2020 YEAR IN REVIEW
We started PlacemakingUS at 2019's International Placemaking Week with a mission to bring together placemakers from US cities and around the world.

We were inspired by the launches of Placemaking Europe, Placemaking Asia and 12 other regional placemaking networks that span the globe in collaboration through PlacemakingX.

Since Covid-19 struck in 2020, we quickly dashed our in-person plans for Placemaking Festivals in Portland, Long Beach and Philadelphia, and pivoted towards online interactions including webinars, international placemaking "tool tests," Zoom workgroups, in-person check-ins when safe, and we even commissioned a series of volunteer cross-country projects.

Facing an incredibly unique set of circumstances in our first full-year, we are excited to share the work that was done towards our goal of fostering a network to bring US-based placemakers together to spread innovations and support and share in the good work from across the country and around the globe.
Connecting the Dots

350+ Multi-disciplinary placemakers from across the country have signed-up with us to participate in open-source collaborations. We are reaching out to learn about each placemaker’s practice to connect them with opportunities that build capacity.

Meet-ups, Check-ins & Phone Calls

Our network’s value is exemplified by our hands-on check-ins, city visits and phone calls with placemakers across the country and with our international partners. We have already developed a track record of spreading innovation across the world.

United Streets of America

Placemakers collaborate on a site-specific community project.

International Tooltests

Tooltests are scheduled chances to try a technique or concept in local contexts while working in a global cohort.

Working Groups

Workgroups meet regularly around a certain topic, theme, project or event.

Webinars & Content

We partner with practitioners to produce webinars and other types of media and content.
TOOLTESTS

TOOLTESTS ARE A CHANCE TO TRY OUT A TECHNIQUE OR CONCEPT IN OUR LOCAL CONTEXT WHILE WORKING IN A GLOBAL COHORT.

A brainchild of Placemaking Europe: Toolbox (shout out to the "Tooltest Day Crew"), previous Tooltests have focused around topics such as lighting, climate resiliency and even porches. When a Tooltest challenge is issued, you are encouraged to implement a test of the proposed tool in your context and then report the results back to the global group participating. It’s quite fun and network-building as we share our work together.

The World Map above shows where Tooltests were issued from along with all of the placemakers who participated in our Placemaking Earth Tooltest in April 2020.

The Tooltests we participated in this year encompassed the following topics:

- Lighting
- Climate Resiliency
- Porch Placemaking
- Kid Friendly Cities
Light Up Your Street

The Light Up Your Street Tooltest connected cities with the goal to raise awareness of the importance of artificial light (design, positioning and technical parameters) in public space and promote light design as a tool for placemaking and tactical urbanism. We jumped on-board and participated by leading a webinar and encouraging US placemakers to participate.
We created this Tooltest in honor of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. It resulted in 27 projects in 14 countries across 7 placemaking networks learning and practicing climate resilient placemaking actions together as part of the Placemake Earth Challenge! Way to connect eco, local and global!
We are dedicated to sharing resources, talent, and stories with one another about all things placemaking.

**2020 Webinar Themes**
- Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Placemaking
- Plazas and Latino Placemaking
- Porches and the Black American Experience
- Placemaking Declarations
- Climate Resiliency

**2021 Upcoming Webinars**
- Spiritual Placemaking
- Creative Placemaking
- Music & Placemaking
- Healthy Placemaking
- Post-Pandemic Place Economics
Inspired by the Porch Placemaking Week challenge out of Australia, Madeleine Spencer gathered a group at the height of 2020's civil unrest to meditate on the meaning of the porch as place in the African American family experience. This much acclaimed conversation uncovered POC revelations and wishes exemplified in the overlooked interstitial place between home and public life.
Latino Urbanist James Rojas was so excited by the meaningful dialogue created in the previous "Porch Talk" that he implored Madeleine to co-create another panel, this time to speak of the Pan-Latin experience with plazas. Speakers included Denver City Councilman Paul Lopez, anthropologist Setha M. Low, Seattle Director of Planning Samuela Assefa, Jennifer Rangel and Christina Patino Houle.
INSIDE OUT

with Tina Govan and Special Guest Jaime Izurietta

Tina Govan is an architect/placemaker and principal of Placemaking Studio based in Raleigh, NC. She is passionate about bridging the gap between architecture and placemaking, individual and community. In the premiere episode of her show, she interviewed Jaime Izurietta, the founder of Storefront Mastery, a creative agency that guides local brick-and-mortars to create great places by celebrating the beauty of their storefronts.

