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*Photo by Volume Collective.*
As we close out the 2010s, I find myself reflecting on the changes of the past decade, some of which we saw coming, and some which took many of us by surprise. We could see the impending climate crisis, but the way it has accelerated is a shock to many. While our economy has never been a place of equal opportunity, today’s divide between the haves and the have-nots is wider than it’s been in generations. We used to feel like our democracy rested on a basic agreement on the facts, but today democratic institutions around the world are being distorted by partisan political maneuvers.

In the midst of these urgent threats, what’s so important about working to improve the public places we all share? At Project for Public Spaces, we believe that public space has the potential to become one of the things that we lack most sorely right now—common ground. We need inclusive placemaking processes in our cities and towns to invite all kinds of people to make something beautiful together, and to rebuild hope for the future and trust in each other. A decade ago, placemaking was still a niche approach to public space, mainly confined to the United States. Today, it has grown to become a truly global movement, first through our own Placemaking Leadership Council, then through our partnerships with the likes of UN-Habitat on their New Urban Agenda, and now with our new sister organization PlacemakingX. Today, regional placemaking networks now thrive in every corner of the world.

People are meant to be social, collaborative—and public space is where we fulfill that purpose. In my first year as CEO of Project for Public Spaces, I believe we have charted a path to achieving that vision, with over 50 projects around the world, a deepening commitment to equity in our work, a stronger focus on our core program areas, and a growing list of likeminded partners to help us broaden and measure our impact. We are deeply grateful for the leadership of our Board, the generosity of our donors, and the endless energy of our many partners for helping to make this year—this decade—of growth possible. We hope you will join us for another decade of making public spaces for and by everyone.

Phil Myrick, Chief Executive Officer, Project for Public Spaces
A family interacts with a community engagement activity organized pro bono by Project for Public Spaces staff at an event in Astor Place, New York City, around the corner from our Broadway offices.
PLACEMAKING FOR ALL

Imagine a world where everyone has the opportunity to shape public space.

Since we began using the term “placemaking” to describe our approach to improving public space in the mid-1990s, one of the foundational concepts behind it has been that the community is the expert.

But over the past year, we have been expanding the definition of who gets to be counted as “the community.” Many people still do not have the opportunity to participate in co-creating the public spaces they use everyday, and even if they do, the process may not value their perspectives and contributions equally to others.

In 2019, we expanded our funding partnerships with foundations and civic-minded corporations, undertook new research initiatives with the Brookings Institution, and refined an equitable approach to our flagship International Placemaking Week conference in order to invite in more people, deepen our process, and broaden its benefits.

PARTNERSHIPS

In 2019, Project for Public Spaces built upon its decades of experience working in partnership with foundations and corporate social responsibility programs in order to bring the benefits of public space and a placemaking approach to more communities. As a partner, we designed and administered grant selection processes; provided peer-to-peer learning opportunities for grantees; and helped those grantees implement on-the-ground projects that reflect the goals of the sponsor, the grantee, and their constituency.

With the William Davidson Foundation, Project for Public Spaces continued its support of mission-driven organizations in Southeast Michigan, including University of Michigan Hillel, Pewabic Pottery, the Motown Museum, and Repair the World, to integrate public space as a strategy for achieving their unique organizational outcomes. Through the Live Mutual Project, we also continued to collaborate with MassMutual Foundation and Financial Health Network to establish, reinvent, and activate physical spaces where community members can access jobs, housing, loans, and other financial support in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Through our ongoing partnership with GAF, North America’s largest roofing and waterproofing manufacturer, we began placemaking processes at a library in Shafter, California, and a multi-use complex in Michigan City, Indiana, two communities where GAF has production facilities.

In 2019, Project for Public Space concluded its five-year partnership with Southwest Airlines on the Heart of the Community program, which has helped to transform public spaces in 19 cities throughout the US and Mexico since 2014. In this final year of the program, Project for Public Spaces led placemaking visioning workshops with two past grantees—the Balboa Park Conservancy in San Diego, California, and Travis Park, managed by San Antonio Center City Development in San Antonio, Texas—to expand the impact of their initial projects.

