

Your guide to  
placemaking on

**BELMONT**

# BELMONT

## BRIEF

Be On Belmont is a collaborative community effort to make Belmont Avenue a destination for art, culture, recreation, and commercial activity in Brownsville. Through placemaking and community building, Be On Belmont aims to revitalize this corridor into a thriving business district and community hub. Long-term goals are to improve public safety, economic development, and the sense of community in Brownsville.

Placemaking brings together public, private, not-for-profit, and community partners to shape the physical and social environment of the neighborhood around arts and culture. Each Be On Belmont project is developed with, and for, the community. Be On Belmont targets young people in Brownsville specifically through youth cohorts structured around creative and civic engagement.

## GOALS

- Solicit community input
- Create permanent public spaces for community activities
- Attract anchor businesses
- Connect businesses and residents
- Strengthen community
- Improve public safety

## MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

- Reductions in crime
- Improved business retention
- Decreased vacancy
- Increased positive pedestrian activity
- Sustained community engagement

## BELMONT AVENUE TASK FORCE



# PLACEMAKING ON BELMONT

We've identified what the Belmont Task Force's natural process looks like. Here's how the best practices of placemaking fit into that process.



## PLANNING AND FUNDING

01 ASSESS PUBLIC SPACE CHALLENGES

02 SELECT A SITE

03 COLLECT DATA



## OUTREACH

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12 ASSESS RESULTS & REPLICATE



# PLANNING & FUNDING

Site selection and assessment of assets and challenges;  
Researching and applying for grants, or providing project funding.

## 01 ASSESS PUBLIC SPACE CHALLENGES

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### WHAT TO DO

Begin with an informal assessment of the public spaces around the project site.

### HOW TO

Convene the taskforce and list the 10 most important places on Belmont, or throughout Brownsville. These can either be successful places or ones that need improvement. List the perks and room for improvement of each, like seating, shade, underused corners, or if it's a safe place to cross the street.

### WHY

These techniques will help the taskforce to better understand the “flow” of a place by understanding trends beyond a given moment. You may be surprised what you discover.

## 02 SELECT A SITE

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### WHAT TO DO

Visit your proposed sites with the taskforce, thinking about the successful elements of the space and room for transforming the space into a place that magnetizes people.

### HOW TO

First, make sure to check with city departments to see what is possible to do in the sites within their restrictions. On location, take some time to look around. Try to see your space through a new set of eyes, examining its characteristics. Have a member of the taskforce record everyone's comments. How does this space compare to your Top 10?

### WHY

When they enjoy a place, people often describe it as safe, fun, charming, or welcoming. These translate to a place that is accessible, has people engaging in activities, is a comfortable place and has a good image, and is where people choose to meet up with each other or show to visitors. Great places usually have at least two of these qualities.



## 03 COLLECT DATA

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### WHAT TO DO

Go to the space and use techniques for observing and measuring people’s perceptions through interviews and questionnaires, trace measures, behavior mapping, counting, tracking, and beyond. Do this for an hour and over several different periods, like on a weekday and weekend and at different times of day.

### HOW TO

Use [Placemaking Chicago’s download section](#) with information on when and how to use a technique and examples of forms that can be used to collect information.

### WHY

These techniques will help the taskforce to better understand the “flow” of a place by understanding trends beyond a given moment. You may be surprised what you discover.





# OUTREACH

Informing stakeholders and inviting them to participate in development and implementation.

## 04 IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS

### WHAT TO DO

Expand stakeholders beyond the taskforce. Placemaking projects are often initiated by self-selected groups of people who live, work and play in the selected site. Local entrepreneurs can and should be pulled into the placemaking process early on.

### HOW TO

Involve folks early in the process like longtime residents, local businesses, community groups, government groups, individual experts and students in creative evaluation sessions. Provide resources and insights, and also be important allies in getting other locals on board.

