to actively promote Reconciliation. The location of the mural was selected to have high visibility both to Chippewa peoples and to those visiting the town for tourism and other activities. As part of a longer-term strategy for placemaking, the mural is a visible, measurable change to the streetscape that communicates the town's chosen identity as a place of inclusion, respect and collaboration.

# POLICY + CAPACITY BUILDING

## MAKERSPACE STRATEGY AJAX PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD

### What

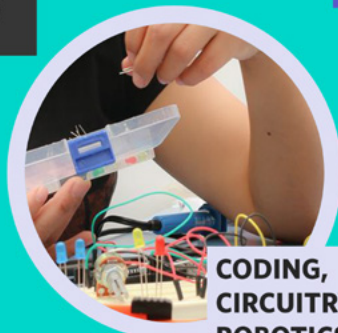
The Ajax Public Library is planning a new makerspace. In preparation, the Library commissioned the development of a strategy that would assess community interest and determine what location, tools and equipment would be most appropriate for the makerspace.

### PROGRAMMING ZONES

#### THINK / MAKE / SHOW & TELL



#### CODING, CIRCUITRY, ROBOTICS



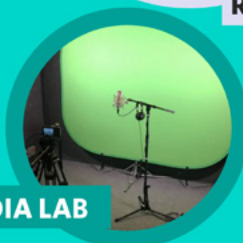
#### DIGITAL INNOVATION



#### CRAFT & FABRIC ARTS



#### MEDIA LAB



### Placemaking intentions

Makerspaces are shared community spaces that foster creativity and innovation; support small business development; encourage collaboration and interaction between cultures and generations as well as amongst like-minded individuals; and facilitate skill development and life-long learning.

The Ajax Public Library's makerspace will be a destination for the community and will attract new customers. Free access to both low-tech and high-tech tools and equipment, in addition to training and programming, will introduce participants to new learning, skills, resources and techniques.

### Equity impacts

The location is in the centre of Ajax within a mixed social composition neighbourhood that includes low income and higher needs for various reasons. Demographically, the location is ethnically diverse with a high level of newcomers. The makerspace will provide and equalize access to tools and equipment that residents would not normally have at home. These tools and equipment will support non-traditional learning, enjoyment, entrepreneurship and development across all generations, abilities and cultures regardless of social status, citizenship or gender identification

Unique opportunities will be available for participants to meet and collaborate with others regardless of age, ability, background or socio-economic status. Physical, social, intellectual and economic accessibility will be a focus of the makerspace. The needs of the community will be served, including the culturally diverse, marginalized, excluded and at-risk groups. Knowledgeable and qualified staff will facilitate use, supervise the makerspace and offer both structured and informal learning opportunities. Accessibility and AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) compliance of potential locations was also evaluated.

The creative output developed through the makerspace may provide a greater sense of entrepreneurship for users and support the development of small businesses. In addition, the skills developed in the makerspace will broaden opportunities for future employment.

The makerspace will have extended hours at least two times per week to accommodate different schedules and activities.

### **Collaboration and partnerships**

Extensive consultation was completed with Library and Town staff; elected officials; key community groups including homeless shelters, youth groups and mental health agencies, partners and stakeholders; and the broader Ajax community.

Community engagement will be ongoing in the form of formal workshops, informal support and training as well as programming tailored to specific interests and demographics. Community engagement staff will work with new and existing partners to extend makerspace communication, awareness and programming reach. This coordinated approach is well-established and very successful in reaching targeted groups (i.e., small business, newcomers, job seekers, cultural groups, etc.).

### **Measurement**

Success for the Makerspace Project will be defined in terms of number of makerspace visits, tool/equipment usage, workshop/program attendance, customer feedback and outcomes. Being part of a public library, processes are already in-place for measuring number of visits and usage as well as for soliciting and gathering customer feedback. Makerspace outcomes will be based on customer feedback and testimonies that will be either formally provided or identified through interaction with staff.

Initially, 2.5 full-time equivalent positions will also be created to support and staff the makerspace.



### **Sustainability goals**

To learn lessons and gain important insights, the Makerspace Strategy examined makerspaces in communities similar to Ajax as well as exemplary models across North America. A market analysis provided insight into current demographics and growth areas within the community. This and other research and feedback informed sizing and potential locations for the proposed makerspace and identified required equipment, programming and activities, related building costs, and a framework for operation.

The strategy is intended to support the approval for the makerspace budget by the Town of Ajax Council in February 2022, and will guide the design and construction of the facility.

### **Why we loved it**

There are lots of great community ideas about how to support residents and build a sense of belonging. But how do you know if they'll work? Taking the time to develop a strategy around your placemaking project allows you to explore best practices, engage with diverse partners and build a plan that is sustainable and impactful.

