

# great place guide

(a guide to making great places)



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## Contact details

Enquiries about this publication should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, City Renewal Authority Office

Address: Canberra Nara Centre, 1 Constitution Avenue, CANBERRA ACT 2601

Postal address: GPO Box 158, CANBERRA ACT 2601

Telephone: 02 6205 1878

Email: [cityrenewal@act.gov.au](mailto:cityrenewal@act.gov.au)

Web: [www.cityrenewalCBR.com.au](http://www.cityrenewalCBR.com.au)

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# great place guide

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# acknowledgement of country

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) is Ngunnawal country.

The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the Canberra region. The region is a significant meeting place for the Ngunnawal and surrounding Aboriginal Nations who have gathered here for thousands of years.

The City Renewal Authority acknowledges and respects the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

# acknowledgement of the placemaking movement

The development of the *Great Place Guide* has benefited from work undertaken by others in the placemaking movement to promote and support good placemaking process and practice. In particular, the guide adopts content from Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a non-profit organisation dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build strong communities. The City Renewal Authority gratefully acknowledges PPS for this content and the Tait Network for their assistance in developing this guide.

# foreword from the authority

The City Renewal Authority is responsible for the revitalisation of central Canberra. As a public agency, leading placemaking initiatives since our inception in 2017, our Board and dedicated staff are pleased to share this publication with you.

The *Great Place Guide* is an opportunity to share our place-related work as we pursue our ambition for the transformation of our city centre. The guide takes a practical approach and reflects the Authority's 'people first' philosophy, putting the community at the core of the renewal process. I encourage you to read and share this guide in the hope that it will assist others in their placemaking endeavours.

The *Great Place Guide* describes the steps for realising successful renewal outcomes and creating memorable places where people want to spend time. A city full of places that people love, and love to use, must of course be a universal goal for anyone involved in shaping the urban environment.

**Malcolm Snow**  
Chief Executive Officer



**“The guide takes a practical approach and reflects the Authority’s ‘people first’ philosophy.”**



# a guide for you

If you have an interest in high-quality urban renewal and want to create urban environments and neighbourhoods that are places where people want to live, invest, work and play, then this guide is for you.

If you've ever thought that the planning and management of a place could be more collaborative and strengthen the connection between people and the places they share, then this guide is for you.

If you're a developer, an architect, an investor, a designer, a baker, a coffee maker or anything else in between, then this guide is for you.

The most important thing is that you care about making great places.



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**“Placemaking is a process that, at its best, when based in communities, maximises locally defined shared value in the public realm.”**

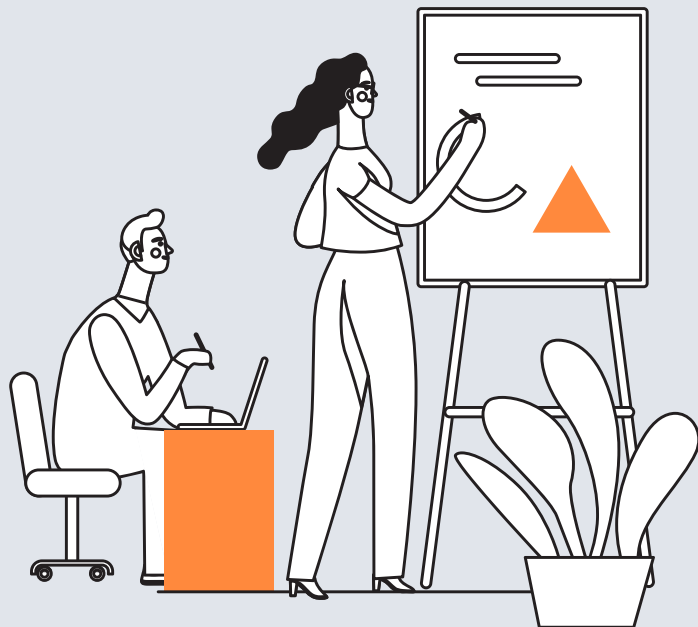
*— Ethan Kent  
Co-director, PlacemakingX*

# an intro to place

# placemaking is

**a philosophy for planning, designing and managing public space that encourages community leadership in the evolution of a place**

**an iterative collaborative process of creating places that people love and feel connected to.**



# placemaking matters

Developments and neighbourhoods shaped by the principles of placemaking not only succeed on a practical level but also increase quality of life, provide a sense of belonging and have emotional resonance. People tend to be happier, more productive and more inclined to care for thoughtfully designed spaces.

