



## ***PLACEMAKING THROUGH YOUR COMMUNITY'S COMP PLAN***

Max Musicant

Founder and Principal: Placemaker

The Musicant Group

**What is a place?** A place is a physical location, of any size, that is useful, meaningful, feels good to be in, and benefits those things around it. A place is formed through an interwoven system of physical elements, the stewardship of those elements, and the uses, activities, and experiences that happen within that environment. A good gauge of a place, is somewhere you'd feel comfortable spending 20 minutes in with nothing "to do".

**So what is "Place-making"?** Placemaking then, is a lens through which any activity relating to the built environment happen, rather than something that is merely attached to "business as usual". Through the comp plan process we collectively strive to create places of communal and commercial value within our communities and for the municipality as a whole. So how does a community most effectively do this?

### ***How the Comprehensive Plan Can Foster the Creation of Places***

**Integrate and connect uses:** More and more people are demanding a "one-drive life", where they are willing to drive once or twice a day, but then want to access services, amenities, etc. on foot and bike. This is particularly important for youth and the elderly. Strategies to accomplish this include expanding networks of bike and pedestrian pathways (beyond just parks), expanding multi-use zoning, and eliminating parking minimums. For a guide on how to create dynamic, integrated places at all scales, see: [A Pattern Language, by Christopher Alexander](#)

**Every space as a social place:** Over the last few decades, opportunities for serendipitous social interactions have been greatly reduced. It has reached a point where people are voting with their feet and now actively seeking out (and pay money for) places where they can be with and around other people. These places need not be limited to parks and special events though! Every space can be a social space: from strip malls to main streets, office buildings to front yards. For a step-by-step guide on how to transform a front yard (or the yards of an entire neighborhood) from empty space, to a social place, see the (free) [Friendly Front Yard Toolkit, developed by The Musicant Group](#)

**Stewardship:** Physical spaces don't take care of themselves and need active stewardship (and often programming) in order for them to live up to their fullest potential and value. Be sure to allocate sufficient resources for the care and activation of your community's public and shared spaces.

**Are your rules and regulations allowing "small good things" to happen easily?** Small actions by small actors often are the seeds that lead to big positive changes. But if these "small good things" are burdened with too many hurdles, than many of these things will simply never come to fruition. Consider scaling event, small businesses, and other regulatory measures to the size of the activity – the smaller the scale, the more limited the process, the larger, vice versa.

**Utilize Experiments and Pilot Projects:** Using placemaking experiments and pilot projects can be a great way to test concepts, engage the community and build momentum for large-scale land-use, infrastructure, economic development and public space initiatives. For inspiration check out the [Tactical Urbanism Guide](#).