This project put in the time to build support for their work, flesh out their proposal and ensure that they are meeting the unique needs of their intended users by engaging in a substantial process of community and partner engagement. By doing so, they have ensured stakeholder support and long-term viability of their work.

# APPENDIX



## APPENDIX A DEFINITIONS

### **Activation**

Temporary use of a space that aims to draw visitors or create unique experiences where no permanent infrastructure is installed (e.g. parklets, pop-up bars and pop-up market stalls).

### **Community**

A community can be formed around shared location, cultural identity, interest, or any other quality.

### **Creative placemaking**

An evolving field of practice that leverages the power of the arts, culture and creativity to serve a community's interest while driving a broader agenda for change, growth and transformation in a way that also builds character and quality of place.

### **Engagement**

Engagement is how you interact with the publics you aim to serve. It can take many forms – including outreach, consultation, deliberation, dialogue, or activation.

### **Evaluation**

An objective assessment of a project after it is complete.

### **Equity Seeking Groups**

Francophone, women, Indigenous, racialized groups, Black communities, newcomers, youth (39 and under), people living with disabilities, the unhoused, low-income people, Trans or non-binary people, and LGBTQ+.

### **Inclusion**

The process of making all groups of people in society feel valued and accepted for who they are.

### **Lighter Quicker Cheaper**

A placemaking strategy that uses simple, low risk and low cost approaches.

### **Main Street**

The location of concentrations of commercial activity in a community, including a variety of independent businesses.

### **Monitoring**

Observing and checking on the progress of an ongoing project.

### **Place**

A specific geographic location, such as a public space, street, district or neighbourhood.

### **Public Space**

A public space is a place that is generally open and accessible to people. This can include a park, street, building, or other publicly accessible building.

### **Strategic Placemaking**

coined Land Policy Institute at MSU, is goal-oriented and requires cross-sector coalitions. These projects are often geared towards attracting high-talent workers who are attracted to high-quality places.

### **Tactical Placemaking**

Also known as Tactical Urbanism or Urban Acupuncture, they are incremental, small-scale improvements are increasingly seen as a way to stage more substantial investments.



## APPENDIX B

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

#### **A Call to Courage: An Open Letter to Canadian Urbanists**

By Jay Pitter

<https://canurb.org/citytalk-news/a-call-to-courage-an-open-letter-to-canadian-urbanists/>

#### **Bring Back Main Street**

<https://bringbackmainstreet.ca>

#### **Bring Back Main Street - A Pandemic Recovery Toolkit for Local Communities**

By Happy City

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eaa1b48c001020e903b2589/t/5f884fa6a968c25584c0553b/1602768849116/BBMS+FINAL+REPORT.pdf>

#### **Bring Back Main Street - Action Report**

<https://bringbackmainstreet.ca/action-report>

#### **Bring Back Main Street - Data Tools**

<https://bringbackmainstreet.ca/data-tools>

#### **Bring Back Main Street - Design Challenge Playbook**

<https://bringbackmainstreet.ca/main-street-design-playbook>

#### **Engaging Black People and Power**

By Jay Pitter in collaboration with leading Black urbanists across North America, students, scholars and policy experts

[https://canurb.org/wp-content/uploads/EBPP\\_2021-03-25\\_FINAL.pdf](https://canurb.org/wp-content/uploads/EBPP_2021-03-25_FINAL.pdf)

#### **Equity Guidance**

by Jay Pitter Placemaking for Canada Healthy Communities Initiative

<https://communityfoundations.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Healthy-Communities-Initiative-Equity-Guidance-Feb-8.pdf>

#### **Locally-led neighbourhoods: A Community-led Placemaking Manual**

<https://www.codesignstudio.com.au/free-guides>

#### **Placemaking Booklet - Project for Public Spaces**

[https://assets-global.website-files.com/5810e16fbe876cec6bcbdb86e/5a6a1c930a6e6500019faf5d\\_Oct-2016-placemaking-booklet.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5810e16fbe876cec6bcbdb86e/5a6a1c930a6e6500019faf5d_Oct-2016-placemaking-booklet.pdf)

**Placemaking Done Right -**

**Building Community through Public-Private Spaces - CoUrbanize**

<https://f.hubspotusercontent40.net/hubfs/5257798/Content%20PDF%20Assets/coUrbanize%20%7C%20Placemaking%20Done%20Right.pdf>

**Planning by Doing - How Small, Citizen Powered Projects**

**Inform Large Planning Decisions - Gehl Studios**

[https://gehl.institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/20160301\\_Planning-by-Doing\\_print-1.pdf](https://gehl.institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/20160301_Planning-by-Doing_print-1.pdf)

**Project for Public Spaces**

<https://www.pps.org>

**Tactical Urbanist's Guide to Materials and Design**

<http://tacticalurbanismguide.com/about/>