Places that generate these good feelings progressively attract more people, more investment and more business. The resulting environmental, social and economic benefits ripple outwards through the wider community and the city as a whole.

**“Never let money be the driver,  
money is the outcome. Focus on  
passion and you’ll get money.”**

— *Andrew Hoyne*  
Founding Partner of Hoyne



**“I don’t think placemaking is optional — it is crucial for creating places that work well and ensuring our cities are successful. Creating great, liveable places is the first step to attract talented, creative individuals to a place where they can thrive and in turn participate in the local economy. It is dangerous to consider placemaking as a fluffy exercise.”**

*— Lucy Turnbull AO  
Former Chief Commissioner,  
Greater Sydney Commission*



## make a great place

Great places bring people together.

They’re places you feel good in and want to spend time in. They feel sociable and welcoming. They exist where the physical collides (unites) with the ephemeral — where we encounter the rhythm of the everyday as well as the unscripted and spontaneous moments.

**They are memorable.**

Great places don’t appear by accident; they’re shaped and nurtured by deliberate actions and an engaged community.

Thinking about how a space can be used, who will use it and how they will interact can fundamentally affect the kind of place that develops.

Great places have an energy that makes them ‘somewhere’ — not just ‘anywhere’.

**A place-based community includes local businesses, residents, building owners, workers, commercial tenants and visitors. New developments are great opportunities to bring people together through their shared involvement in placemaking.**



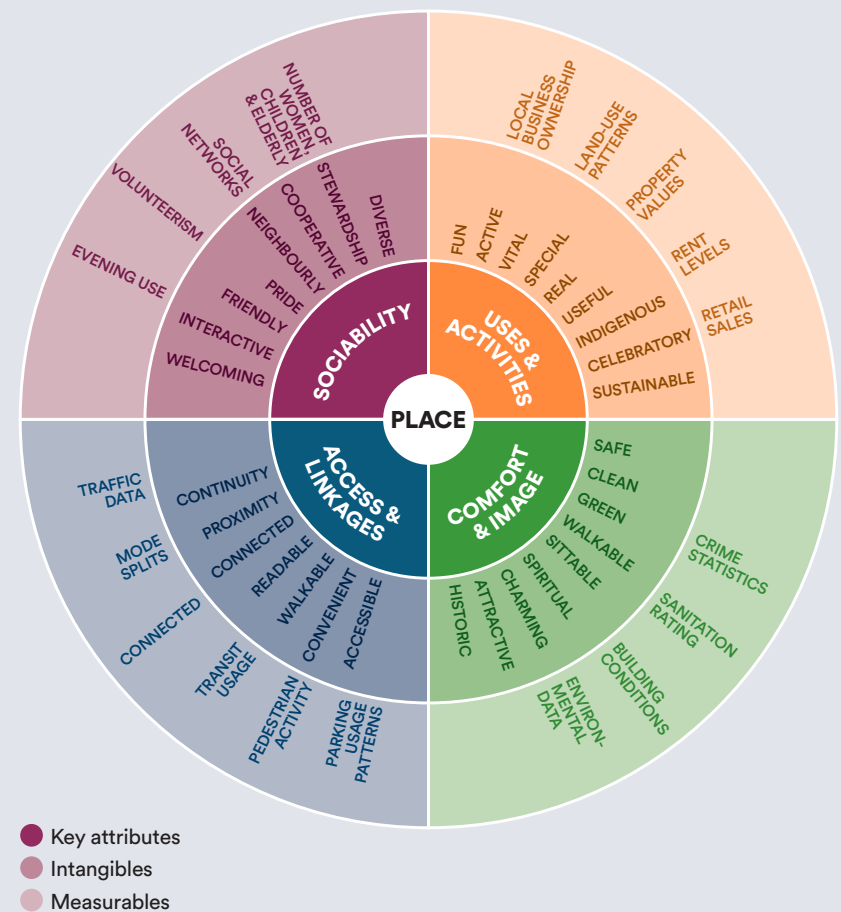
**“What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people.”**

— William H Whyte  
author of *The Social life of Small Urban Spaces*



**Across the globe, you’ll find great places — from the grand civic square of a bustling city to a small local park in the suburbs.**