Storefront Mastery

Do-It-Yourself Storefront Design Kit For Entrepreneurs Who Value Beauty
Streatery Ahead!

When cities began to allow restaurants to convert sidewalks, parking lots, even whole streets into outdoor dining areas, we organized a cross-cutting discussion among practitioners working on the new Wild West, blurry-lines between public and private space. We were excited to present approaches from Robin Abad Ocubillo at the San Francisco Department of City Planning, Alan Pullman from Studio One Eleven, Sherryl Muriente of Downtown West Palm Beach, Jason Roberts from A Better Block, Alex Sasayama of NeighborWorks America as well as PlacemakingUS and PlacemakingX.
CASE STUDY: BEYOND WORDS TOWARDS ACTION

Our Streatery Ahead! webinar helped inform many city planning and traffic departments, business districts and economic development bureaus on various approaches to opening streets.

We actively gathered and shared best practices on social media like the Portland Bureau of Transportation’s Healthy Business Plazas Program (the street photo above permitted by Greg Raisman) and the National Association of City Traffic Official’s Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery.

By following the Streateries resources and processes promoted by PlacemakingUS, Downtown Santa Ana turned mockups into plans into pop-ups into funded permanent infrastructure.

As Webinars and Zoom became the norm, we wanted to make sure our words were having a real-world impact.

In Santa Ana, California, the Downtown association had advocated to the City for 5+ years for parklets, but received none. Finally, faced with Covid and inspired by PlacemakingUS–gathered materials, the City allowed 30+ outdoor patios and parklets and awarded $750,000 CARES Act economic relief funds for more permanent designs after a successful pilot.
Downtown Santa Ana followed the materials we gathered through our Streateries campaign and they received $750K CARE Act Relief Funds for permanent patio build-outs after a successful pilot for 30+ small businesses.
We have workgroups meeting to discuss the following:

1. Kid Friendly Cities
2. Media and Content Creation
3. Tooltests
4. United Streets of America/Volunteer Projects
5. Placemaking Declarations
6. Hosting a Placemaking Festival

Please let us know if you’d like to join a workgroup or to help us start a new one. For example, Placemaking Europe has several workgroups including Creative Bureaucracies, Housing, Climate Change and more.
WORKING GROUPS

The Kid Friendly Cities Workgroup was inspired by UNICEF’s Child Friendly Cities Initiative, a program which defines a Child Friendly City as "a city, town or community in which the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions."

This year, our group has launched a Kid Mayor campaign to ask kids how they’d help their city.
Content Creation

Creating videos, writing articles, updating the website, moderating the social media accounts -- it’s a ton of work! We’re grateful for placemakers who have helped share the load this year of building content for the network to share.

- Madeleine Spencer
- Ryan Smolar
- Ethan Kent
- Tina Govan
- Hilary Ho
- Abraham Gomez

Please contact us if you can help us with production so we can expand our content delivery and reach!

Placemaking Weeks

We started 2021 working with several different workgroups focused on making Placemaking Weeks happen across the country.

The time we spent together was no waste as we’ve been able to collaborate and cross-promote during the pandemic and look forward to in-person gatherings when possible.

Philadelphia Placemaking Week

Ian Litwin, Nate Hommel, Katrina Johnston-Zimmerman, Ethan Kent

Long Beach Placemaking Week

Long Beach Fresh Advisory Board and Urban Aggies Group

Portland Placemaking Week

Amanda Leigh Evans, Kirk Greener Rea, Matt Bibeau, Mark Lakeman, Greg Raisman, Rich Eisenhauer
As a result of COVID, American cities began drastically reallocating their streets in 2020. The changed plans were thought to be temporary, but many changes made during COVID are beginning to have long-term impact for our communities’ pandemic-aware built-environment.

