

Project  
for thriving communities,   
historic public markets,  
 reclaiming underpasses  
for teens, sunset picnics,  
connecting  global market  
leaders, incubating  
 businesses, urban farms  
with affordable housing,  
free concerts at   
subway stations,  
and  other transformation  
stories.

Project  
for Public  
Spaces

2023 Annual Report





International Public Markets Conference, Toronto, Canada

# About Project for Public Spaces

## OUR MISSION

Great public spaces strengthen communities. We bring public spaces to life by planning and designing them with the people who use them every day. Our knowledge, skills, and strategies equip people to fuel lasting change. Together, we create community-powered public spaces around the world.

## OUR VISION

We envision a world where all people shape public spaces that foster civic life, belonging, and well-being in their communities.

## OUR VALUES

Our values guide us every day as we help people create community-powered public spaces. They inform how and with whom we work and serve as the ethical principles of Project for Public Spaces as a nonprofit committed to public good.

### Participation.

We work on the ground to include all community members in envisioning, planning, and creating the public spaces that will influence their daily lives.

### Collaboration.

We bring everyone together across disciplines and sectors—from government agencies and nonprofits to developers and neighborhood groups—to develop great public spaces in communities worldwide.

### Local leadership.

We show people what's possible and give them the tools to not only transform their public spaces for the better, but also to own and to take care of them for years to come.

### Pragmatism.

We advocate for public spaces that work for all people. Every project takes observation, practical experimentation, and agility to bring the best solutions to life.

### Integrity.

We believe that community-powered public spaces are the backbone of a healthy, equitable society, and we are dedicated to working with people who are just as passionate about them as we are.



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A Letter from the Co-Executive Directors



Kelly Verel



Nate Storrington

Last May, the US Surgeon General released a dire report on the epidemic of loneliness in this country, comparing its negative health effects to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. His number one prescription? Strengthen “social infrastructure”—in other words, parks and plazas, markets, main streets, and the programs that support them.

Social isolation is just one of the big societal challenges that public space can play a lead role in addressing. As inequality and discrimination persist in neighborhoods and rural towns across the country, well-run public markets can lower barriers to accessing healthy food, entrepreneurship, and civic life. As downtowns adapt to post-pandemic patterns of work and leisure, the space between buildings is vital to giving people a reason to come back. As affordability continues to worsen, public spaces have become the front lines of addressing issues like homelessness, addiction, and mental health—either with cruelty or compassion.

Public space has the unique potential to address all of these challenges at once. That is why Project for Public Spaces exists, and why we’ve spent the past year expanding our programs to support the people and organizations that care for public spaces around the world.

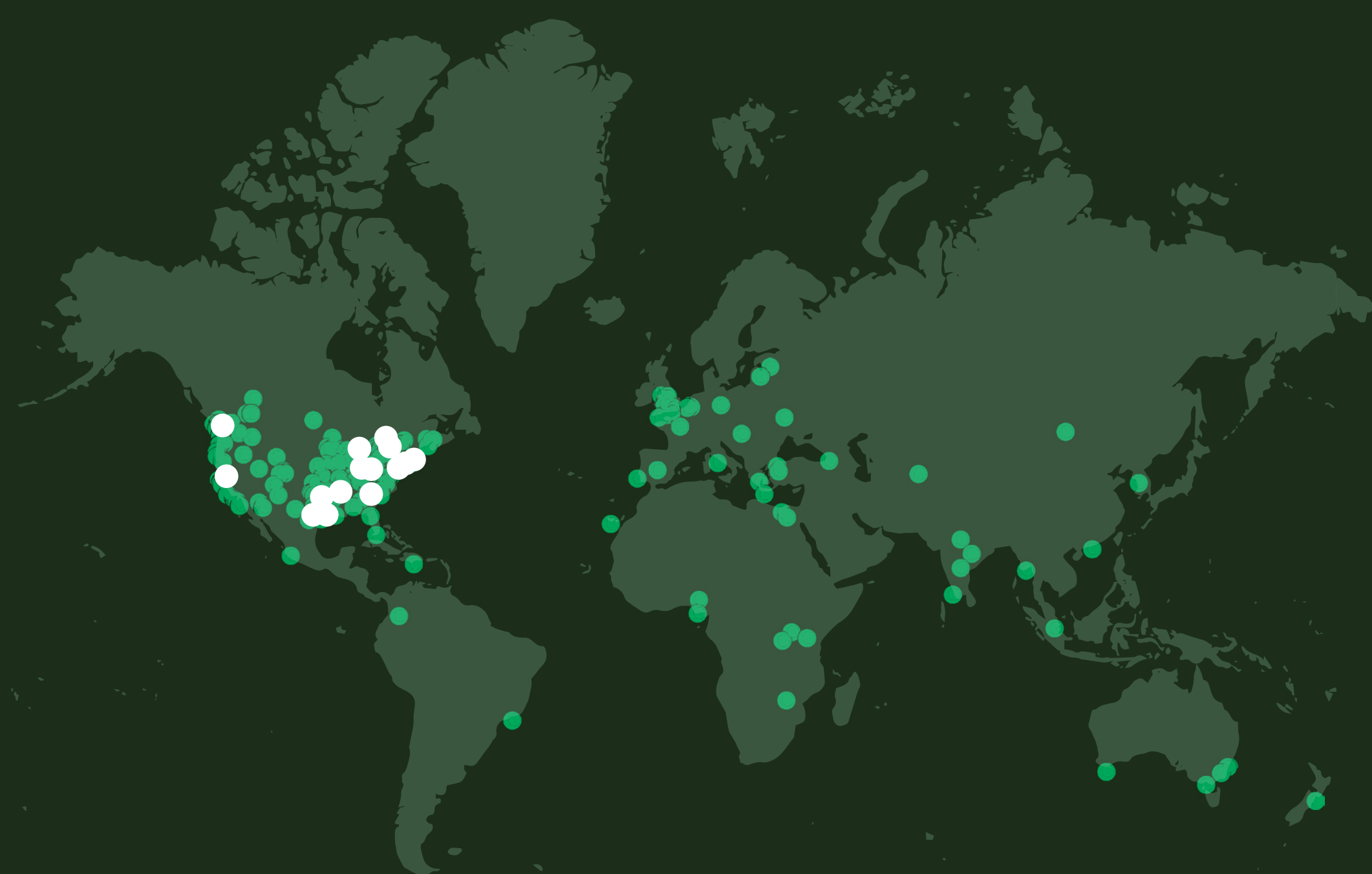
In 2023, we doubled the size of our Community Placemaking Grants initiative, providing free technical assistance and \$490,000 in implementation funding to six communities across the United States. We offered two new online training offerings on addressing homelessness in public space and cultivating inclusive entrepreneurship in markets. We hosted the 11th International Public Markets Conference, our first fully in-person conference since the pandemic, and launched the Market Cities Network to continue supporting global public market leaders all year round. In all cases, these growing initiatives are not only about transforming public spaces, but also equipping the people who steward them with new skills, tools, and resources to succeed in their work.