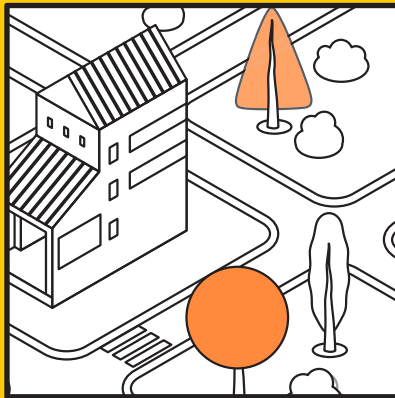
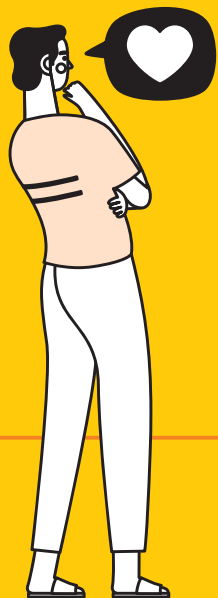
**When you dig deep you’ll find they all share the same four key attributes:**



\*This diagram was developed by and is copyright of Project for Public Spaces

# golden rules

(of placemaking)



## great places ...

... are accessible and well connected to other places in the area

... are comfortable and project a good image

... attract people to participate in activities there

... are social environments where people want to gather and visit again and again.





(discover, propose, take action)

# let's get onto it

**“Cultures and climates  
differ all over the world,  
but people are the same.  
They’ll gather in public  
if you give them a good  
place to do it.”**

— Jan Gehl  
Architect and urban designer

# discover context

Placemaking starts with learning as much as possible about the place as it is currently. You need a deep understanding of the area, the people who use it and what makes it tick.

- Spend time in the area's public spaces to get a feel for its **place identity**.
- Collect data on demographics, community sentiment and how people are using the area.
- Visit businesses in the neighbourhood, talk with local residents and generally try to understand the **place experience**.
- Find your future and emerging communities — especially when you're working in places undergoing urban renewal.

**Place identity** is the combination of the location's enduring and unique qualities, including its history and cultural traditions.

**Place experience** is how people experience, interact with and value the local built and/or natural environment.

# discover people

The heart of placemaking is 'people first'. Collaborate closely with all relevant communities throughout the design process. Consult widely through community meetings, events, site visits and online forums.

## Listen carefully

Listen carefully to what people say and be open to incorporating their ideas about how they see their neighbourhood changing over time and what they hope it will become.

From this collaboration with the community you'll develop the place proposition — the document which describes the overarching vision for future development and presents the themes which describe the needs and aspirations for the place to realise that vision.

The place proposition will steer decision-making through the design, construction and management phases of urban renewal and the creation of neighbourhoods where people want to live, invest, work and play.





## propose vision

A vision captures a location's place identity and describes the future place experience. Informed by your understanding of the existing characteristics of the neighbourhood and its people, a vision encompasses the hopes and dreams of the community.

To unite people behind the vision, you need to explain it clearly and communicate it with integrity and authenticity.

In 2018 the City Renewal Authority worked with the local community to develop the Haig Park Place Plan. The vision was simple and it informed future actions for the park.

*“Haig Park will be known as an example of how thoughtful action can transform a living space into something truly representative of the community that uses it. It will be an active and reflective place geared toward recreation, relaxation, and pleasure.”*

## propose themes

The next phase is developing a series of themes which will provide the strategic framework for the action plan (you'll learn more about this in a second).

Themes are statements, often based on well-established and tested urban design principles, that describe the attributes a place needs to be preserved or enhanced, and the community's aspirations for the place in order to deliver on the vision.

**“Deep and early engagement with stakeholders, neighbours, interested residents, traders and broader citizenry are critical to foster a true and self-proclaimed sense of community.”**

— Nightingale Housing  
*an award-winning model of systems and processes for housing*