Lastly, this fall, Project for Public Spaces also announced a new initiative with CloroxPro to further their commitment to public health by strengthening the social fabric of communities. Two pilot projects are expected in 2020.

“Everyone has the right to live in a great place. More importantly, everyone has the right to contribute to making the place where they already live great.”

— Fred Kent, Founder, Project for Public Spaces
THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL PLACEMAKING WEEK

Project for Public Spaces organizes the biannual International Placemaking Week conference, which brings placemaking practitioners from around the world together to learn from one another and the host city, and to catalyze new regional networks of practitioners. We also support and promote regional Placemaking Weeks hosted by partner organizations.

On October 1-4, 2019, the 3rd International Placemaking Week was held in Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA. Working with our co-host the Innovation District of Chattanooga, Project for Public Spaces brought together over 600 participants from around the world for a week full of hands-on sessions, off-site workshops, tours, public space activations, and networking events. The 3rd International Placemaking Week built upon two previous events in Canada and the Netherlands by becoming a “conference with-out walls,” using the city itself as the venue. The conference theme this year was equity, which the organizers addressed not only in content, but in decision-making processes and the local impact of the event.

As the global placemaking movement continues to grow, the International Placemaking Week conference has proven to be a vital platform to build connections and share ideas across borders, to provoke local debate and action on public space, and to experience the host city’s places, issues, and initiatives firsthand. Thank you to the Walton Family Foundation and our other sponsors for making this event possible!

Photos by Volume Collective.
THE BASS CENTER FOR TRANSFORMATIVE PLACEMAKING

As founding partners of the Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking at the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Center, in 2019 Project for Public Spaces helped conduct and disseminate research on how placemaking practitioners and decision-makers can broaden the economic and social benefits of public space.

As part of the Center’s Place-making Postcards blog series, which highlights promising inclusive placemaking practices across the U.S. and abroad, we revisited our 2007-2008 work with BakerRipley, Texas’s largest charitable organization. Through a process called Appreciative Community Building, Project for Public Spaces, architecture firm Concordia, and BakerRipley hosted more than 100 individual interviews, focus groups, and events to identify untapped assets in the Gulfton-Sharpstown neighborhood of Houston. The result was a five-building campus that hosts over 70,000 residents annually. Offering a mix of rentable spaces, a community garden, and social services such as after-school programs, English classes, citizenship classes, entrepreneurship programs, adult education, and computer literacy classes, the aim of the Gulfton-Sharpstown Campus is to address the place-based inequities facing its neighborhood, and to foster socio-economic mobility through training, access to resources, and community-capacity building. Since this initial engagement, BakerRipley has continued to refine and expand the campus by regularly returning to the Appreciative Community Building process, and has opened a second campus in the East Aldine neighborhood of Houston.

To mark the one-year anniversary of the Bass Center, Brookings released their Transformative Placemaking Framework, developed in collaboration with Project for Public Spaces and Main Street America. By considering a community’s entrepreneurial ecosystem, built environment, social environment, and civic structures together, this framework aims to help stakeholders and experts work together across the usual disciplinary silos to create more connected, vibrant, and inclusive communities.

PLACEMAKING: MAKING IT HAPPEN

In May, Project for Public Spaces hosted another sold-out edition of its Placemaking: Making It Happen training, teaching the fundamentals of placemaking to 30 participants hailing from 12 US states, 2 Canadian provinces, Iceland, Malaysia, and South Africa.

Of course, no placemaking training would be complete without observing real public spaces. Participants enjoyed tours with public space managers of Brooklyn Bridge Park, Bryant Park, Herald Square & Greeley Square Park, the High Line, and Times Square, among others.