Ultimately, if we want to overcome loneliness, inequality, and our many other challenges, it will take more than a one-time investment. This moment demands ongoing support for the daily work in public space of management, programming, and tinkering—the work of care—that Project for Public Spaces has provided since its founding in 1975.

Nate Storrington  
Co-Executive Director

Kelly Verel  
Co-Executive Director





39 Countries and 44 U.S. States Reached in 2023

20 Public Space Improvement Projects (●)

745 Training & Event Attendees (●)

184k Social Media Followers

1.1m Website Visitors

\$280k in Grants Given

\$55k in Scholarships Given

12 Articles Published

52 Newsletters Published





The Pass, San Antonio, TX.  
Credit: Bria Woods for the San Antonio Report

## Placemaking

Imagine a world  where  everyone has the opportunity to shape  public spaces.

We believe that everyone has a right to participate in the improvement of the public spaces they use everyday and to benefit from those improvements. Building upon Project for Public Spaces’ forty-year history, our Placemaking Program works to make this core belief a reality through partnerships, education, events, research, and technical assistance.

In 2023, the Placemaking Program helped reimagine 10 public spaces across the United States, including six communities that have received technical assistance at no cost to them and implementation funds through the Program’s Community Placemaking Grants. In addition to our flagship online training, Placemaking: Making It Happen, the Program also hosted a new offering: Places of Social Inclusion: Addressing Homelessness and Mental Health Needs in Public Space, which provided an introduction to addressing this international crisis using placemaking.



# Community Placemaking Grants

Supported by:



Our flagship initiative Community Placemaking Grants launched in 2021 with the mission of bringing people-powered transformation to the communities that need it the most. In 2023, we partnered with six public space stewards and facilitated the resources to help them improve a public space in their community, including technical assistance and capacity building from the Project for Public Spaces team, as well as a commitment of \$490,000 in implementation funding.

The variety of spaces, ranging from museum grounds to an unused field beside a railroad corridor, showcase the potential for placemaking to bring about transformative change. In 2023, we welcomed our new partner, the Walton Family Foundation, and continued collaborations with GM, Niantic, and MySidewalk. Our goal is to continue fostering partnerships with like-minded foundations and corporations who are equally dedicated to uplifting the voices of local communities when it comes to public space design.

## NORTH AVENUE MARTA STATION PLAZA

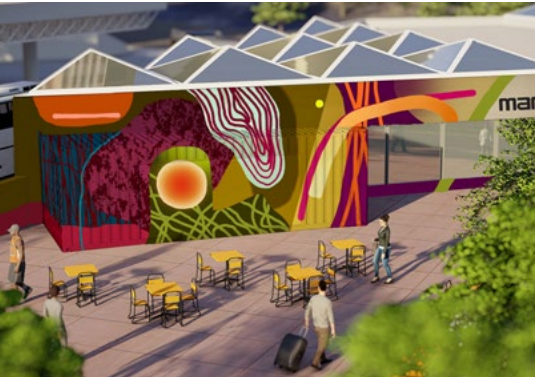
Grantee: Midtown Alliance | Atlanta, Georgia

While 15,000 daily transit riders pass through Midtown’s North Avenue MARTA station plaza, there are no public parks within a half-mile radius. Through placemaking, Project for Public Spaces has engaged the Midtown Alliance and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority in transforming this site into a vibrant community hub where people can take a break and even catch a performance by local talent.