# take action identify

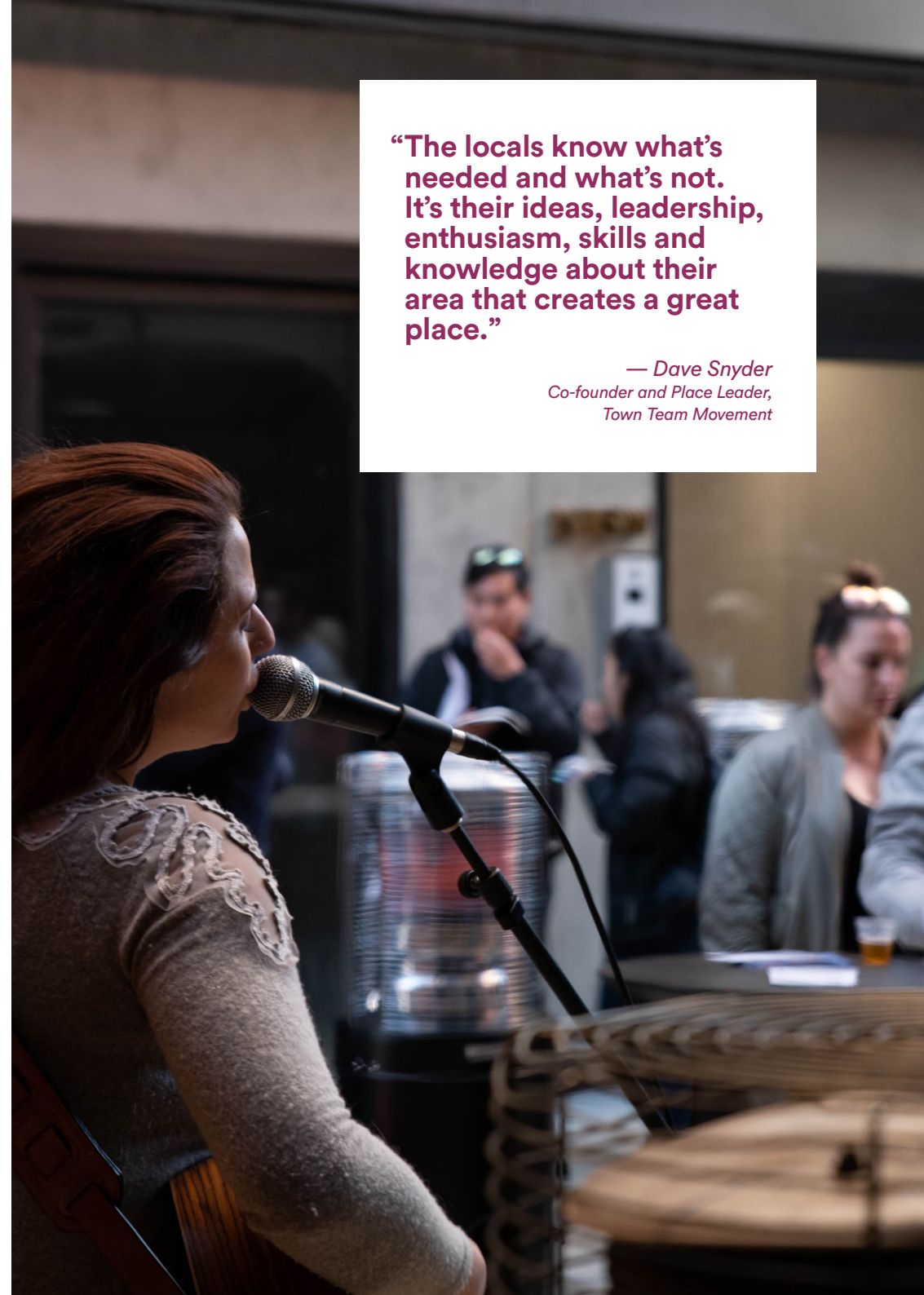
The last phase in the process is the action plan — the document describing the actions needed to make the vision a reality.

Again, a people-first approach is essential. Community-led placemaking brings local leadership, ideas, enthusiasm, skills and knowledge to the task of implementing the action plan. Champions are identified and capacity is built, which enables the long-term vision for renewal to be sustained.



**“The locals know what’s needed and what’s not. It’s their ideas, leadership, enthusiasm, skills and knowledge about their area that creates a great place.”**

— Dave Snyder  
Co-founder and Place Leader,  
Town Team Movement



# take action prioritise

The action plan details all the elements of place infrastructure.

For each action, it indicates a timeframe (short, medium or long term), who will be responsible and an approximation of cost (low, medium, high).

Organised according to the themes, recommended actions cover aspects of:

- constructing and caring for the physical infrastructure of buildings and public spaces (hardware)
- initiating and co-ordinating events and activations (software)
- managing the completed development or public space (orgware)
- supporting the growth of community and place identity.

The action plan needs to consider the priorities of local businesses, building owners and residents, and how the actions it proposes will affect them, involve them and rely on them.

A living document, the action plan is intended to be re-created over time with the community, as actions and timing are refined.

## understanding place infrastructure

**Place infrastructure is made up of hardware, software and orgware.**

**Hardware is the physical infrastructure and design, which influences how a place looks and feels — streets, buildings, green infrastructure, street furniture, water supply and other services. It's the work of urban designers, architects, landscape architects and engineers.**

**Software is the non-physical, experiential elements that define a place — the things that happen there. Local businesses, landowners, residents and visitors contribute to these elements.**

**Orgware is the set of organisational, management and governance structures for how the place functions.**



# take action implement

**Placemaking doesn't end** when construction ends.

**Placemaking doesn't end** when consultation ends.

**Placemaking continues** when people move in and public spaces are used.

Place management is about the processes for maintaining and co-ordinating the place infrastructure so that different stakeholders can work together to achieve and sustain a shared vision for the place.