Recognizing this opportunity to re-envision how streets work, PlacemakingUS began gathering placemakers to help spread innovative policies and work with community-based groups and independent small businesses to facilitate site-specific help planning their outdoor space.

2020 Contributing Placemakers:

- James Rojas, Latino Urbanist, Place IT! Oakland, California
- Triveece Penelton, AICP, Public Involvement Innovator, Vireo, Kansas City, Missouri
- Carmen Mays, CEO, Elevators, Birmingham, Alabama
- Madeleine Spencer, Coordinator, PlacemakingUS, Santa Ana, California
- Ryan Smolar, Coordinator, PlacemakingUS, Southern California
- Tina Govan, Architect, Placemaking Studio, Raleigh, North Carolina
- Erin Holsonback, Landscape Architect, Otten + Associates, Portland, Oregon
- Candice Ji, Independent Urban Planner/Architect, Kirkland, Washington
MAYE Center "Marklet"

The MAYE Center cultivates self-healing and wellness for Long Beach's Cambodian community affected by the trauma and displacement of the Khmer Rouge genocide in their homeland.

This USofA project helped extend the vital services of the MAYE Center by utilizing the Long Beach Open Streets Initiative to serve the community with food access and a safe outdoor environment.

Part market and part parklet, they called this new space the "Marklet" and hosted pop-up Cambodian vendors including a BBQ smoker, fresh juices and local clothing makers. The space is currently in pop-out mode and is a finalist for $20k in grant funding to build the full vision.
Sowing Seeds of Change Urban Farm  
Long Beach, California

We helped two dreamers looking for a site for a farm and food systems workforce development space as a place to teach disadvantaged adults who are aging out of the foster youth system. As we supported them with drawings, visualizations and strategies, the City of Long Beach gained interest and offered Dina and Lindsay 14,000 sq. ft. in the heart of an $8.5 million new park in a neighborhood in need of ecological interventions, job opportunities and healthy food. The project is moving forward and currently seeking funding and breaking ground.

The current site is a bus storage yard which is being relocated away to create a park.

Their passion assisted with strategy and articulation by our team helped them secure a 14,000 sq ft lease.

Visualization of the farm created by Tina Govan as part of the USofA team.

This is the site layout conceived by Lindsay and Dina, drawn by Erin Holsonback and adapted by Tina Govan.
The Blue Lot is a large, vacant lot on a busy street in Orange County’s creative Latin urban heart. Event promoter Ruben Salazar has been activating the lot with community music festivals, vegan village pop-ups and "Gente Night Markets," but the City of Santa Ana wants to see the site develop and have permitting so we helped Ruben envision a more complete layout and infrastructure for the Blue Lot including gardens, staging, food truck spaces, a popup marketplace, signage and more. The City is excited to issue Ruben a pilot permit to operate this new concept in the city and he is raising funds to help phase in this implementation.

Current site is an empty, corner parking lot.

Helping locals go from parking lot to public place.

The envisioned site has a mix of food trucks, garden, stage, community space and popup marketplace.
In 1905, the City of Santa Ana burned down its Chinatown blocks. Despite the tragic event and its repercussions, no marker or signifier recalls the old place. We’re supporting local historian Dylan Almedral as he worked with the site’s current building owners and Chinese elders from the community to organize thinking around a memorial. Together, we analyzed original source materials including texts, interviews, archive images as well as other U.S. Chinatowns and additional perspectives and insights from our team member Candice Ji who is originally from Shanghai, the same port town many of the Santa Ana Chinese hailed through.

The memorial will hold photos, a marker and text.

Relandscaping has been approved as well as memorial elements, though the structure is going to become more of an abstract element and in-laid sidewalk panels are likely to be added.
We absolutely love this program: it's fun, inspiring and educational for placemakers to participate in and it is providing real, tangible changes in communities thanks to the efforts of these citizen-led initiatives. We want to expand the United Streets program in 2021 and we think we can by promoting the program to specific geographies.