Presentations led by Project for Public Spaces staff included topics like community engagement and visioning strategies; public space evaluation, design, programming, and management; and “lighter, quicker, cheaper” approaches to implementation. Participants also had the opportunity to share and discuss their current placemaking projects with one another.
Building upon our 2016 report, *The Case for Healthy Places*, Project for Public Spaces developed a course on the connection between placemaking and wellbeing for *Rutgers University* in the spring of 2019.

Throughout the course, “Highland Park Placemaking: Making Connections between Health, Place, Equity, Transportation and Economy,” 12 Masters of City and Regional Planning Students worked with instructors from the Rutgers and Project for Public Spaces to plan and implement a two-day community placemaking workshop in the nearby Borough of Highland Park, New Jersey.

The course culminated in a report to the community. Since the conclusion of the course, the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs awarded a $25,000 grant to Main Street Highland Park to help implement some of the students’ recommendations for revamping a downtown parking lot for public use.

Throughout 2019, our team has also been working with researchers at Ball State University to update and expand upon *The Case for Healthy Places*, with a deeper look at how the collaborative placemaking process itself benefits health and wellbeing. This new report, which includes a literature review of over 120 articles, case studies, and practical strategies, is expected to be released in early 2020.

Making It Happen attendees experience the commercial drama of Times Square.

Photo courtesy of Central Atlanta Progress.
In the US, our growing national crisis of homelessness, mental health, and addiction plays out in public space. At Project for Public Spaces we believe that public space managers have a major role to play in addressing this crisis at its roots, and we must equip them with innovative, humane, and effective strategies to connect people experiencing homelessness with social services. Central Atlanta Progress (CAP), which manages Woodruff Park in Atlanta, Georgia, offers a leading example of how place management organizations can partner with social service agencies to better meet the needs of underserved people in their spaces.

Project for Public Spaces began working with CAP in 2016 as part of our Southwest Airlines Heart of the Community grant program (2014-2019). By engaging with park stakeholders, including downtown residents, students, office workers, business owners, and government agencies, CAP and Project for Public Spaces decided to invest in a custom-designed games cart and staff to activate it on the southwest side of the park. This project helped change perceptions and usage of the park and also motivated CAP to hire Ainsley Whipple, a new park manager.

In 2018, CAP was awarded a second grant from the Southwest Airlines Foundation, in part to fund a dedicated, full-time social worker for the park from local social service provider HOPE Atlanta. Janika Robinson now provides park visitors experiencing homelessness and poverty with case management, information, and referrals for supportive housing, public assistance, shelters, and treatment programs. From September 2018 to October 2019, Janika has enrolled 720 people in HOPE Atlanta programs, referred another 765 to others, placed 300 individuals into shelter—and permanently housed 109 individuals.

Public spaces have the potential to not only meet people experiencing housing, mental health, and addiction challenges where they are, but also to build trust through casual everyday interactions. These bonds of trust are vital to successfully addressing our crisis of homelessness at its roots.
An illustration from our Portals to Places Initiative show many little touches that can transform a busy transit hub from barely adequate to a supportive part of our lives.

Illustration by Jiayi Chen.
TRANSPORTATION

Showing how our hardest working public spaces can work even harder.

Streets and transportation infrastructure represent the most bountiful kind of public space in our cities, accounting for more than 80% of all public space. Yet the many social, economic, and civic functions these spaces must host are almost always subordinated to mobility, even among progressive planning circles. To address our mounting crises of poor physical and social health, declining civic participation, and inequality in cities in the US and around the world, we must recognize the potential of streets and other transportation infrastructure as public spaces— as places that can contribute to community wellbeing beyond simply getting around.

In 2019, Project for Public Spaces’ Transportation Program team helped push this vision forward by launching a new initiative focused on place-making for transit stops and stations, by collaborating with Dutch mobility experts Mobycon to reimagine our Streets as Places training, and by creating a guide for Main Street leaders and other placemakers to work more effectively with local and state transportation officials.