### WHY

There is strength in numbers. Involving folks early in the process encourages ownership. Businesses flourish when people enjoy spending time in and around them.



# ENVISIONING

Soliciting community input on the design of the space.



## 05 CONDUCT PLACE EVALUATION WORKSHOP

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### WHAT TO DO

The Placemaking process is both transparent and inclusive, so individual residents, community groups, business owners, nonprofits, and local government, along with planners and design professionals, can participate equally and in a meaningful way to make their community better.

### HOW TO

From informal groups or small planning teams to workshops and large conferences, see resources at [PPS.org](https://pps.org) as well as past envisioning workshops the taskforce has conducted.

### WHY

Make the most of participants' unique perspectives. Stakeholders can quickly sum up the good and bad qualities of a site, and ignite a creative process.

## 06 TRANSLATE IDEAS INTO ACTION WITH A WORKSHOP GROUP

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### WHAT TO DO

Several good ideas will come out of the workshop with your assembled stakeholders, many of whom will be excited by the possibilities for the space they've just evaluated. The next step is to ask for volunteers—preferably, a mix of the most enthusiastic and influential people—to become members of a working group.

### HOW TO

In general, a Place Evaluation Workshop includes an overview of the targeted location and interactive site evaluation. The working group should include a strong point person to lead the efforts. It should identify a problem statement and create an action plan to address this problem.

### WHY

The working group can now review the evaluation and ideas that were generated, solidify these ideas into a vision, and develop more specific recommendations.





# RENDERING

Visualizing outputs from envisioning and finalizing the design.

## 07 DEVELOP A VISUAL CONCEPT PLAN

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### WHAT TO DO

Capture the output of your workshop and reflect it visually. Developing a visual concept plan may seem like something that requires hiring an architect, but there are many ways you can design a simple space yourself, with people who have a good eye for what makes a space both appealing and useful.

### HOW TO

A designer or person with artistic talents could quickly sketch recommended improvements on a wallmounted base plan as they are suggested by workshop participants.

### WHY

This cartoon-type vision plan captures the full range of possible improvements that can be used to develop the action plans and prioritize the enhancements to be implemented.



# APPROVAL

Acquiring clearance or permits from official bodies required for implementation.



## 08 CREATE SUMMARY REPORT & PRESENTATION

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### WHAT TO DO

Write a short report that summarizes the result of the Placemaking Workshop, working group sessions, and follow-up Visual Concept Plan.

### HOW TO

The report should build on the workshop result summary and vision statement, adding specific short and long-term priorities. It should also feature ideas that were not shown on the plan, as well as other information like a list of ideal partners, proposed short-term budget, and thorough financing plan.

### WHY

Think of a presentation as a visual tool that can be used to gain approval and market your public space improvement efforts to potential partners, political supporters, funders, and community boards.





# INSTALLATION

Implementation, construction and launch.

## 09 IMPLEMENT SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

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### WHAT TO DO

Some ideas can be implemented without design concepts, while others cannot. The taskforce should meet regularly to give progress updates on their assigned actions, identify problems or challenges to this progress, and discuss new approaches or developments that may help speed implementation.

### HOW TO

Review programming proposals and management-related issues, and prepare for the purchase and layout of amenities. Members might also decide how and when to involve more partners and draw positive attention to the new public-space improvements.

### WHY

Adding new activities to a space are among the best short-term improvements to a public space. It is easy to energize the community with some basic activities such as clean-ups and painting/decorating. Groups also can organize some simple, temporary events to get people used to the idea of using the place.





### 10 DEVELOP LONG-TERM DESIGN PLANS

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#### WHAT TO DO

As you implement short-term improvements to a place, it also may be necessary to develop a design for the long-term improvement of the space.

#### HOW TO

Always refer back to your summary report and use it to guide all new partners you bring into the process. Have regular meetings with invested community members using specified timelines to review products and conduct additional brainstorming to address new issues.

