

In Real Life

The gift of place, embodiment, and community

Compelled by Love Conference | Session 1



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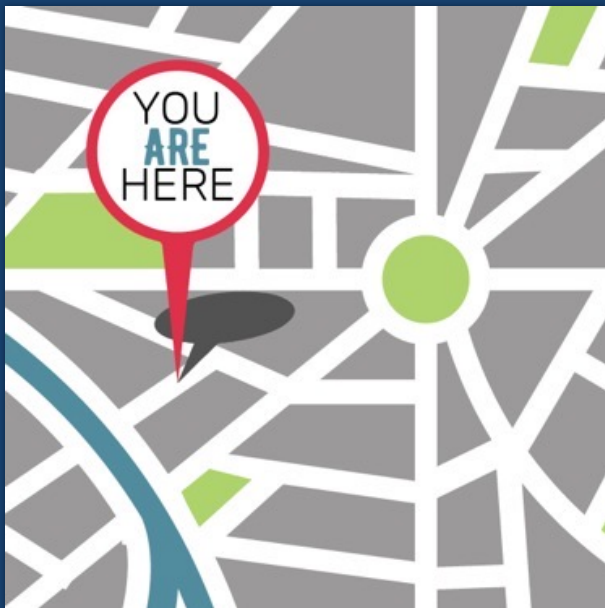
C.S. Lewis,
urban planner



Space or Place: What's the difference?



A placed people



And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Genesis 2:8

And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Matthew 2:23

"To hold to a view of the world where God becomes flesh is to acknowledge that God loves places, loves the particular."

Leonard Hjalmarson, *No Home Like Place*



Embodied from, in, and for a place

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature... And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

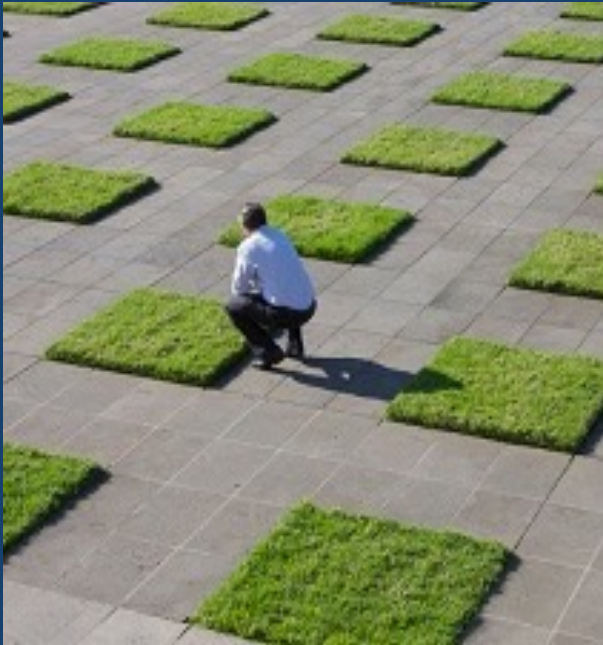
Genesis 2:7 & 9

Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.

Genesis 1:28



Displacement = Disorientation



And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'

Genesis 3:8-9

And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire." As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days.

Nehemiah 1: 2b-4



Care for embodiment

And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

Genesis 3:21

I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet.