## DAYTON COURTHOUSE SQUARE

Grantee: Downtown Dayton Partnership | Dayton, Ohio

While Courthouse Square in Dayton, Ohio, boasts a central location near the city’s public transit system hub, the square lies mostly underutilized these days as fewer office workers populate the city’s downtown. With its Community Placemaking Grant, the Downtown Dayton Partnership, a nonprofit dedicated to improving downtown Dayton, will have the resources to activate the plaza, make it an accessible community gathering place, and encourage people to return to this central business district.



North Avenue MARTA Station Plaza, Atlanta, Georgia





Buffalo Central Terminal, Buffalo, NY



## ARLINGTON DOGGIE DEPOT

**Grantee:** Downtown Arlington Management Corporation | Arlington, Texas

Arlington, Texas, like many other US cities, grew up around a railroad corridor. While the railway remains an important local feature, it also creates a barrier, preventing residents, businesses, and institutions from coming together. Project for Public Spaces is helping the Downtown Arlington Management Corporation convert the buffer lots around these railroad tracks into usable green space, featuring a new dog park to give locals more opportunities to socialize and meet their neighbors.



## MOUNT SEQUOYAH CENTER OVERLOOK

**Grantee:** Mount Sequoyah Center | Fayetteville, Arkansas

Across from the Mount Sequoyah Retreat Center, there's a peaceful vantage point that, until 2020, was only home to a few parking spots. When the Center added seating, this spot revealed its potential as a gathering point to meet friends or enjoy a beautiful sunset. Project for Public Spaces is now helping connect the Overlook with the rest of Mount Sequoyah's arts and recreation offerings by improving pedestrian safety and public programming.



## PEA RIDGE CITY PARK

**Grantee:** City of Pea Ridge | Pea Ridge, Arkansas

The 12-acre Pea Ridge City Park is one of the only municipal parks in Pea Ridge, a city of 6,500 people. Project for Public Spaces and the City of Pea Ridge are engaging the community to explore how to serve visitors who are currently left out, including younger kids, teens, and older adults, through diversified programming and movement opportunities for all abilities.



## SHILOH MUSEUM OF OZARK HISTORY GROUNDS

**Grantee:** Shiloh Museum of Ozark History | Springdale, Arkansas

The Shiloh Museum of Ozark History is dedicated to local history and culture, both past and present. With this grant, Project for Public Spaces will help the Shiloh Museum extend its welcoming atmosphere to the outdoors. Together, we are exploring ways of amplifying existing qualities—the Museum's free admission and programming—and discovering what other factors can make the grounds an even more vibrant space for programming, events, gatherings, and independent activities.