#### WHY

Involving community members in meetings, documenting shared steps, and celebrating via regular communication with stakeholders will generate sustainable ownership, enthusiasm and a sense of pride.

### 11 DEVELOP LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT PLANS

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#### WHAT TO DO

While local government focuses on basic services, such as waste collection, maintenance, and lighting, local community or business organizations can manage space on a deeper level, making people feel welcome and the place seem more inviting through constant refinements to make the space work better.

#### HOW TO

To better understand the management that a space really needs compared to what it is getting, it is helpful to conduct interviews and chart what is done in the short term and compare that with the new demands that will be placed on the space if you implement the long-term vision you have developed. In some cases, a new organization might be created.

#### WHY

This step is not only about cleaning and maintaining, but also drawing in the public. You ensure sustainable activation by assigning invested members of the community and task force to champion particulars, like curating a calendar of events, maintaining attractive arrangements, answering questions and responding to complaints, and beyond.





# EVALUATION

Collecting data on community response and impact.

## 12 ASSESS RESULTS & REPLICATE

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### WHAT TO DO

At this point (or even before you implement a longer term plan), you can also think about expanding your efforts to other sites or neighboring communities.

### HOW TO

Ask: What other places in the community need to be improved? Who will fund the implementation of short-term improvements? What role will the working group play? How can you work with other similar projects in the region or country?

### WHY

If your placemaking efforts are a success, stakeholders and community members from other places and municipalities will seek to initiate their own placemaking projects with your project as a case study.



# CASE STUDIES

**Stories from Brooklyn, New York, and beyond  
which echo some of the successes and challenges  
faced in placemaking work on Belmont Avenue.**

**'HOME GROWN, LOCALLY OWNED'**

**MYRTLE AVENUE, BROOKLYN, NY**

**Business development**

**CORONA PLAZA**

**QUEENS, NY**

**Plaza activation**

**MURAL ARTS PROGRAM**

**PHILADELPHIA, PA**

**Space revitalization through beautification**

**SENN PARK UNITY GARDEN**

**CHICAGO, IL**

**Community greening project**



# 'HOME GROWN, LOCALLY OWNED'

Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

**GOAL** Promote the neighborhood commercial strip and encourage nearby residents to support the local economy.

**MADE BY** **The Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership:**  
Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project, Local Development Corporation (MARP)  
Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Business Improvement District (BID)

## TIMELINE



*Profiles of business owners made a personal connection to shopping locally.*

## SUMMARY

The campaign puts the area’s small businesses in the spotlight and leverages the historic “mom and pop” character of Myrtle Avenue and strives to distinguish its mix of over 150 individual retailers by featuring the personal stories of entrepreneurs who have invested their time, energy and money in building their small business, and therefore the neighborhood. This reminds shoppers of the familiar face and the personalized service they experience at a locally-owned business.

The campaign also activates local shoppers to invest in urban neighborhoods, helping to prevent the displacement of locally-owned businesses while ensuring continued opportunities for first-time entrepreneurs.

**METHOD** A branding campaign that showcases the Myrtle Avenue merchants in postcards, print and electronic advertising, and streetlight banners.

The partnership also plans to launch Myrtle Miles, an avenue-wide loyalty card program, where shoppers will receive points and bonuses for their local Myrtle purchases.

**IMPACT** The campaign has increased local awareness of new business openings on Myrtle Avenue, broadened residents’ familiarity with local business owners, and increased daytime and evening foot traffic on the avenue.

**REFERENCES** [Home Grown, Locally Owned, Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership](#)  
[Myrtle Avenue Partnership Wins Placemaking Award](#), Clinton Hill Blog  
[Community Input Drives New Plans for a Safer, More Welcoming Myrtle Avenue Plaza](#), Project for Public Spaces

# CORONA PLAZA

Queens, NY



**GOAL** Revive the Corona Plaza, enhance foot traffic, and boost local businesses.

**MADE BY** NYC Department of Transportation, Queens Economic Development Corporation, Queens Museum, Social Practice Queens, Queens College, DSGN AGNC

## TIMELINE



## SUMMARY

Before its redesign, the plaza was a fenced-off triangle and a parking lot surrounded by sixteen lanes of traffic and the loud subway line isolating the main commercial corridor. The demand for this revival came from the neighbourhood residents and took four years to complete.