Expanding United Streets in 2021

We hope to partner with cities, community foundations, equity and economic uplift initiatives to help us organize cross-country United Streets teams to work with locals on their idea, visualizing it, gaining permissions, raising funds and developing an inclusive and effective organization to run and maintain their project.
THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE NETWORK IS TO CONNECT PLACEMAKERS THROUGH GATHERINGS, MEETUPS, PHONE CALLS, WORKGROUPS OF INTEREST AND SHARED PROJECT WORK.

We believe the core benefit of having a PlacemakingUS network is our ability to connect thousands of placemakers with each other. We actively welcome new members and connect them with the right people, growth opportunities and resources they seek. We also actively visit placemakers in their context to learn from them and help them further shout their innovations from the rooftops.
We spent a lot of this year in PDX. Before the pandemic, we had hoped to host a placemaking festival here in 2020. As famous as Portland is and as widely as it’s cited, we believe very few of its best tools, policies, ideas and practices have spread far enough.

We look forward to a season ahead where we can share with you more about our amazing friends and their projects in Portland including City Repair and their Village Build Convergence (VBC) event and trainings (which we attended virutally this year—shout outs to fellow VBC’ers Rebecca Sanborn Stone, Matt Bibeau, Erin Holsonback, Mark Lakeman and Kirk Greener Rea).

Greg Raisman of the Portland Bureau of Transportation showed us how his department has worked with the VBC to help 70+ community groups complete intersection paintings and also where all the good beer in town is.

We built new pathways at a work party at the Living Lab Farm and learned how Sustainability at PSU is a keystone of the Portland Placemaking movement.
We had great tours and talks with social practice artist and educator Amanda Leigh Evans.

Evans facilitates The Living School of Art, an intergenerational art collective and alternative art school that she and her neighbors co-develop in their affordable housing apartment complex in East Portland.

Evans also co-created KSMoCA, a topsy-turvy teacher’s take on the contemporary art museum by housing it in the first elementary school in the country to be named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Evans has an incredible process for involving students in world-class artmaking and in bringing world-class artists back to work with kids.
Washington

International District, Seattle

We had an extraordinary tour of Seattle’s International District primarily focusing on all of the visual representation telling the story of the Japanese Internment which greatly affected Seattle’s Asian downtown enclave.

Gregg Scuggs, who was a principle reporter of Seattle’s erupting Capitol Hill Autonomos Zone, generously shared the afternoon with us and WOWed us with stories he’s pursued from hallowed tribal lands to the decommissioned Ministry of Cities in Brasilia.
We instantly felt Port Townsend would be an incredible place for a Placemaking Festival. Do not underestimate small Jefferson County: this rural, wealthy, educated and *purple* port town is a placemaking powerhouse.

We spent time with one of the smartest public officials you’ll ever meet: **County Supervisor Kate Dean** and her husband **Rico Quirindongo** who was recently appointed Deputy Director of Seattle’s Office of Planning and Community Development.

They connected us with **Magdalene Adenau** who is co-creating a local placemaking group with **Katherine Baril** of the local chamber of commerce who educated us on a barrage of waterfront placemaking projects and explained their incredible way of welcoming new residents in the community with a compulsory dinner party. We couldn’t miss **Finnriver Farm & Cidery** or 434-acre multi-use **Fort Worden State Park**.
We benefitted from an afternoon with Milenko Matanović, pouring through his books, *The Case for Everyday Democracy* and *Multiple Victories: Pomegranate Center’s Art of Creating Community-Crafted Gathering Places*, as he described his process of community building which evolved over a 30 year period with 60 projects completed between 1990 and 2017.

**White Point**

The deeper philosophical roots and physical dynamics of placemaking were on the table when we met with Jedi Placemaster, Michael Mehaffy, in the quiet Washington town he calls home when he’s not splitting his time in Stockholm at the KTH Royal Institute of Technology’s Centre for the Future of Places. Mehaffy dazzled us with stories of working with his collaborator, Christopher Alexander, the writing of the United Nations’ *New Urban Agenda* and his theories of place dynamics, Wikiplaces and the Force.
We explored the issues and opportunities facing South Park, a sort of island neighborhood encircled by freeways, industrial wastewaters and heavy industry with the owners of Resistencia Coffee.