PORTALS TO PLACES INITIATIVE

At this September’s Rail-Volution conference in Vancouver, BC, Canada, we launched Portals to Places, a new initiative to create transit stops and stations that better serve the everyday needs and social lives of people in low-income, transit-dependent neighborhoods.

By mapping assets and opportunities in the areas within a short walk or bike ride of important transit nodes, transportation agencies and others can improve rider experience, reduce the need for short trips, change perceptions about neglected transit modes, help reintegrate land use and transportation patterns, engage riders in a positive vision, and contribute to public life. This strategy can be particularly useful in the context of the design or redesign of a transit system as a whole. Too often, decisions about locating transit stops and stations rely entirely on considerations of ridership and service, with little regard for how a new stop could benefit from and contribute to the clusters of daily uses and the public realm. Besides Rail-Volution, this emerging Portals to Places work was also showcased at the American Public Transportation Association’s TransFORM conference and TransLoc’s The Movement podcast in November, among other venues.

In the New Year, the Portals to Places Initiative will release Our cities train us to expect a bare-bones bus stop. Illustrations by Jiayi Chen.

“A bus system’s stops and stations can and should serve a multitude of functions themselves, and be surrounded by everyday destinations beyond just transportation infrastructure.”

— Nidhi Gulati, Program Manager, Project for Public Spaces

What if our transit stops and stations fully supported our daily needs and lives?
Project for Public Spaces collaborated with Dutch mobility consultants Mobycon to pilot a reimagined Streets as Places training for over 40 participants. The session included both core placemaking principles for streets, as well as implementation tactics. Participants learned about the role of transportation infrastructure in supporting livability, design guidelines for humanizing streets, protecting the most vulnerable road users (children), co-creation with communities, and tactics for balancing traffic flow and placemaking from the Netherlands and around the world. The Transportation Program team and Mobycon are currently planning to reprise their Streets as Places Training as part of Project for Public Spaces’ Walk/Bike/Places conference next August in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**NAVIGATING MAIN STREETS AS PLACES TOOLKIT**

At the 3rd International Placemaking Week this October, Main Street America and Project for Public Spaces released Navigating Main Streets as Places: A People-First Transportation Toolkit. This free, one-stop-shop toolkit aims to help Main Street leaders, transportation officials, and placemakers evaluate streets and transportation through the lens of placemaking, balance the needs of mobility and other street activities, and build stronger relationships with other decision-makers and the community. Featuring best practices for rural downtowns and urban commercial districts, the toolkit includes a downloadable handbook, an online resource library, and a four-part webinar series.

The toolkit builds on Project for Public Spaces’ previous collaboration with Main Street America to provide placemaking training for Main Street managers around the country. In 2016 and 2017, training sessions were held in Alabama, Connecticut, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Wyoming, reaching about 650 managers in total and generating $14 million in new investment. After the trainings, multiple states have also created placemaking grant programs or used existing grant funds for placemaking projects.

Between its launch in October and December 2019, the Navigating Main Streets as Places toolkit garnered over 10,000 unique pageviews across all of its webpages, over 175,000 impressions and 7,000 engagements across the social media of both organizations, and 500 registered attendees from around the world for the launch webinar series.

“By taking the time to humbly communicate, evaluate, and co-create visions together, our streets can become powerful places to be, to move through, and to build our community’s life around.”

— Shaylee Zaugg, Junior Project Associate, Project for Public Spaces
Attendees at the 10th International Public Markets Conference enjoy a reception at the thousand-year-old Borough Market, one of over 280 markets in London, UK.

Photo courtesy of the Greater London Authority.
In 2019, we continued our long-time support for public markets by conducting a feasibility study for a new public market at the Utah State Fairpark in Salt Lake City, Utah, and by assisting open-air farmers markets in planning for new permanent facilities in Athens, Ohio; Eugene, Oregon; and Troy, New York. We also hosted the 10th International Public Markets Conference in London, UK, where we launched our new Market Cities Initiative, which aims to support regional public market systems through new policy, governance, programs, and investments.