# Placemaking Training Courses

279  
Participants

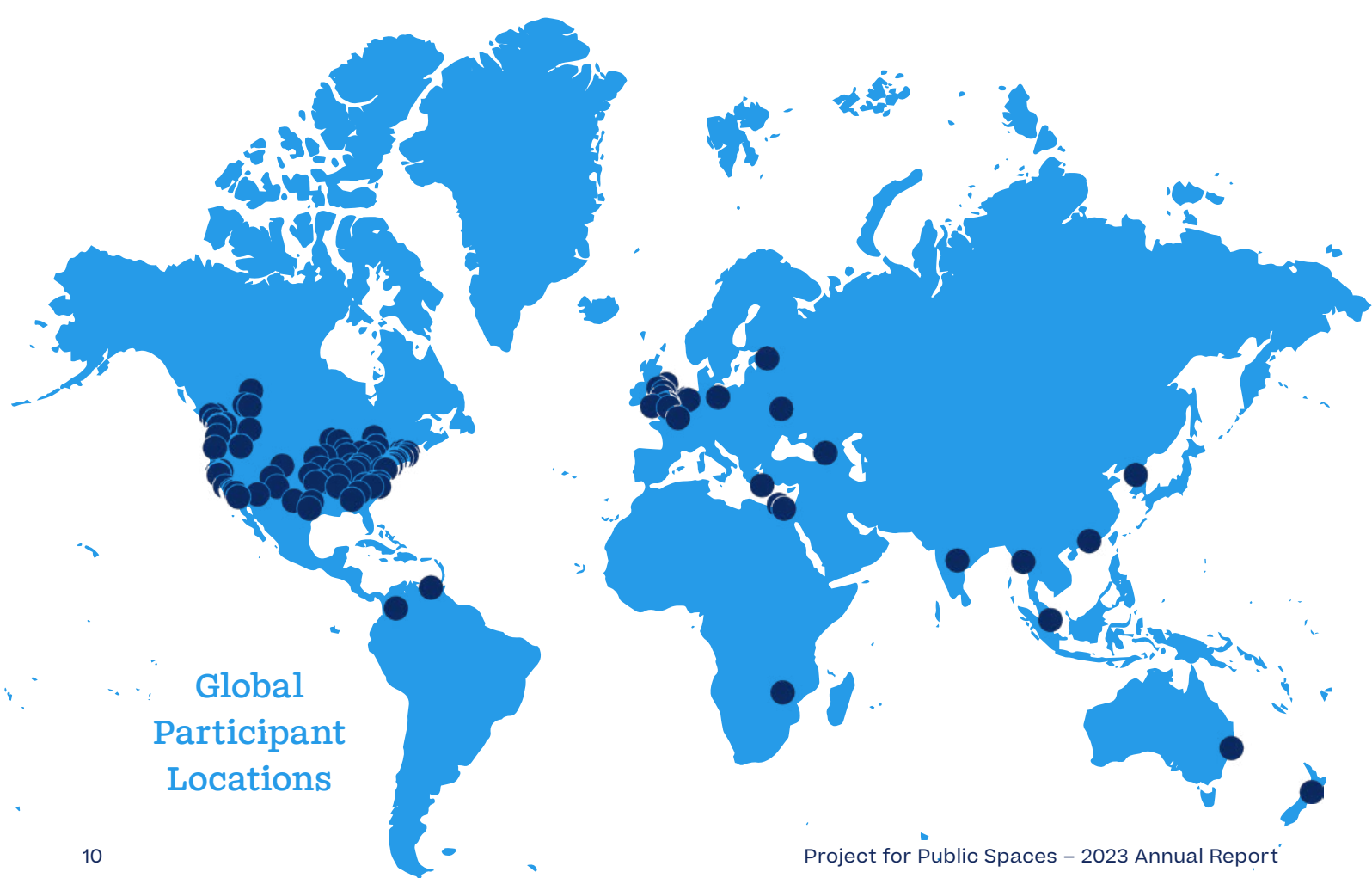
25  
Countries  
Represented

28  
Scholarships

In 2023, the Placemaking Program expanded its online training offerings, adding an exciting course focused on social inclusion to its annual introductory course in placemaking.

Project for Public Spaces partnered with organizations at the forefront of social inclusion—Fountain House, the Times Square Alliance, and the National Alliance to End Homelessness—to host **“Places of Social Inclusion: Addressing Homelessness and Mental Health Needs in Public Space.”** During this two-day course, participants gained an overview of how the mental health and housing crises play out in public space, along with best practices for connecting people to services by building trust.

We also welcomed participants from around the world to our signature **“Placemaking: Making it Happen.”** Over the course of six sessions, the Project for Public Spaces team taught core placemaking concepts, taught key tools to implement and manage public space improvement projects, and invited expert guests to drill down on topics like community engagement and creative placemaking.



# Testimonials

“I left with new knowledge on how successful places function and how to implement new ideas into my community. I better understand my role as a change maker and feel empowered to uplift and celebrate our cultural assets and community spaces.”

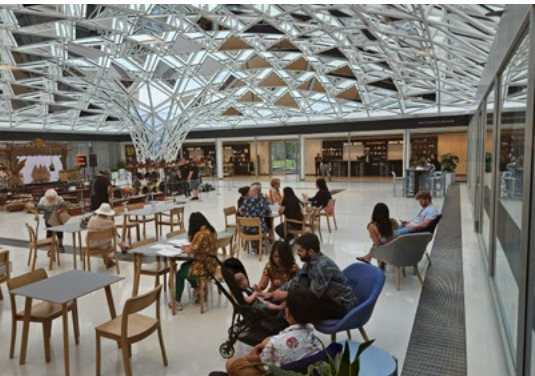
— Dave Goe, Training Participant

“This was my second online training with Project for Public Spaces, and they continue to be an excellent resource for deepening my knowledge as a professional working in social practice and public space.”

— Mitzi Gordon, Training Participant



# Technical Assistance: Project Milestones



## TOWN SQUARE ATRIUM

Buffalo, New York | Client: Buffalo AKG Art Museum

On June 12, 2023, AKG Art Museum reopened its doors after a decade-long planning effort and a four-year construction process to expand and rebrand the campus as a place for all Buffalonians. In 2019 Project for Public Spaces led a workshop and focus groups with museum staff and members to develop a placemaking vision for a new indoor “town square.” Today, this free space, sheltered by a commissioned artwork by Olafur Eliasson and Sebastian Behmann, reflects key findings from the workshop, with flexible infrastructure to support daily and seasonal programming, a variety of seating options, and a focus on showcasing local talent.



## AGRIHOOD

Santa Clara, California | Client: City of Santa Clara

In October 2023, Santa Clara celebrated the opening of a unique residential development called Agrihood, which combines 165 units of affordable housing for seniors and veterans with California’s largest urban farm. With the help of a visioning workshop led by Project for Public Spaces with the City of Santa Clara in 2017 to reimagine the former agricultural site owned by UC Davis, this development will offer a unique mix of access to housing and healthy food, green infrastructure, and social infrastructure for residents and beyond.