Cote dreams of a potential removal of the freeway that bisects South Park in favor of more housing, green space and a school. After we met, she continued to successfully lay the groundwork for this transformation.

Her husband Tim Soerens co-leads the Parish Collective, a global movement of Christians reimagining what it means to be the church in, with, and for the neighborhood. Tim recently authored *Everywhere You Look: Discovering the Church Right Where you Are.*

Also visiting that night was DeAmon Harges, the original “Roving Listener,” who practices and has created a cadre of community “deep listeners” based out of the principles and practices of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD).
We visited with Shae Blackwell, Legislative Assistant to City of the Spokane District 1 Council Office to explore Riverfront Park, a former industrial site which was revitalized into an open space heartland for the Expo '74 "World's Fair"-type event held here.

Some highlights of the park include metal goat sculptures who vacuum garbage out of your hands and a house-sized Radio Flyer red wagon with a handle that acts as a slide.

On the way out of town, we dropped-in on the Downtown Spokane Partnership and had an extensive meeting with Marketing and Programming Director, Elisabeth Hooker, about Downtown’s sporty events including free yoga at the park, Hoopfest and the incredible Bloomsday Run.
We met with Russ Roca and Laura Crawford from The Path Less Pedaled which is a successful Youtube Channel as well as a bikeways consulting firm.

Russ and Laura told us they recently led a workshop at Walk Bike Places in Indiana and that they regularly work with destination marketing organizations to promote bicycle-based tourism that often include visiting small shops, historic locales and farms for tastings.

We were lucky to grab lunch with Nick Peterson, Project for Public Places alum and former Co-Director at the New York City Department of Transportation where he managed the CityBench program. He is taking it easier in Missoula these days but is still happy to share his experience and participate in projects that make the world a better place.
We caught up with Scott Patria, the Director at Patrajdas Contemporary | Art & Consulting in Downtown Ogden. We toured his PLATFORMS project, a brilliant transformation of a corner vacant lot into a venue for large-scale outdoor art shows. This project catalyzed the surrounding arts district and Scott has been hired by the City as a consultant to invite both local and international arts to tango up and down the streets of Ogden.

Salt Lake City

Resident leader, health advocate, and economic development aficionado, Turner Bitton, toured us around downtown Salt Lake City, eschewing the interesting dynamics of places like downtown’s LDS-owned shopping mall with the city’s original artesian springwaters running right through it. Turner is currently excited about the conversion of a rundown Raging Waters theme park in his neighborhood.
ONLINE CONNECTIONS

Placemaking Declarations

We held an online chat about the monumental Wuhan Placemaking Declaration which inspired Scott Strawbridge of Placemaking SoFlo to host a local thinktank to establish a South Florida Placemaking Declaration. Monica and Jim at the Pontiac Holonomy Incubator helped out by facilitating the online community mind-mapping.

PlacIt! Train the Trainer

Carmen Mays, James Rojas, Triveece Penelton and Madeleine Spencer teamed up for a train-the-trainer session for the staff and community surrounding Red Mountain Park in Birmingham, Alabama. Rojas is a Latino Urbanist and his PlaceIt! tool has been used in countless communities of color to reimagine spaces using toys and found objects.

Additional Online Gatherings

We Participated in:

- PlacemakingX All Regional Networks On-Deck World Meeting
- City Repair’s Village Building Convergence
- PlacemakingUS Happy Hour
- Pontiac Park(ing) Day
- Walk Bike Places Indianapolis
In 2020, we had long phone conversations with placemakers across the United States. While so many of us are subscribed to each other’s Facebook feeds, LinkedIn updates, Google Alerts and quartely newsletters, you still find out much more when you pick-up the phone and make calls across the country.