Since Project for Public Spaces launched our Public Markets Program in 1987, we have come to recognize that public markets can be some of the highest impact public places around. They provide access to fresh foods and social interactions that benefit our wellbeing; they provide low-barrier opportunities for entrepreneurship; they support environmental sustainability by reducing food miles and supporting local farmland; and they are some of the most diverse places in many cities, bringing together people across cultures in a time of increasing polarization.

Market Cities Initiative

At the 9th International Public Markets Conference in 2015, the host city of Barcelona, Spain, opened our eyes to the importance of having a citywide strategy for supporting public markets—a “Market City” strategy. There the municipal government treats markets like infrastructure, ensuring that every neighborhood has the fresh food and vibrant public life of a market within walking distance. This year, at the 10th conference, we selected London, UK, as the host city because it demonstrated how to take this approach to the next level. In 2017, Mayor Sadiq Khan founded the city’s first London Markets Board to give operators and vendors a voice in the way that municipal policy affects their work. The Board was accompanied by a report on the city’s 280 markets, which contribute nearly £250 million to London’s economy each year and account for over 13,250 jobs. Recommendations in the report fell into three broad categories: encouraging innovation in markets, supporting diversity across the markets sector, and strengthening opportunities to access healthy food.

Today, we take it for granted that any city of a certain size must have a cultural strategy to support the ecosystem of artists, performers, and organizations that make up a city’s cultural life. What if, in the not-too-distant future, we could take it for granted that every city had a public market strategy as robust as that of London or Barcelona to support their ecosystem of market managers, vendors, food producers, and myriad other partners?

In the coming year, Project for Public Spaces plans to explore that vision by working with select cities to map their regional market assets and develop a strategy for supporting them. As this Market Cities Initiative grows, we believe that together we can connect market managers, local entrepreneurs, and the...
THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC MARKETS CONFERENCE

In June 2019, the International Public Markets Conference marked its 10th edition in London, UK. The conference, co-hosted by Project for Public Spaces and the Mayor of London, and supported by many other partners, showcased the city’s cutting-edge Market Cities approach and impressive network of public markets.

The Mayor of London Sadiq Khan welcomed attendees representing 36 countries and 115 cities, and over the course of three days, they witnessed the Mayor’s groundbreaking policy in action. The program offered a guided exploration of London’s evolving markets, which balance continued innovation with a millennium worth of history. The conference provided an up-close look at how markets of all scales can improve community-level outcomes, from health to entrepreneurship. More than 300 market operators, developers, and advocates discussed how markets can support their communities.

Breakout sessions at the conference engaged participants on topics like markets as incubators for entrepreneurship, data-driven advocacy, and the power of using placemaking to make markets into community destinations. Attendees discussed markets through the lens of inclusion and health, and exchanged ideas about how markets can maintain authenticity while adapting to changing trends and community needs. Speakers like London’s Night Czar Amy Lamé also covered the importance of markets in supporting a growing night-time economy.

Digging deeper, participants attended various “unconferences” at City Hall, collaboratively workshopping ideas on everything from how to adapt to the climate crisis to thoughtful approaches to security. A farmers market in Delaware shared thoughts on the value of sales-boosting experimentation, while delegates from New York City discussed using markets to build resilience after Hurricane Sandy. In the context of these collaborative talks, attendees highlighted their broad range of experiences in designing, managing, and programming markets, ultimately creating a set of exciting new approaches to shared challenges.

Photos courtesy of the Greater London Authority.
Eight regional placemaking events took place in cities around the world in 2019, attracting thousands of public space designers, researchers, managers, and advocates.
In June, PlacemakingX officially launched at Placemaking Week Europe in Valencia, Spain, and in its first six months, its founders Ethan and Josh Kent have launched PlacemakingX at 10 events on 5 continents, and presented to over 5,000 people in 30 cities, with each event further informing the regional and global placemaking movement. In the process, they worked with a diverse group of placemaking leaders from around the world to co-create a mission, vision, and goals for the new network.