## PLACEMAKING FOR PLAYHOUSES TRAINING

South Africa, Pakistan & Bangladesh | Client: IRD Global

The Placemaking team provided a custom training course to IRD to bring a community-centered approach to IRD’s playhouse design efforts in rural South Africa. The team worked with IRD staff in Pakistan, Bangladesh and South Africa to explore how these unique spaces can be designed and operated as community destinations that provide both play and health resources to villages around the country.



The Pass, San Antonio, TX. Credit: Bria Woods for the San Antonio Report

**“This park gives us an opportunity to reconnect our communities to shoot some hoops, rally over some ping pong, and spend quality time together under a structure that was once historically used to separate us.”**

—Councilwoman Teri Castillo

## THE PASS

San Antonio, Texas | Grantee: Center City Development & Operations Department, City of San Antonio

In August 2023, The Pass opened to the public as San Antonio’s first recreational area below an elevated freeway. With support from the Clarity Parks Project™ by the Makers of Claritin®, as well as UTSA and the 80|20 Foundation, Project for Public Spaces worked with local high school students to envision and implement this gathering space for and by young people, including basketball courts, ping pong, and colorful murals.



# Technical Assistance: Work in Progress

“The historic investments we are making in America’s infrastructure must reach the communities that need them the most.

With the new Thriving Communities program, we are helping under-resourced communities better access federal funding for transportation projects that will create jobs, improve safety, and strengthen their economies.”

—U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg

## THRIVING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

National | Client: US Department of Transportation  
Prime Consultant: Main Street America

In 2023, Project for Public Spaces and an interdisciplinary team of capacity builders led by Main Street America began providing technical assistance and training to help 20 under-resourced rural and Tribal communities access and make the most of federal infrastructure funding. As specialists in placemaking, our team helps participants ensure transportation and revitalization projects engage the community and contribute to broader public life outcomes.

## A POCKET SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE BRONX

New York, New York | Client: Fountain House

Project for Public Spaces is collaborating with peer-based social service provider Fountain House to design and program a special kiosk in a key Bronx public space to connect people experiencing homelessness, addiction, or mental health challenges to resources and services by focusing first on building trusting relationships. This project builds upon our work together on Times Square’s Recharge Station, which in its first year resulted in people there accessing over 1,100 services, from food to permanent housing, through a Fountain House ambassador.

## DELTA RHYTHM & BAYOUS CULTURAL DISTRICT

Pine Bluff, Arkansas | Client: City of Pine Bluff | Subconsultant: CivicBrand

Project for Public Spaces and place branding firm CivicBrand to create a placemaking vision for the Delta Rhythm & Bayous Cultural District, a key stop on the Chitlin’ Circuit that provided safe venues for Black musicians and other entertainers during segregation. The team helped flesh out the vision for a network of destinations forming an outdoor museum experience, complete with a phasing plan and design concepts for lighter, quicker, cheaper and interim development. Recommendations focused on physical amenities, artistic interpretation, cultural programming, branding and tourism strategy that showcases the area’s culture and history.



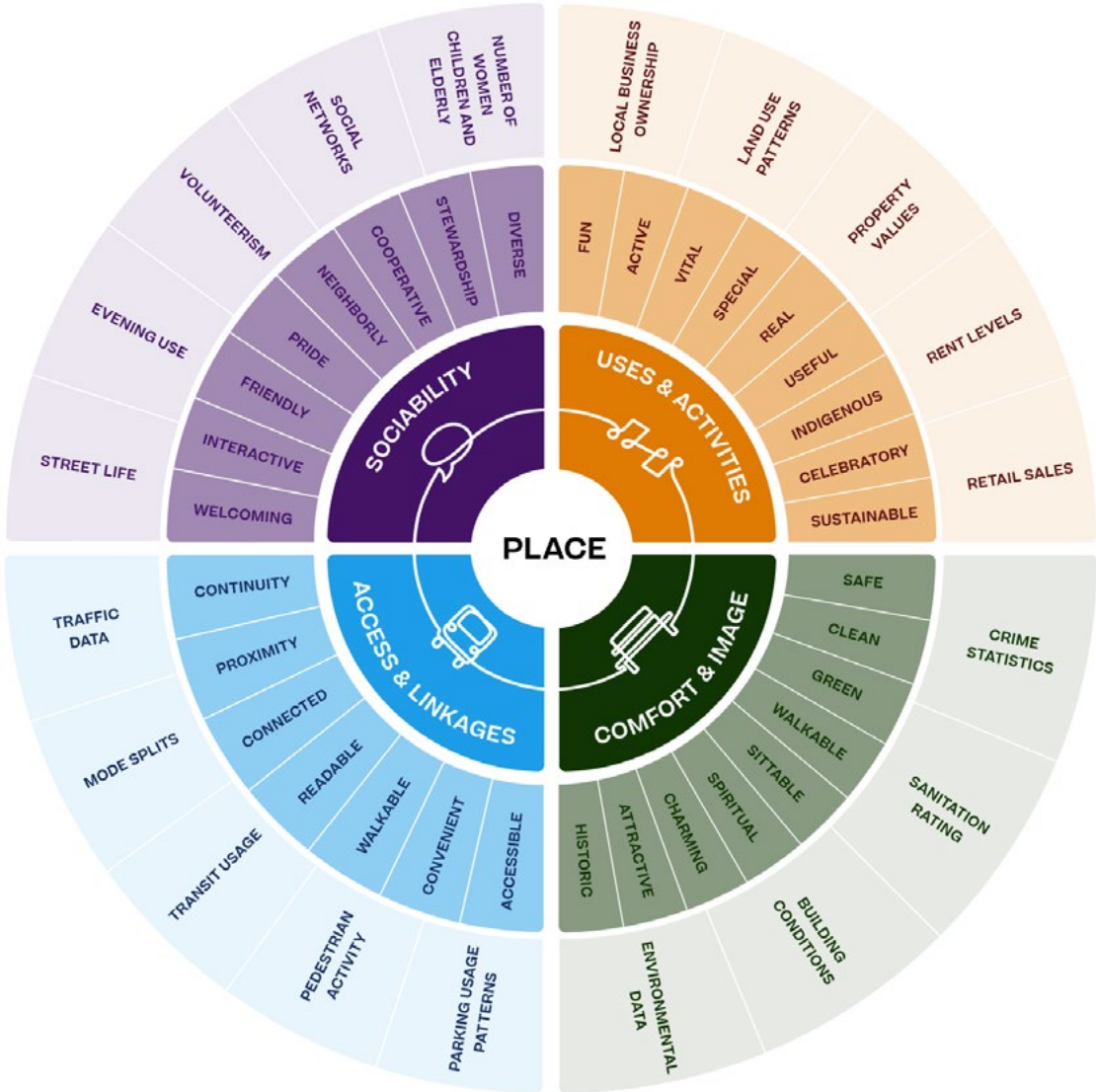
Recharge Station, Times Square, NY, NY. Credit: Ruvi Perumal