Deuteronomy 29:5

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

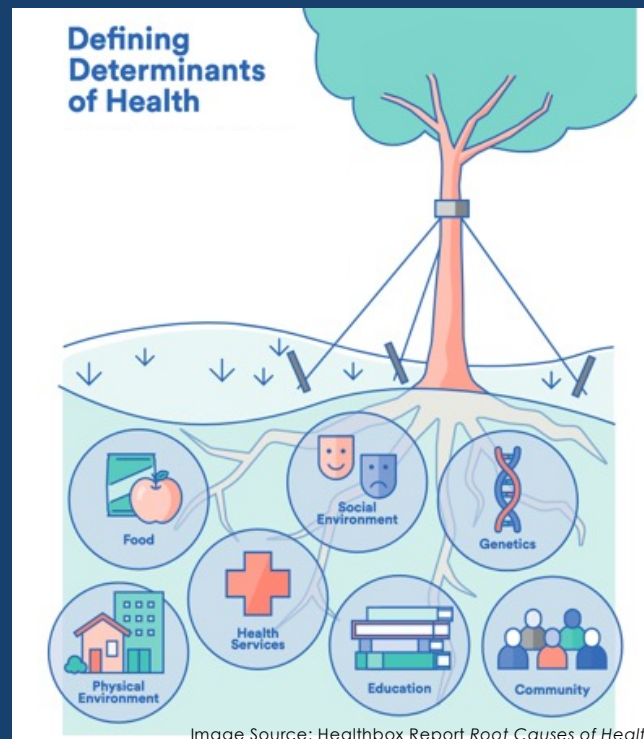
Matthew 25:35



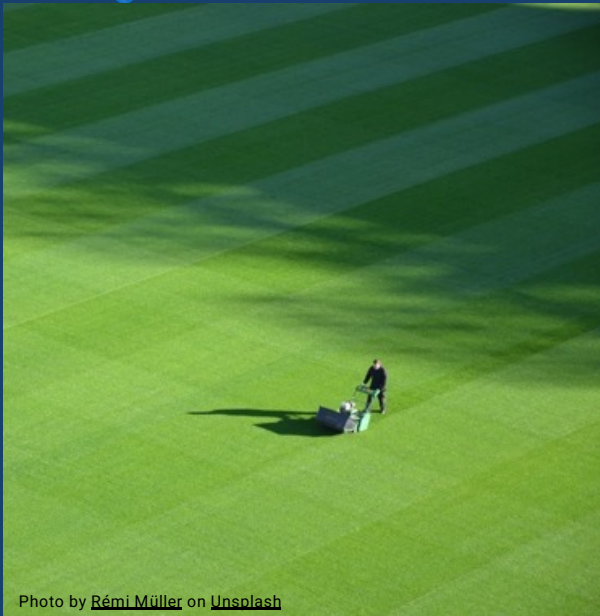


Place & Welfare

A majority of your health =
stable housing + job opportunities +
public transit + healthy foods + safe
spaces + **community relationships**



Our Cultural Reality



- Nearly 50% of American adults report being lonely.
- Only 39% of Americans feel socially connected.
- Only 30% of Americans believe they can reliably trust other Americans.
- Only 16% of Americans report feeling very attached to their local community.
- Only 47% of Americans belong to a local church, synagogue, or mosque.



The Biblical Reality



Photo by Nina Strehl on Unsplash

It is not good for man to be alone.
Genesis 2:18

Build houses and live in them; plant
gardens and eat their produce.

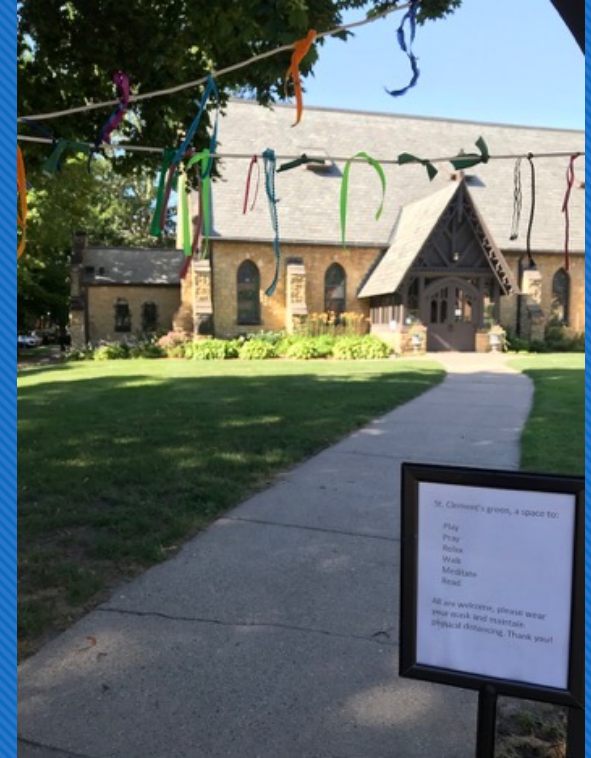
But seek the welfare of the city where I
have sent you into exile, and pray to the
LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will
find your welfare. Jeremiah 29:7