So far, PlacemakingX has grown to include over 100 pioneers and 600 advocates representing over 65 countries. The organization celebrated the growth of regional networks in Europe, Latin America, and Tāmaki Makaurau (New Zealand), and supported the emergence of new networks in India, Southeast Asia, Australia, the Middle East and North Africa, Colombia, the Nordics, and the United States. In the coming year, members have identified a number of urgent issues to explore, including shifting from the consumption-based metric of urban livability to one of lovability; fighting back against the co-optation of the term placemaking by industries and individuals that ignore its community-driven roots; and shifting the field from one-off public space activations to changing broader systems.
Who We Are

OUR TEAM

- Alina Bibisheva, Project Associate
- Alessandra Galletti, Vice President
- Nidhi Gulati, Program Manager, Transportation
- Juliet Kahne, Director, Events and Education
- Ethan Kent, Senior Fellow
- Josh Kent, Vice President
- Cailean Kok, Project Associate
- Elena Madison, Vice President
- Marcos Martinez, Office Administrator
- Lisa McLaughlin, Director of Operations
- Cynthia Nikitin, Senior Vice President
- David O’Neil, Senior Director, Public Markets
- Priti Patel, Senior Associate
- Emily Putnam, Junior Project Associate
- Christina Ragon, Junior Marketing Associate
- Evalynn Rosado, Director of Marketing and Business Development
- Nate Storring, Director of Communications
- Laura Torchio, Deputy Director of Transportation
- Gary Toth, Executive Vice President
- Kelly Verel, Vice President
- Meg Walker, Senior Vice President
- Rebecca Weiser, Administrative Associate
- Kurt Wheeler, Senior Project Associate
- Philip Winn, Vice President
- Shaylee Zaugg, Junior Project Associate

OUR LEADERSHIP

- Phil Myrick, Chief Executive Officer

OUR BOARD

- David Burney, New York, NY, USA (Chair)
- Ricardo Byrd, Washington, DC, USA (Secretary)
- Kimberly C. Driggins, Washington, DC, USA
- Dr. Minnie Fells Johnson, Dayton, OH, USA
- Andrew Manshel, Esq., New York, NY, USA
- Cecilia Martinez, Mexico City, Mexico
- Benjamin de la Peña, Seattle, WA, USA
- Vanessa September, Capetown, South Africa
- Jennifer Vickers, Austin, TX, USA
- Jon Zagrodzky, New York, NY, USA (Treasurer)

Seven ways to bring Project for Public Spaces to your community in 2020.

1. Hire us for a project.
   We help create well-used and well-loved public spaces of all kinds, on all scales and budgets, and ensure communities are thoughtfully involved every step of the way.

2. Partner with us. We are expanding our impact by working with foundations, corporate social responsibility programs, and governments to give more communities the opportunity to shape their public spaces.

3. Hire us for a custom training or speaking engagement. We develop educational material for a wide range of audience, from place managers to professional designers to city agency staff, that address your unique goals and opportunities.

4. Join us at Walk/Bike/Places. North America’s foremost active transportation and placemaking conference is coming to Indianapolis, IN in August with a focus on implementation. Bring home new skills, ideas, and connections this summer.

5. Attend a training in our New York City offices. We invite you to join us for our two hands-on trainings: Placemaking: Making It Happen and How to Create Successful Public Markets.

6. Subscribe to our newsletter. We bring loads of placemaking opportunities, resources, and articles directly to your inbox.

7. Donate to Project for Public Spaces. Support the work we do every day to help people like you create community-powered public spaces around the world.

Learn more at www.pps.org.
The closing party of the 3rd International Placemaking Week took place in Cooper’s Alley, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

*Photo by Volume Collective.*