# Article Series: What Makes a Great Place?

In evaluating thousands of public spaces around the world, Project for Public Spaces has found that to be successful, they generally share the following four qualities: they are accessible; people are engaged in activities there; the space is comfortable and has a positive image; and finally, it is a sociable place, one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit.

In 2023, our communications team produced a four-part series answering the question, “What Makes a Great Place?” that explored recent public space innovations related to each of these four key attributes, ranging from queer urbanism to open street programs that have survived beyond the coronavirus pandemic.



## Featured Case Studies



Photos from top-left to bottom-right: A walkway in Waco, TX, helps connect various destinations. Credit: CivicBrand | 34th Avenue Open Street in Jackson Heights, NYC. Credit: John Surico | People enjoying the newly designed Great Lawn at Buffalo Central Terminal. | Based on recommendations by Project for Public Spaces, Epstein-Joslin Architects designed the Comfort Station in Salisbury, MA, with accessible bathrooms and changing rooms for the beach, alongside seating, shade, nighttime lighting, and plantings. | Outdoor programming at NewBo City Market in Cedar Rapids, IA. | A program “bubble diagram” created by Project for Public Spaces for South City Park in Redding, CA. | The Project for Public Spaces-designed Recharge Station in Times Square, NYC. Credit: Ruvi Perumal





International Public Markets Conference, Toronto, Canada

## Market Cities

# What if every city had a public market strategy?

Successful public markets help build communities rooted in well-being and equitable opportunity. The Market Cities Program strengthens the regional systems behind the market stalls, connecting and supporting a diverse set of stakeholders through research, specialized training, and a network of peers.

In 2023, the Market Cities Program brought together over 350 global market leaders for its 11th International Public Markets Conference in Toronto, Ontario—Project for Public Spaces’ first fully in-person conference since the beginning of the pandemic. At the conference, the team also launched the new Market Cities Network, which has extended the vital learning and relationship-building of this long-running event throughout the year.

In addition to our flagship online training, How to Create Successful Markets, the Program also hosted a new offering this year: Places of Economic Opportunity, which provided an introduction to supporting inclusive entrepreneurship in public markets. Finally, the Program provided direct technical assistance in two North American communities, collaborating with market managers, vendors, and the public to envision the future of their public markets.



# 11th International Public Markets Conference

373  
Attendees

23  
Countries  
Represented

1 in 10  
attendees received a  
scholarship

1 in 5  
attendees presented  
at the conference

1 in 5  
attendees lead  
their organization

The 11th edition of the International Public Markets Conference took place in Toronto, one of the world’s most diverse cities with a network of over 100 markets, on June 8-10, 2023.

Attendees from around the world had the opportunity to discuss many of the most pressing issues in the field of public markets, including health, local economic development, food systems, and climate resilience. The conference also treated the city as its venue, with key sessions hosted by the St. Lawrence Market and tours and workshops hosted by inspiring local organizations like the Afro-Caribbean Farmers’ Market, Market 707, and many more.

As a result of the event, as well as the long advocacy work of our conference co-host Market City TO and other local leaders, Toronto City Council approved the motion to develop the first Public Market Action Plan for the City of Toronto in 2024—the first of its kind in North America.





# The Market Cities Network



The Market Cities Network is the first international forum for markets of all kinds and the people committed to their success. Spearheaded by Project for Public Spaces and supported by more than 25 Founding Members from across the globe, the Network is committed to ensuring markets of all sizes reach their full potential in driving economic growth, social inclusion, and cultural expression.

