

## Conceptual Summary of Placemaking

**Working Paper 2025-03**

Sam Marino  
Research Assistant, Center for Public Safety Initiatives  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
srm9893@rit.edu

Irshad Altheimer, Ph.D.,  
Ellen M Granberg Endowed Full Professor, Department of Criminal Justice  
Director, Center for Public Safety Initiatives  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
lxagcj@rit.edu

## Introduction

Placemaking allows a community to re-envision and reinvent their public spaces to improve their neighborhood. Placemaking activities can help strengthen connections between community members and the spaces they share. These activities utilize the physical, cultural, and social identities that define certain places and support their ongoing evolution (Urban Institute, 2018). They create quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, well-being, and togetherness. Placemaking belongs to everyone within a community and supports future generations. There are several types of placemaking activities, including: creative/artistic, health/well-being, and community-related ones.

## Creative/Artistic Placemaking

Creative and artistic placemaking integrates art and culture into community projects to benefit the physical, social, and economic well-being of a neighborhood. It encourages residents to find their creative side and utilize those skills to improve their community spaces. It combines art and culture together to shape the physical and social character of places within an area. By shaping the physical and social characteristics of certain places in a community, economic development is induced, social change begins, and the physical environment improves.

There are also many diverse partners involved in creative placemaking activities. These partners strengthen the overall placemaking project in an area and contribute to expanding the varying cultural backgrounds through creative pieces (Reconnecting to Our Waterways, n.d.). Some examples of creative placemaking can include murals, music, sculptures, block parties, and dances (Urban Institute, 2018). Creative placemaking's main goal is to bring a

community closer together by connecting through their culture and different arts with the hope of revitalizing the entire community.

## Health/Well-Being Placemaking

There are other placemaking activities that target the health and well-being of residents. A healthy community ensures changes to lifestyles to improve the overall well-being of community members. Physical activities are important to a person's health, as they improve brain health, manage weight, reduce the risk of disease, strengthen bones and muscles, and improve the ability to do everyday activities. Many health related placemaking activities incorporate physical activities for community members to involve themselves in (Project for Public Spaces, 2024). Placemakers, those who are implementing the placemaking activities, will alter the community design of an area to inspire more physical activity by creating activity-friendly routes to places residents want and need to visit, which can include parks, workplaces, markets, and schools. These placemaking activities will also grant access to healthy, affordable foods for these communities. Both physical activity and access to healthier foods foster impoverished communities to begin to thrive through their physical health (Project for Public Spaces, 2024). Other health and wellness placemaking activities can include offering affordable and/or free healthcare services. These services allow the community to thrive even more physically and mentally, as they assist in improving the physical health of residents as well as their mental health. Some of the services provided include mammograms, blood pressure screenings, cholesterol screenings, blood sugar screenings, vision and hearing exams, vaccinations, mental health resources, and more. By improving the physical and mental health of underprivileged communities, the neighborhood will regenerate and prosper, thus lowering the incidence of violence and crime.

## Community Related Placemaking

One of the final types of placemaking activities are those that promote a sense of community. These activities specifically gather the community members together and aid in the formation of social relationships and development within an area. Many impoverished and underprivileged communities do not have a feeling of community or any relationships within them. Thus, community-related placemaking activities aim to build social connections and bonds among a community to assist in revitalizing the community as a whole (Project for Public Spaces, n.d.). Some examples of community related placemaking activities can include community barbecues, neighborhood celebrations, outreach programs, and more. By building a community and strengthening social bonds within it, a community will be able to flourish and turn away from violence and crime.

## Conclusion

Overall, placemaking activities are key to bettering underprivileged communities. The various forms of activities aid in developing and enriching a community and the residents within it. They form public spaces that promote individual's health, well-being, happiness, and unity. By bettering and unifying a community, crime and violence will be reduced, and it will begin to prosper.

## References

Urban Institute. (2018, September 13). *Project: Creative placemaking and community safety*. <https://www.urban.org/creative-placemaking-and-community-safety>

Project for Public Spaces. (2024, May 2). *Placemaking for active living & public health*. <https://www.pps.org/article/placemaking-for-active-living-public-health>

Project for Public Spaces (n.d.). *What is placemaking?* <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>

Reconnecting to Our Waterways (n.d.). *What is “Creative placemaking”?* <https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/ROW-Creative-Placemaking-handout.doc.pdf>

## About the Center for Public Safety Initiatives

The Center for Public Safety Initiatives (CPSI) is a multi-disciplinary research center that examines strategies to reduce crime and enhance the administration of justice. It provides program evaluation, data analytics, and project management services to area law enforcement, community non-profits, and other criminal justice professionals, and it contributes to general knowledge generation of the nature and causes of crime and violence. Its educational goals include training graduate and undergraduate students in strategic planning, program evaluation, and policy analysis.

The foundation of the Center is the practice of action research in which relevant data and analyses are brought to bear on the day-to-day decision-making processes of organizations. The Center serves the practice of policy development and implementation in real time and is a testing ground for 21st century university engagement, demonstrating how rigorous research and analysis can play a role in improving the lives of society's most marginalized citizens.

To access our full library of white papers, visit our website at [rit.edu/cpsi](http://rit.edu/cpsi).



### Learn more

- [rit.edu/cpsi](http://rit.edu/cpsi)
- [CPSI@rit.edu](mailto:CPSI@rit.edu)
- (585) 475-6386