The cross-sector team used the temporary-to-permanent placemaking model, allowing the community to be designers of the space and to inform professionals about important design considerations. The triangular plaza under the 7 train implemented gravel pavement, movable furniture, planter boxes, and umbrellas. Within days of the opening, children were playing, seniors were chilling over dominos, and well-attended performances were held.



*Redesign workshops used transparent maps projecting images over the space as conversation starters with community members.*

**METHOD** The plaza was designed and executed with the community using the DOT's temporary toolkit, including: gravel pavement, movable furniture, planter boxes, and umbrellas. In Early 2013, the DOT commissioned RBA Architects to create a permanent plan for the plaza.

**FUNDING** The Kresge Foundation, Surdna Foundation, and Institute of Museum and Library Services provided grants. Additional support was provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and New York State. Council on the Arts also contributed with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

**IMPACT** The new landscaping helps improve air quality and damp noise control. Bicycle traffic is up 12% and walking rates have doubled, with more than 3,400 people using the route daily.

**REFERENCES** [Places in the Making](#), MIT Department of Urban Spaces & Planning  
[Corona's Plaza](#), DSGN AGNC  
[Corona Plaza](#), Queens Museum  
[The Best Active Designs that Help People Live Healthier Lives](#), Fast Company



# MURAL ARTS PROGRAM

Philadelphia, PA

**GOAL** Beautify the city, stabilize abandoned lots, enliven community centers, and animate open spaces.

**MADE BY** Jane Golden, founding artist  
Philadelphia Mural Arts Advocates  
City of Philadelphia

## TIMELINE



*The Mural Arts Program enhances revitalization neighborhoods in Philadelphia by integrating greening and art.*

## SUMMARY

Abandoned lots in Philadelphia were converted into beacons of pride through Pennsylvania’s Mural Arts Program, a project started in 1984 in response to a debased cityspace provoking crime and segregation rather than inspiring individual progress and community. The organization’s work serves not just artistic, but also social, placemaking and economic development objectives. Partnering with the criminal justice system, the program provides inmates and ex-offenders with social skills and basic education and the opportunity to make amends by restoring their own communities. Youth are involved in mural projects and learn entrepreneurial skills through involvement, enriching their trajectory to opportunities beyond crime.

**METHOD** Through a unique city-agency-non-profit hybrid, Philadelphia is now known as the City of Murals. More than 3,000 of these murals have converted expanses of once-vacant walls into beacons of pride. Founding artist, Jane Golden, recognized the medium’s potential for the city. Through mural-making, she offered youth a support structure, empowering them to create beautiful public works of art. From the start, neighborhood residents sanctioned and shaped mural themes and collaborated in the design process through facilitated community meetings. Golden used the program’s success to leverage additional city support and services for previously underserved communities.

**IMPACT** The Mural Arts Program now boasts 3,000 Murals, and the involvement of 2,500 youth, 400 inmates and ex-offenders, 300 professional artists, and 100 communities each year.

**FUNDING** Half of the Mural Arts Program’s \$6.5 million annual budget comes from private grants, donations, and earned income, and half is from the public sector. The City of Philadelphia contributes the bulk of public funding through staffing and service contracts, although the Pennsylvania Council for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts also provide support.