The second is this: 'You shall love your
neighbor as yourself.' There is no other
commandment greater than these.
Mark 12:31



Redemptive Placemaking

Sharing the gift of embodiment and place



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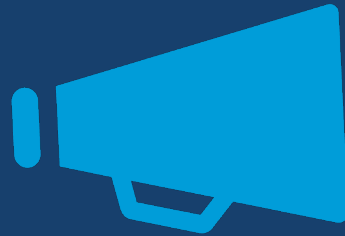


Imagine your church outdoor space...









**What message does your church property
send to your community?**



In our world full of strangers, estranged from their own past, culture, and country, from their neighbors, friends and family, from their deepest self and their God, we witness a painful search for a **hospitable place** where life can be lived without fear and where community can be found.

- Henri Nouwen,
Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life





Following the way of Jesus calls for practicing hospitality.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Matthew 25:35

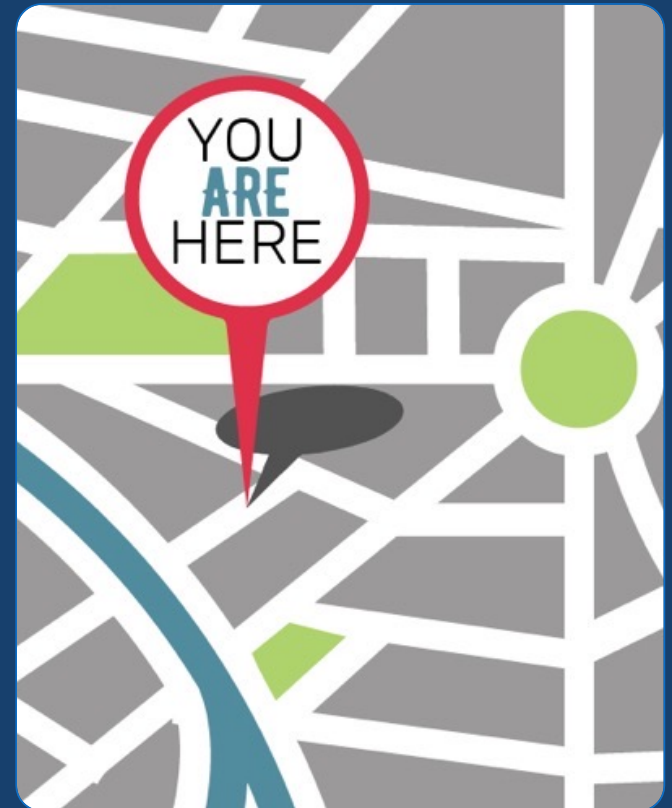
**Thus, we must build hospitable
places.**

Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Jeremiah 29:5



Why has God placed you in your neighborhood?

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Acts 17:26-27b



Factors That Can Shape Social Connection



Individual

- Chronic disease
- Sensory and functional impairments
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Personality
- Race
- Gender
- Socioeconomic status
- Life stage

Relationships

- Structure, function, and quality
- Household size
- Characteristics and behaviors of others
- Empathy

Community

- Outdoor space
- Housing
- Schools
- Workplace
- Local government
- Local business
- Community organizations
- Health care
- Transportation

Society

- Norms and values
- Public policies
- Tech environment and use
- Civic engagement
- Democratic norms
- Historical inequities

Connectedness is influenced by more than simply personal or interpersonal factors. It is also shaped by the social infrastructure of the community in which one is born, grows up, learns, plays, works, and ages.

Social infrastructure includes the physical assets of a community, programs, and local policies that support the development of social connection.



What is placemaking?



People-centered approach for improving a property, neighborhood, city, or region to collectively:

- **reimagine** and reinvent **public spaces** as the heart of every community
- **strengthen** the **connection between people** and the places they share
- **collaborate to shape the public realm** in order to maximize shared value

Placemaking values and capitalizes on the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place.

