2018: A YEAR IN REVIEW

This year, Project for Public Spaces marked some important milestones. In July, we welcomed our new CEO, Phil Myrick, an experienced planner and placemaker with a long history at PPS, and in August, we moved to our bright new offices at 740 Broadway.

As always, the year brought a host of events, projects, trainings, and programs. Our activities extended to over 50 communities, both urban and rural, with projects as wide-ranging as a market expansion on Granville Island in Vancouver, BC, an interdepartmental training for City officials in Durham, NC, and a waterfront district plan in Brisbane, Australia. We convened conferences in New Orleans, LA and Wuhan, China. Project for Public Spaces also launched and continued programs like the Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking and the Southwest Airlines Heart of the Community program, which combine capacity building, research, and on-the-ground projects to drive change.

As we enter 2019 with new digs and an expanded team, we continue to honor the proud foundations on which Project for Public Spaces was built over forty years ago by our founders: Fred Kent, who led a small group of out-of-the-box thinkers to become the hub of a global movement; Kathy Madden, longtime director of PPS’s education and research efforts and co-author of *How to Turn a Place Around*; and Steve Davies, the mastermind behind PPS’s Public Markets Program.
Project for Public Spaces helped 50+ communities around the world improve their public spaces this year through hands-on services and education.

WHERE WE WORKED IN 2018

- Project
- Training/Speaking
PROGRAM
SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN PLACEMAKING PILOT INITIATIVE

In 2018, Project for Public Spaces was thrilled to partner with the William Davidson Foundation on the Southeast Michigan Placemaking Pilot Initiative grant, which provided $25,000 and technical assistance to four local organizations for short-term improvements to public spaces across Metro Detroit.

This year’s grantees include: University of Michigan Hillel, an Ann Arbor-based Jewish cultural center; Pewabic Pottery, a world-renowned ceramic and tile creator located in a National Historic Landmark building on East Jefferson Corridor; Detroit Motown Museum, local landmark and creative hub; and Repair the World, a citywide outreach space focusing on social issues like education and food justice.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT
DUNCAN PLAZA

Duncan Plaza has often played an important role in the civic life of New Orleans, LA as a site of protest and camaraderie in times of need. But its everyday life was not so lively. With support from the Southwest Airlines Heart of the Community program, Project for Public Spaces partnered with the Downtown Development District (DDD) and Arts Council New Orleans to bring the imagination of New Orleanians to life in the park.

A comprehensive community outreach process led to many Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper improvements to the park, including new seating, rotating installations by local artists, lunchtime meditation, and food truck Fridays. Since its reopening in September 2018, Duncan Plaza has quickly become a hub of wellness and arts in the heart of the city.
This November, the Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking launched at the Brookings Institution’s Metropolitan Policy Program. A collaboration between Project for Public Spaces, the National Main Street Center, and Brookings, the Bass Center will inspire public, private, and civic sector leaders to make transformative placemaking investments that generate widespread social and economic benefits.

The Center will build on Project for Public Space’s previous collaboration with the Brookings Institution, the Bass Initiative on Innovation and Placemaking. The Initiative conducted pioneering research on innovation districts, including a how-to guide for auditing districts, placemaking principles, and a handbook for the US Conference of Mayors. While Project for Public Spaces continues to refine and apply this research on innovation districts, the new Bass Center will broaden its focus to include more diverse people, places, and economies. The Center has already kicked off this effort with a set of case studies on four very different districts (opposite): a rural downtown, an urban commercial district, a burgeoning innovation district, and an evolving legacy office park.
Now in its fifth year, the 2018 Southwest Airlines Heart of the Community program focused on empowering past grantees and providing them with tools, resources, and additional technical assistance to take their placemaking efforts to a higher level.

This year’s grant recipients include: **Campus Martius** in Detroit, MI, **City Market** in Indianapolis, IN, **Woodruff Park** in Atlanta, GA, **Kennedy Plaza** in Providence, RI, and **Civic Plaza** in Albuquerque, NM.