In its first year, members participated in seven calls to discuss urgent topics in the field and weigh in on the future of the Network, gained access to a members-only resource library of research and resources like sample leases, and regularly shared updates and ideas through the Network’s Google Group.

In order to amplify our early success, we’re continually inviting market leaders and their partners—including operators, NGOs, funders, researchers, and more—to join us. Together, we are building toward stronger, more resilient public markets.

## OUR FOUNDING MEMBERS





# Market Cities Training Courses

93  
Participants

9  
Countries  
Represented

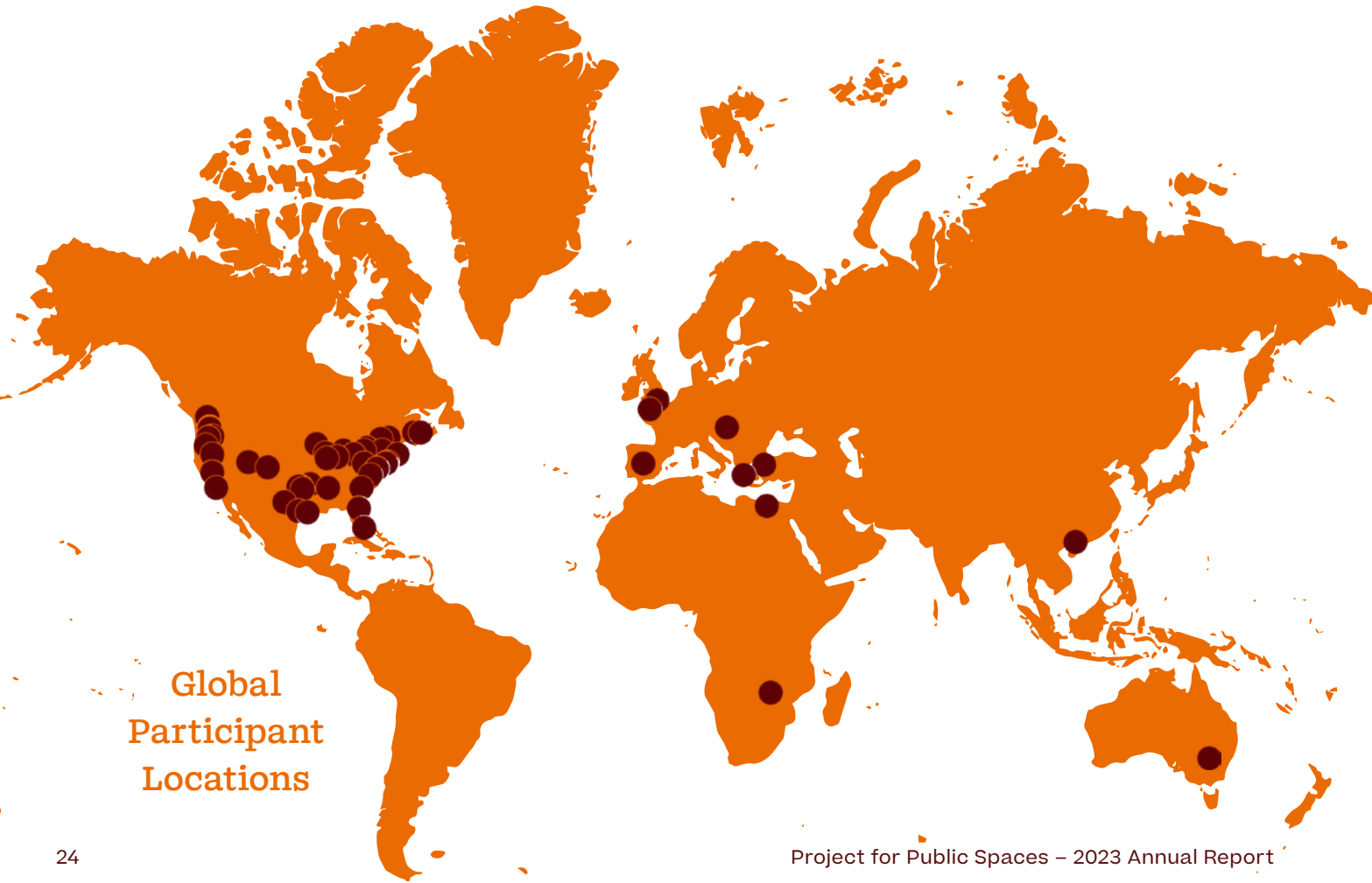
15  
Scholarships

In 2023, the Market Cities Program expanded its online training offerings, adding a topical course on entrepreneurship and business support to its annual introductory course on market design and management.

During the annual three-week course **“How to Create Successful Markets,”** participants learned the essentials for creating a thriving market, from the brass tacks of financial sustainability to powerful tools for measuring outcomes. To share lessons that are applicable to all types of markets, our team invited international guest speakers, including leaders from Chicago’s Green City Market, who shared the ins and outs of fundraising for a market’s mission.