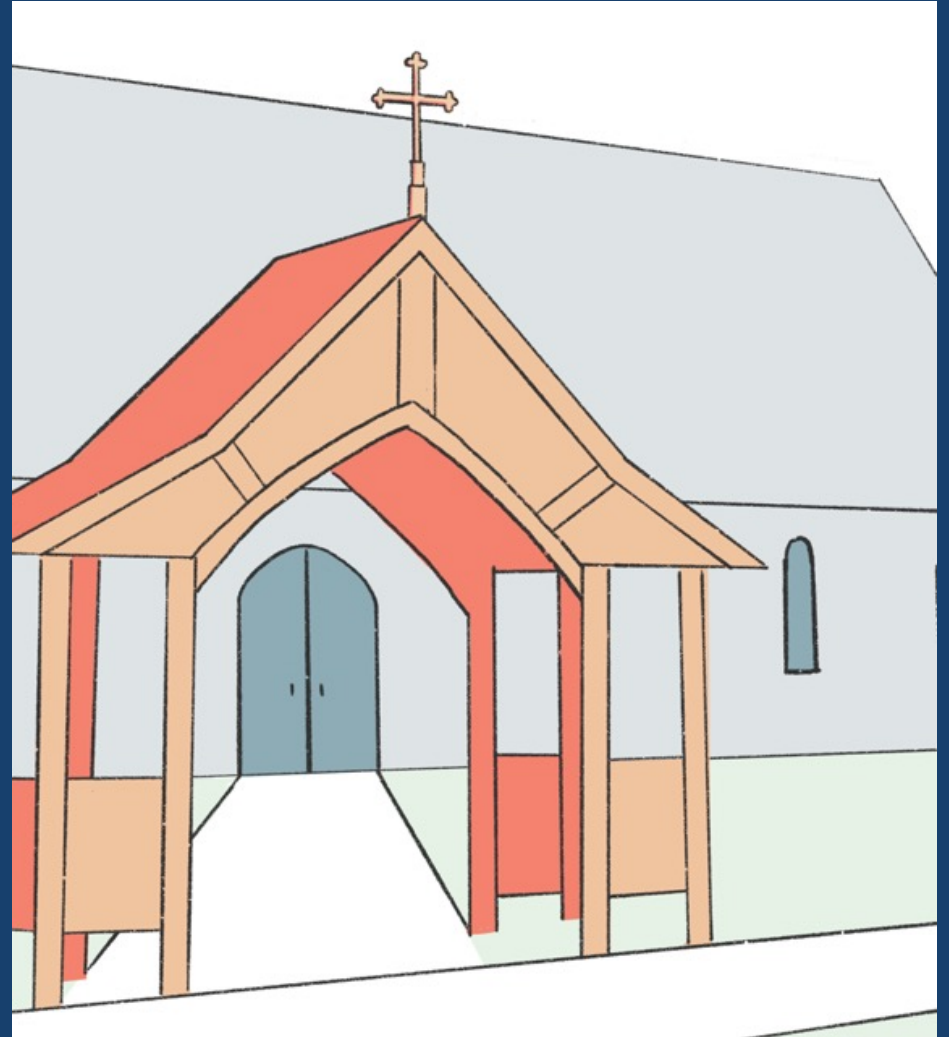
Project For Public Spaces | www.pps.org



1. Thresholds

Connect the inside and outside of a place.

A threshold extends the front door of your church to the outside and offers a visible welcome and space for a friendly “handshake” interaction with those encountering your property without requiring them to step inside.