Along with amplifying the impacts of past projects, this year Project for Public Spaces kicked off the Heart of the Community **Cohort Learning Network**, which convened this fall in New Orleans. Encouraging ongoing peer-to-peer exchange, this network provides diverse teaching tools and includes a series of PPS-hosted webinars focusing on social inclusion.

Several Heart of the Community grant recipients also cut the ribbon on their reimagined public spaces this year, including **Duncan Plaza** in New Orleans, LA, **Kerr Park** in Oklahoma City, OK, and **Reading Park** in Buffalo, NY.
In 2018, Project for Public Spaces marked our sixth and final year as coordinators of the National Endowment for the Arts Citizens’ Institute on Rural Design™ program (CIRD). We completed our 19th workshop this year, working with a visionary group of citizens, experts, and government officials to address unique design challenges in their community through workshops and follow-up actions.

This year’s cohort of four communities focused on the simple but profound goal of fostering respectful dialogue. CIRD helped bridge the differing goals of the City of Valentine, NE to build community and support businesses on Main Street and those of Nebraska Department of Transportation to redesign State Highway 83. In Greenville, MS, CIRD helped Rural LISC find the best experts to guide the City in a series of conversations about how to develop downtown in a racially and economically equitable way. In Tuttle, ND, CIRD tied the redevelopment of the Tuttle High School as an incubator and food hub to the efforts of like-minded entrepreneurs around Kidder County. Finally, CIRD provided a breakthrough moment for the town of Las Vegas, NM by building a community-driven vision for a park along the Gallinas River that would link together two ethnically divided neighborhoods.
OUR REACH

This year, Project for Public Spaces focused on building capacity, strengthening our foundation, and creating tools and resources for inspiring even more placemakers, urban professionals, city officials, and grassroots activists around the world.

In January, we launched a new website that makes it easier for users to access our most popular content about placemaking. We also added new sections focused on the outcomes of placemaking, like economic development, public health, and equity. Our blog content also continued to evolve, featuring a mixture of new PPS resources, research and success stories, as well as voices from around the world, from Philadelphia, USA to Cape Town, South Africa to Valencia, Spain.

The website received over 1.5 million unique page views this year, with about 64% of those visits landing on resources pages that teach readers how to lead projects in their own communities.

We complement our website reach with a newsletter that reaches 36,000 subscribers, and a growing list of over 187,000 followers on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Altogether, our social media presence garnered nearly 7 million impressions and 130,000 engagements.
In August, Project for Public Spaces released the Streets as Places Action Pack—a user-friendly guide for community members who see an opportunity to create better streets, but may be struggling to get their neighbors on board or spur government officials into action.

In compiling the data for this resource, the Project for Public Spaces transportation team interviewed twenty community advocates who shared their successes, failures, and hands-on experience at making change happen. What we found was that, while engineers and planners generally agree on best practices in street design, far too often residents and local officials run into common roadblocks that prevent these implementation.

That is why we developed this easy-to-follow roadmap for addressing those roadblocks at every stage of street improvement projects, from creating a vision and gathering support to building consensus and sustaining momentum.
When it was first released in 2000, this user-friendly guidebook helped launch the placemaking movement. It brought together Project for Public Spaces’ thirty years of community-driven observation and experimentation and turned it into a series of principles and practical tools for anyone to remake their public spaces.

The expanded second edition, released this November, not only updates the design, text, and images, but also adds useful new tools, inspiring new case studies, and a whole new section on how to run a successful placemaking process, from community engagement to creating a vision to implementation.

“How to Turn a Place Around is the best book on placemaking, anywhere. It is comprehensive, but it’s written and designed in a simple way for anyone to understand.”

—Gil Peñalosa
Founder, 8-80 Cities & World Urban Parks
TRAINING

HOW TO CREATE SUCCESSFUL MARKETS

This year, 60 market managers, designers, and champions attended “How to Create Successful Markets,” a two-day training where participants learn the essentials for creating a thriving public market that is economically sustainable, maximizes community benefits, and contributes to a lively, inclusive public realm. The course takes participants from big picture and brass tacks through working session and tours.