**REFERENCES** [Creative Placemaking](#), National Endowment for the Arts  
[Mural Arts Program](#), City of Philadelphia

# SENN PARK UNITY GARDEN

Chicago, IL



**GOAL** Revitalize a vacant lot and increase community connectivity through placemaking.

**MADE BY** Chicago Park District, Edgewater community members, Senn High School, Alternatives Youth Outreach Program, Broadway Armory's Day Camp, Senn YouthNet

## TIMELINE



1996

*Launched*

2004

*Six beds added due to high demand*

September 2009

*Fall campaign*

## SUMMARY

The 1996 Senn Park Unity Garden project on Chicago's Northside neighborhood, Edgewater, started as a vacant lot covered in weeds and trash. Today, it is a popular garden as well as a performance space. In the early steps of revitalization, outreach program teens, day camp kids, and senior residents cleared trash, landscaped, and filled the raised beds. The garden has become a safe space for residents since being activated. As the garden has been cultivated, it has become a source of collective pride. Neighborhood-level interventions on vacant lots offer a tangible, direct means for residents to connect with the ecology of the neighborhood, linking soil quality, green space, activism, and community through their activities.



*A mosaic artist, a landscape architect, and more than 50 Senn High students worked together to design and install mosaics, a totem, and the landscaping.*

**METHOD** Community meetings with high school students, neighbors, families, seniors and block clubs facilitated the envisioning of possibilities for a vacant lot. Design and construction of the space occurred during community clean-up days and collaboration with parks department, local artists, architects, and students.

**IMPACT** With a community-driven design process and ownership by the community to tend the garden, residents feel connected to and use the space. High demand for the garden led to its expansion in 2004, and all of the gardeners who live nearby know each other.

**REFERENCES** [A Guide to Neighborhood Placemaking in Chicago](#), Project for Public Spaces  
[The Story of the Queen Anne Memorial Garden: Resisting a Dominant Cultural Narrative](#), Troy D. Glover

# RESOURCES

## Useful links to best practice literature and tools.

### **A GUIDE TO NEIGHBORHOOD PLACEMAKING, PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES**

#### **11 PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL PLACEMAKING (P.7)**

11 principles that can be used to evolve public spaces into “community places.” Shifting a physical piece of land-space, to an emotional attachment to the piece of land-space.

#### **POWER OF 10 (P.11)**

The Power of 10 is a concept that helps to start off a Placemaking process. It talks about the idea that a great place needs to have at least 10 things to do in it or 10 reasons to be there.

### **CREATIVE PLACEMAKING, NATIONAL ENDOWMENT OF THE ARTS**

#### **CREATIVE ECONOMY (P.8)**

The creative economy consists of three overlapping domains: workers, industries, and places, depicted as intersecting circles. Each domain is populated by a unique set of actors and institutions.

#### **CHALLENGES FOR CREATIVE PLACEMAKING (P.15)**

How to face common challenges, such as: forging and sustaining partnerships, countering community skepticism, assembling adequate financing, clearing regulatory hurdles, ensuring maintenance and sustainability, avoiding displacement and gentrification, and developing metrics for performance and evaluation.

#### **COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PLACEMAKING INITIATIVES (P.18)**

In thousands of state and local laboratories, arts and cultural catalysts have partnered in economic and community development and revitalization efforts. Pioneering cases from the nation’s largest metros to tiny hamlets illuminate how partners came together to produce economic development and livability through the arts.

### **BUILDING VIBRANCY, MASSINC & ARTPLACE**

Challenges and approaches to using creative placemaking for renewal in urban areas of Massachusetts. Includes program models, best practices, impact analysis, and strategic recommendations for a leadership network.

### **PLACES IN THE MAKING, DUSP MIT**

Report examining the interactions between placemaking, community participation, and the ways communities collaborate to develop public spaces. Includes 13 case studies and common elements of success.

### **PLACEMAKING AND THE FUTURE OF CITIES, PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES**

Compilation of global best practices - with 10 ways to improve your city - and 11 case studies from around the world. Focus is on the challenges specific to urban areas.

### **CASE STUDIES 2012, ART PLACE**

Five case studies on placemaking projects around the country. More information on recent projects can be found on [their blog](#).



Design for Social Innovation

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