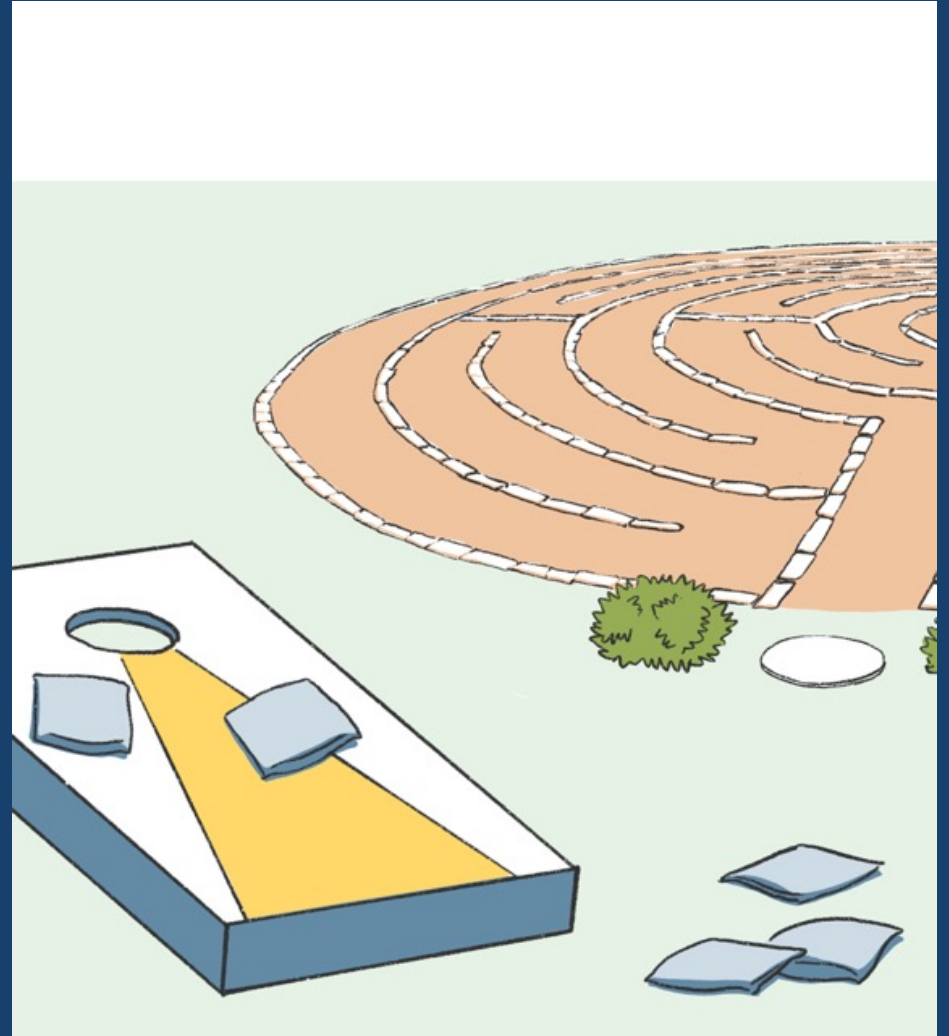


2. Activities

Add sociability to a place.

Having things to do or ways to interact gives people a reason to be there and breaks the ice between people and places.