The place management strategy includes actions to:

- maintain building integrity, landscaping and public spaces
- support the growth of a strong place-based community with a sense of belonging and ownership
- encourage local leadership and active residents groups.

Developments without an effective place management strategy seem to age badly within a few years. They lose their vitality and become less desirable. By contrast, places sustained by co-ordinated, people-first place management only become more vibrant and more valued with time.



# a step-by-step guide to making great places

(it's a cheat sheet)

## 1. Discover

### Context

Take a deep dive into the history, characteristics and regulatory environment of the place.

1.1

### People

Get to know the community — who they are (now and in the future), their cultural traditions and how they use space.

1.2

### Engagement

Start a dialogue with the community to learn about what makes them tick and build local leadership. Keep on talking.

1.3

## 2. Propose

### Vision

Present an ideal future that comes from the place and encompasses the hopes and dreams of the community.

2.1

### Themes

Develop statements which describe the needs and aspirations required to deliver the vision. They provide the strategic framework for future actions.

2.2

### Narrative

Share the story of the place and its community. The story will guide decision-making as renewal happens.

2.3

## 3. Take action

### Identify

Find the local champions and the best ideas. List all the actions required to achieve the vision.

3.1

### Prioritise

Sort actions according to indicative timeframes and cost ranges, which guide the next step.

3.2

### Implement

Start doing. Kick off with the quick wins to test and trial ideas, as well as building capacity and leadership in the community.

3.3





**“Cities have the capability  
of providing something for  
everybody, only because,  
and only when, they are  
created by everybody.”**

— Jane Jacobs  
author of *The Death and Life  
of Great American Cities*

# what to do next



# resources

## This guide is just a starting point.

Check out the following resources, which will provide you with a deeper understanding of the many facets of placemaking.

A great place to start is to get your hands on a copy of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) by Jane Jacobs, writer, urbanist and activist, who championed the voices of everyday people in neighbourhood planning and city-building.

William H (Holly) Whyte also laid the groundwork for the placemaking movement with his seminal book *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980), which showed why some public spaces work and others don't. He was also the mentor of Project for Public Spaces.

**Project for Public Spaces** (PPS) is a non-profit planning, design and educational organisation dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities.

[www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)

**PlacemakingX** is a global network of leaders who together accelerate placemaking as a way to create healthy, inclusive and beloved communities.

[www.placemakingx.org](http://www.placemakingx.org)

**Gehl Institute** is the home of the public life data protocol, which is an open data specification intended to improve the ability of everyone to share and compare information about public life activity in public space.

[gehl institute.org](http://gehl institute.org)

**Charles Landry** is an international authority on the use of imagination and creativity in urban change. He focuses on how cities can create the enabling conditions for people and organisations to think, plan and act with imagination to solve problems and develop opportunities.

[charleslandry.com](http://charleslandry.com)



**Town Team Movement** is an 'underarching' organisation that supports, connects and promotes Town Teams around Australia and New Zealand. They help to empower communities and create better places.

[www.townteams.com.au](http://www.townteams.com.au)

**Place Leaders** is a member organisation for the promotion of leadership among place planners, managers, shapers and makers working in the Asia-Pacific region.

[www.placeleaders.com](http://www.placeleaders.com)

Madden, K (lead writer) and PPS Publication Team 2018, revised edition, *How to Turn a Place Around*, Project for Public Spaces, Inc.

A common-sense handbook for everyone from community residents to mayors on how to understand and improve the public spaces in their communities.

Hoyne, A (ed) 2019, *The Place Economy, Volume 2*, Hoyne

Using case studies, essays and research gathered from across the world, this book strengthens the commercial argument for effective placemaking. It examines how spaces are used, analysing the things required to meet the needs of communities, from residents to visitors and from commercial entities to private individuals.

Hes, D and Hernandez-Santin, C (eds) 2020, *Placemaking Fundamentals for the Built Environment*, Palgrave Macmillan

A book for all those actively working in the built environment, it presents the latest theory and practice of engaging with stakeholders to co-design, develop and manage thriving places.







The *Great Place Guide* is your new bible for placemaking.

It's an easy-to-follow guide for everyone who's interested in city-building and wants to know about what makes great public places and the collaborative process to get there.

are you ready  
to make a  
great place?



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