In online posts and releases, we tend to celebrate completed milestones, but when you call someone, you hear about their plans, their uncertainties and help them troubleshoot places they might be stuck along the road. We were excited to have long chats with the following placemakers and many others:

- Ebrahim Varachia, Patronicity
- Jim Walker & Elizabeth Nash, Big Car Collective, Indianapolis
- Mark Lakeman & Kirk Rea, City Repair
- Rebecca Sanborn Stone, Placemaking Vermont
- Nate Hommel, University District, Philadelphia
- Greig Raisman and Rich Eisenhauer, Portland Bureau of Transportation
- Alexandra Gonzales, Hive Public Spaces, New York
- Alan Pullman, Studio One Eleven, Long Beach
- Carmen Mays, Elevators on 4th, Birmingham, Alabama
- Rachel Halfaker, Porchlight, Georgetown
- Chris Casillas, Regenerating Sonora, Arizona
- Blair Cohn, Bixby Knolls Business Improvement
- Megan Ihnen, Creative Placemaking, New Orleans

In 2021, we are promoting the phone call check-in as an important tool for getting and keeping in touch.

Long phone calls are incredibly value, but they also take time so in 2021 we are working to share the value of small conversations we’re holding through report-outs. Lookout for Placemaker Speaks articles and Placemaker Profiles shared on our social media channels.
The most intoxicating part of our work is the exciting international exchanges occurring between the 11 PlacemakingX regional networks that span the globe. Before the pandemic set in, it was exciting to travel overseas and meet with placemakers in Japan and Hong Kong and to exchange information about many differences and similarities.
Activist, preservationist and placemaker Judy Chan took us on an in-depth tour behind the veil of the student unrest in Hong Kong. She helped us understand the dire state of public space in Hong Kong by taking us to Sidewalk Pier, a reclaimed, people's waterfront. Later, we perched above an event being held on a street that is closed to traffic because it is too steep for vehicular traffic. Judy decoded all of the dynamics and politics of the production below before we left the city to see traditional villages where food justice and farming reclamation programs are flourishing. Lastly, we had dim sum with Jason Hilgefort before we bounced, imbuing him with ideas for collaborations that tap the incredible changes happening around China.
From Hokkaido to Fukuoka, Tokyo to Yokohama, we had a whirlwind visit to Japan in the beginning of the year with several exciting conferences and office visits organized by Koichiro Tamura and Rui Izumiyama of Placemaking Japan.

Placemaking Japan is spearheading placemaking in fastidious partnerships with national and local government, universities, shopping mall managers and developers, their own media conglomerate, hosted events.

We also got to connect with powerful placemakers outside the hub of Tokyo. Emi Watanabe toured us around the local agricultural hub Itoshima, Naho Degawa showed ecological and historical renewal projects in the suburbs and Nomura Patterson shared his incredible acumen to parlay his shrinking city into an expansive real estate portfolio for incubating a new generation of pop-up style creative businesses.
WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

We want to connect where you are with our open-source network.

PLACEMAKERS

- Call us to get acquainted and make sure we are connected in a meaningful way.
  - We will share with you contacts in your area of interest and geography
  - We can work together to find ways with you to share your ideas and insights with our broader community:
    - Webinars & Dialogues
    - Articles and Case Studies
    - Workgroups & Projects
    - Help us build the network

EDUCATORS & STUDENTS

- Post-graduate students regularly contact us and contribute to our work including Hilary Ho, Candice Ji and Abraham Gomez.
- We are excited to work with matriculated and post-graduate placemakers on research and applied learning.

FUNDERS/CLIENTS

We are actively seeking grants and funding relationships to further our work to build a US placemaking network to diffuse placemaking innovations across the United States.

Help connect us with funders who oversee a geography where we can connect national placemaking energy to.

Municipalities/BIDs - City, business and community leaders have reached out asking if PlacemakingUS can provide technical support to help their communities develop placemaking plans and site specific ideas.

Foundations/Equity Funds/Economic Relief Programs - Grantors providing placemaking, equity and relief grants are seeking our technical assistance help to prepare their grantees’ projects for maximum street-level impact.
WE LOOK FORWARD TO PLACEMAKING WITH YOU

PLACE MAKING US

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