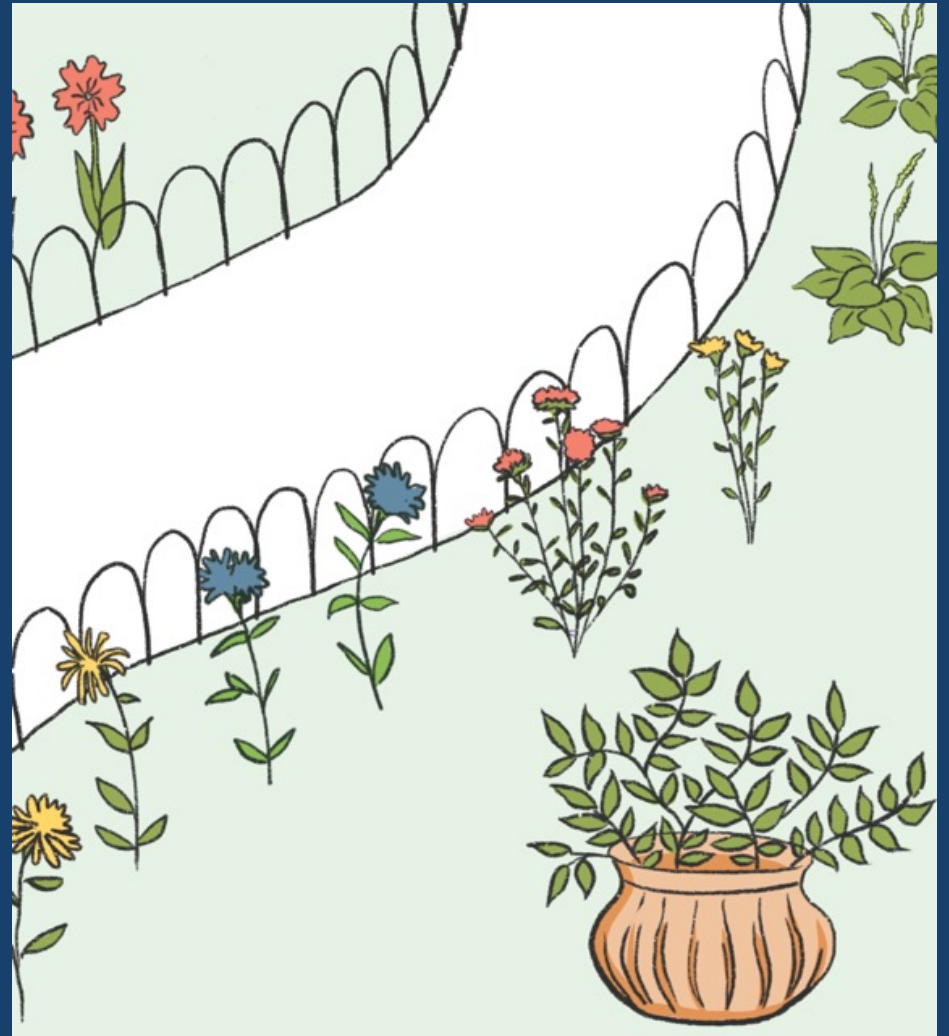
Activities might include things such as bird feeders, libraries, lawn games, or prayer labyrinths.



3. Beauty

Contributes to the aesthetic value of a place and stimulates curiosity.

Incorporating gardens and public art are easy ways to enhance the character of your property and invite others to experience the goodness and creativity of God's creation.



4. Places to Rest

Allow people to linger and enjoy a place.

Consider pockets of seating (moveable is best!), a low sit wall, or rest stops for those using other modes of transit.

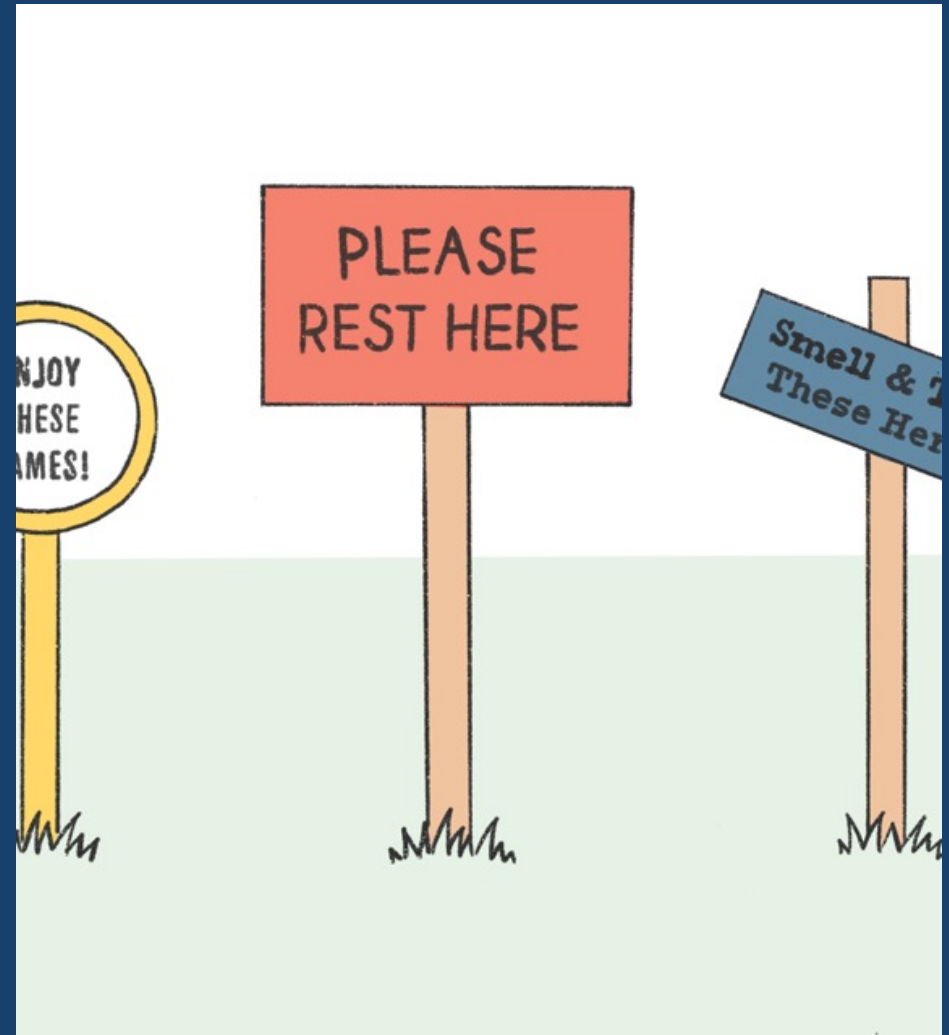
Provide a shelter for bus riders or install a bike rack to enable riders to stop and appreciate the area.