TRAINING

PLACEMAKING: MAKING IT HAPPEN

This year, Project for Public Space helped 30 placemakers take their practice to the next level through “Placemaking: Making it Happen,” our semi-annual three-day training on implementing and managing placemaking projects in public space. The course provides a mix of presentations from longtime placemaking practitioners and testing out placemaking tools firsthand in various public spaces around New York.
This September New Orleans hosted Walk/Bike/Places, North America’s premier conference for walking and biking professionals. The event attracted over 1,000 advocates, public officials, nonprofit professionals, designers, and placemakers.

Our local host committee challenged us to design an event that was diverse, fair, and beneficial to all New Orleanians. In response, we hired certified minority- and women-owned businesses for bike rentals, printing, catering and A/V services; we contracted with a local nonprofit for our delegate bags, which were delivered to four New Orleans public schools, stuffed with school supplies by volunteers; we remitted all fees we collected for mobile workshops to Bike Easy who disbursed $21,500 to local nonprofits; and we provided honorariums and travel reimbursement for all speakers at our general sessions, ensuring our most diverse, gender-balanced program ever.

We also left a legacy in the city. Working with Bike Easy, attendees, sponsors, and others, we built Connect the Crescent, a four-mile pop-up protected bikeway network in downtown New Orleans. The City has pledged to make the network permanent in 2019—and to add two additional miles to boot.

See you in Indianapolis, IN for Walk/Bike/Places 2020!
In December, PPS partnered with UN-Habitat, ISOCARP, Wuhan Land Use and Spatial Planning, and Wuhan Planning & Design Institute to convene placemakers from across the world at Placemaking Week Wuhan, marking the launch of a brand-new Chinese Placemaking Network.

To re-imagine the future of rapidly expanding Chinese cities, participants took part in sessions on waterfronts, community placemaking, health, and historical streets. International speakers shared inspiring examples of human-scaled neighborhoods and streets around the world, while site visits to neighborhoods like Tan Hualin gave participants a new perspective of Wuhan, a growing city of 10 million.

The event also launched the Wuhan Declaration, a series of commitments for creating connected, equitable, and sustainable public spaces across China. Supporting efforts outlined in the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, the new Chinese Placemaking Network will become the center point for maximizing the shared value of the public realm.
THE GROWTH OF THE PLACEMAKING MOVEMENT

Since Project for Public Spaces began using the placemaking approach in the 1990s, it has spread worldwide through regional placemaking networks and gatherings, like some of our sister events above. In 2019, we invite you to join your local group or start your own!
FIVE THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2019

1. THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC MARKETS CONFERENCE

We are thrilled to announce that London, UK, will be the host city for our 10th International Public Markets Conference. The event will be co-hosted with the Mayor of London, who recently announced a groundbreaking strategy to preserve and promote the city’s vast market network. Over three days of workshops, tours, and networking, 300 leaders in public markets from across the globe will explore how markets can drive social and economic impact.

2. NEW TOOLS FOR TRANSPORTATION

Our transportation team is always busy creating new resources for placemakers! This year will bring a free online guide to “rightsizing” streets for placemaking, and a handbook for Main Street managers on working with Departments of Transportation.

3. PLACEMAKING WEEK 2019

First Vancouver, then Amsterdam. Who will be the next host city for our flagship placemaking conference? Keep an eye out for an announcement early next year!

4. LIVE MUTUAL PROJECT

We’re excited to announce our new initiative with MassMutual—the Live Mutual Project—which uses placemaking to bring together existing community resources to build financial strength and help people reach their full potential, neighborhood by neighborhood.

5. NEW PARTNERSHIPS

In 2019, PPS is seeking opportunities for partnerships with like-minded nonprofits, design and planning firms, and socially responsible corporations. Get in touch with us at amackenzie@pps.org.
Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build strong communities.

www.pps.org