

The Sounds of Prince George's County

An Introduction to Creative Placemaking

Julia Kuhlman

The University of Maryland – College Park
Fall, 2021

PALS - Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability
An initiative of the National Center for Smart Growth
Gerrit Knaap, NCSG Executive Director
Kimberly Fisher, PALS Director

Introduction to Creative Placemaking

The phrase “creative placemaking” is described by the American Planning Association as a set of different but related practices that engage “community members, artists, arts and culture organizations, community developers, and other stakeholders **use arts and cultural strategies to implement community-led change.**”

Most often, creative placemaking strategies are generated by arts practitioners and struggle to find funding and partners in local government. This places Prince George’s County Park and Planning in a unique position: if it chooses to use creative placemaking, the burden of finding resources is somewhat more easily achievable, though it will need to find and engage community members and arts practitioners. The agency can help to scale-up projects that are already underway.

The NEA white paper on creative placemaking advises that projects begin by defining the desired outcomes or community effects, rather than shoe-horning an already-developed arts initiative into a changemaking activity. ArtPlace research on creative placemaking sorts projects into following “[cross sector initiatives](#)”:

- Agriculture & Food
- Economic Development
- Environment & Energy
- Health
- Housing
- Immigration
- Public Safety
- Transportation
- Workforce Development
- Youth Development.

A creative placemaking project should begin by envisioning a desired outcome in one of these categories, then ask how any particular art (music, dance, architecture, visual art, film, culinary arts, theater, literature) could help achieve that outcome.

While the how-to guides for creative placemaking are not particularly detailed, based on the resources listed below and from conversations with Parks and Planning staff, recommended projects in the following approaches; they should also be fairly low-budget, easily organized, and strive for high impact with community buy-in.

Activating Spaces

Park and Planning is already invested in and pursuing, and the arts can be a great strategy. For example, using music:

- Live performance: Whether or not the event is themed, artists with an established following and name recognition will obviously draw their own crowd.

- Residencies that activate space and develop audiences: A “residency” is a multiple-performance contract scheduled over a period of weeks or months. They can be particularly effective in encouraging repeated interactions with community members.
- Hosting community engagement sessions: Larger and expanded events in spaces already in use can generate attendees who are already using the space; people who attend are more likely to care what happens in a space because they use it.

Event Planning with Local Experts

Events that could be considered community placemaking regularly take place on a small scale. Working with Park and Planning or the Arts Council could help reconceive these events on a larger scale. For example, programming opportunities include:

- Capital Centre Collection: Local filmmaker and music aficionado, Jeff Krulik, and Joni Floyd, special collections curator at the University of Maryland, are working to expand this collection of event ephemera and publications. There is also an active Facebook group dedicated to memories of the Capital Centre, indicating a popular interest.
- Punk Music: Ben Jackson, UMD project archivist and musician Ian MacKaye are developing a record of punk music venues in the region.
- Arts for All: This University initiative blends the arts with STEM education, and social justice movements. They hope to create community-oriented programming that sparks civic dialogue, increases community engagement and activates social change.
- Local libraries: County libraries are likely already hosting events that could be expanded into community placemaking.

Placemaking Grants and Funding Sources

National Endowment for the Arts [“Our Town” Initiative](#)

Kresge Foundation [Arts & Culture Grant](#)

Project for Public Spaces [Community Placemaking Grants](#)

Maryland State Arts Council [County Arts Development Grant](#)

Maryland Humanities Council [Grants Program](#) (focus on literature, history, social sciences)

Resources

The ArtPlace America [website](#) records the 10-year initiative (2010-2020) that researched funding creative placemaking projects, in the [community development approaches](#) listed above. plus provides examples and light analysis of creative placemaking projects.

National Endowment for the Arts white paper, *Creative Placemaking*, Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa, 2010 <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/CreativePlacemaking-Paper.pdf>

This comprehensive survey of the value and practice of creative placemaking examines challenges and includes case studies examining the pros and cons of various placemaking efforts. (Visual art is the most popular form of creative placemaking, but that may be the result of momentum, rather than applicability.)

American Planning Association, Creative Placemaking

<https://www.planning.org/knowledgebase/creativeplacemaking/>

This website includes various planning-oriented resources for placemaking process and projects.