5. Wayfinding

Helps people orient themselves and directs their engagement with a place.

Displaying clear signage can encourage them to explore a place and make them freer to interact with elements such as gardens and games.



More Placemaking Ideas



Paint an interactive community mural that adds color and curiosity to a blank wall.



Plant a community garden with creative signs to invite neighborhood participation.



Open your playground for the community to use throughout the week.



Host a local food truck on your parking lot and invite neighbors to lunch.



Build a small outdoor patio or park for neighboring gathering



Plan a bike to church day to encourage congregants to explore the neighborhood by bike. Photo credit: Frontline Church, Oklahoma City, OK



Field Notes

*Placemaking case studies to
stir your imagination*



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Meetinghouse Church

Edina, MN

Placemaking Idea: Community Walking Path

- Suburban property
- 10 acres
- Adjacent to a park, senior living center, and residential townhomes
- Stormwater pond, native plants, bee keeping





Ambassador Church

Anaheim, CA

Placemaking Idea:

Playground, Park
Benches, & Basketball
Courts

- Urban property
- Fenced for security
- Adjacent to a middle school and single family homes
- Worn-out basketball courts, no places to sit and/or play





Bringing distinct boundaries and edges to the green space provides a sense of semi-enclosure and safety. Using moveable planters to block off parking stalls along the northwest perimeter defines a connection between the central plaza and the green. Extending the patio to create a square enhances an opportunity for additional outdoor seating and grilling area. A shade sail and children's play area at the southwest corner promotes play and draws more activity to the green. Additional planter bench seating and landscaping provide visual interest and invitations to gather and linger.