The team also offered a new, two-day training on markets as **“Places of Economic Opportunity,”** which covered how to support up-and-coming entrepreneurs. One of the highlights includes a case study from the Beloved Community Incubator on the organizing campaign that led Washington, DC, to decriminalize street vending and create designated sidewalk vendor zones.

Global  
Participant  
Locations



## Testimonials

“I believe this training will be valuable to anyone connected to markets — there is so much great knowledge and tools presented and many opportunities to network with peers. Well worth the investment.”

— Leslie Harrison, Training Participant

“I learned many strategies for opening and operating a market. The different avenues suggested for fundraising and marketing were extremely helpful. It was amazing to connect with other market operators from around the world. The presenters were professional and approachable and the curriculum was detailed and informative.”

— Keli Sim, Training Participant



# Technical Assistance: Project Milestones



## HAMILTON FARMERS’ MARKET

Hamilton, Ontario, Canada | Client: City of Hamilton

In May 2023, Project for Public Spaces delivered its final recommendations for the Hamilton Farmers’ Market, a 186-year-old institution at a critical moment in its life cycle. Feedback from vendors, stakeholders, and the public found that investing in the building’s infrastructure, changing its operational hours, and creating an authentic social experience by allowing the market to spill outside the building’s walls could help the market reach its full potential.



## JULIETTA MARKET

Lexington, Kentucky | Client: Julietta Market

Project for Public Spaces completed a series of workshops and interviews with organizational leadership, vendors, and other stakeholders to assist with a revamped vision and business strategy for Julietta Market, with the primary objective of fostering growth of minority-owned businesses in Lexington.



Hamilton Market, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.  
Credit: Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association



# People

## STAFF

- Leadership**  
Nate Storning, Co-Executive Director  
Kelly Verel, Co-Executive Director
- Development**  
Jacob Cohen, Development Manager
- Finance & Operations**  
Pamela Reichen, Finance and Operations Manager
- Communications**  
Josh Kent, Senior Design Lead  
Priscilla Posada, Marketing & Communications Manager
- Events**  
Juliet Kahne, Director of Events  
Rebecca Weiser, Senior Associate, Events & Administration
- Market Cities**  
Kurt Wheeler, Program Manager, Market Cities
- Placemaking**  
Elena Madison, Director of Projects  
Emily Putnam, Senior Associate, Projects

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- David Burney (Chair)  
Ricardo Byrd (Secretary)  
Jon Zagrodzky (Treasurer)  
Reena Agarwal  
Lisa Knipp  
David Koren  
Bridget Marquis  
Todd Palmer  
Jennifer Vickers

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Thank you to GM, the Walton Family Foundation, and Niantic for their generous support.

## EVENT SPONSORS

Thank you to the sponsors of our International Public Markets Conference: Westbank, Link, Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance, the Province of Ontario, Quay North Urban Development, Greenbelt Foundation, Northcrest, FoodShare, Duuo, The Farmers Market Pros, DTAH, Muuse, University of Toronto Scarborough Culinary Research Center, Evergreen, the World Union of Wholesale Markets; and our local contributors Quest Audio Visual, Destination Toronto, and Stackt.

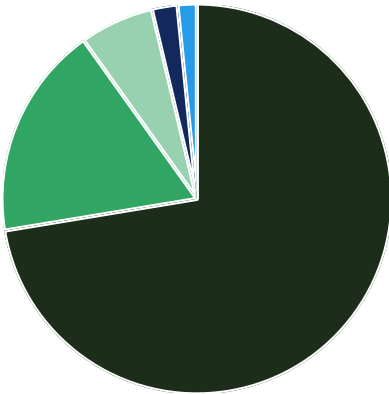
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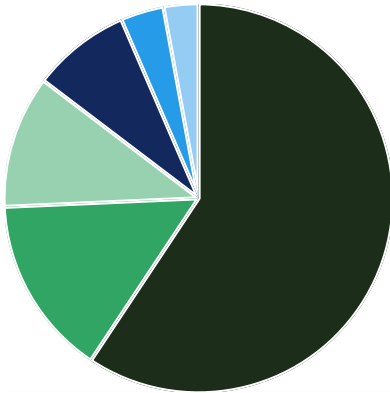
# Finances

Fiscal Year: January 1, 2023–December 31, 2023\*

REVENUE		
	Grants & Contributions	\$ 1,387,164
	Event Registrations & Sponsorships	\$ 339,689
	Consulting Services	\$ 117,891
	Network Membership	\$ 40,786
	Other Earned Income	\$ 30,460
	<b>GROSS PROFIT</b>	<b>\$ 1,915,990</b>



EXPENDITURES		
	Staff Payroll & Benefits	\$ 1,109,884
	Grants Awarded	\$ 280,000
	Consultants	\$ 206,369
	Office Expenses	\$ 152,916
	Travel & Meals	\$ 67,286
	Equipment/Venue Rental	\$ 54,222
	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$ 1,870,676</b>



**NET OPERATING REVENUE** **\$ 45,314**

\*This budget reflects the organization’s unaudited finances for the year.



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Brooklyn, NY 11217  
USA

[www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)  
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Made By All. Used By All.