AMBASSADOR CHURCH AMBASSADOR GREEN - PERSPECTIVE RENDERING

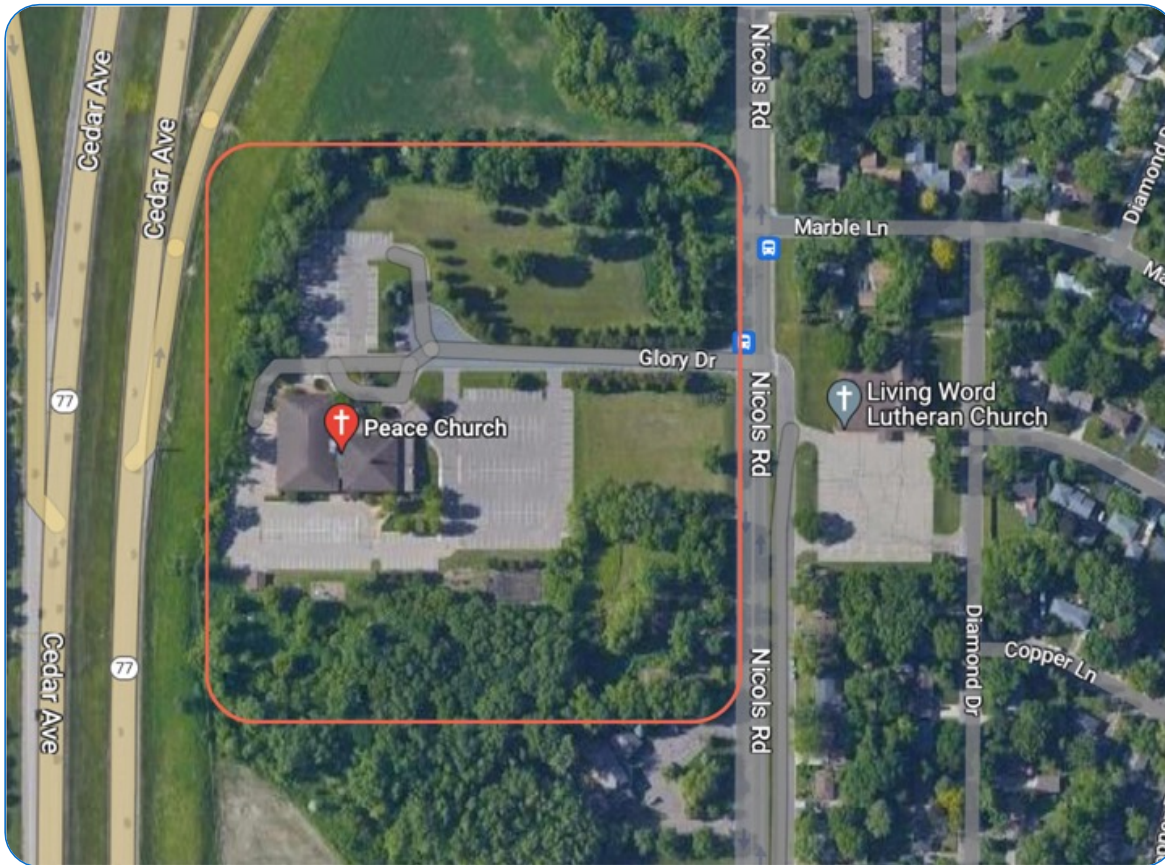
May 23, 2022





Ambassador Church + South Junior High





Peace Church

Eagan, MN

Placemaking Idea: Community Park

- Suburban property
- 12 acres
- Adjacent to a brand new affordable housing apartment building
- Stormwater easement with the City
- Empty greenspace





Valued open green space. Stormwater easement area.



New housing development next door.





Church Pizza Oven Feeds Community



The church parking lot...





www.kzooparks.org/Events/KZoo-Parks-Events/Bike-Rodeo



www.alliancepavinginc.com/portfolio/modern-building/



www.treetopproducts.com/essential-bike-repair-station



oconomowoc.org/events/oacc-signature-events/summer-farmers-market/



Starting Your Journey

*Practical steps to begin placemaking
in your context*

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Walk Your Block



Draw a circle (1/2-mile (+/-) radius around your church property) on a map.

Walk the exterior of your property and your block.

Observe the transition places.

Take pictures to document your observations.

Make a list of all the businesses, churches and nonprofits or community organizations that are closest in proximity to your church.

Consistently visit "third places" in the community like cafés and shops.



Synergy of Place



Consider the “Power of 10.”

Don’t forget wayfinding.



Start Small



Take what you are doing inside ---
OUTSIDE!

Pilot your ideas to lower your risk.

Learn the playing field and your
capacity.





This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.” - Zechariah 8:4



Recommended Resources

Books

- *Blueprints for a Just City* by Sean Benesh
- *Good Places for All* by Mark D. Bjelland
- *No Home Like Place* by Leonard Hjalmarson
- *Sidewalks in the Kingdom* by Eric O. Jacobsen
- *The Happy City* by Charles Montgomery
- *The Art of Neighboring* by Jay Pathak & Dave Runyon

Podcasts

- The Embedded Church (www.embeddedchurch.com)
- The Bottom-Up Revolution (www.strongtowns.org/podcasts)

