



## BEYOND THE BUZZWORD:

# CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

In the last few issues of “ie” Magazine, we presented a new perspective on our work in the festivals and events space that celebrates our communities, embraces our diversity and improves the overall quality of life in the regions we call home.

Most recently, we hosted an IFEA Webinar on the concepts behind creative placemaking and how you can change the conversations with government and business leaders, sponsors and your community at-large.

As originally defined by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus, authors of a white paper commissioned by the Mayor’s Institute on City Design entitled *Creative Placemaking*, creative placemaking is the field of practice that intentionally leverages the power of arts, culture and creativity to serve a community’s interest while driving a broader agenda for change, growth and transformation in a way that also builds character and quality of place.

There are also some key definitions that help us define this work as well. Think through these terms and phrases and see how they may better inform the work you do, the grants and sponsorships you write and the conversations you have.

### Social Capital

The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. This was best explained as the “glue that holds a community together.” Is that not what festivals and events do?

### Sense of Place

Those characteristics that make a place special or unique, as well as to those that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging. Again, our festivals and events are absolutely a determining factor in what creates the sense of place and welcoming for the residents and guests of our hometown communities.

### Community Engagement

To tap into, preserve, enhance the artistic, cultural and historical characteristics and assets of a community including its people, local history, architecture, ethnic heritage, unique customs and foods. We have begun using the term Cultural Infrastructure to help define the artistic, historic and natural assets of any community that helps to create and develop community engagement and sense of place.

### Arts-led Economic Development

Growth and revitalization of communities with commercial and residential impacts on quality of life standards initiated by or incorporating the arts. When we are looking to reframe our impact on a city, county or larger region, the economic impacts of our festivals and events present a new way to look at the work we’ve done and the legacy our events have created to help further develop the communities we serve.

### RANKINGS

If you are interested in seeing how the arts and culture activity in your region

stack up against communities across America, there is a great resource compiled every five years by the American for the Arts.

The Prosperity Index is the accumulation of data from the non-profit arts and culture organizations which is then combined with multipliers based on the activity which is influenced by participating in arts and culture activity to give a snapshot of the overall economic impact of the arts in regions nationally.

Another resource for you to explore is the Creative Vitality Index prepared annually by WESTAF, the Western States Arts Federation. The Creative Vitality Index is a benchmarking tool to compare the creative activity of a region to the U.S. averages and other peer regions. Data on creative industry sales, creative occupation jobs and cultural non-profit revenues are combined into a population-based calculation.

Both of these platforms will allow you to see your region’s performance benchmarked against other population centers similar in size and scope to your own. The outcome of your research should allow you to tell a more informed story of the impact you and your colleagues in the arts and culture industry have on your region and the community you serve.

### SEVEN TIPS

In wrapping up our series on Creative Placemaking and the role your festivals and events, and the arts and culture industry has

# KING AND YOUR EVENT

on your community, we'd like to leave you with several quick tips to put this in motion.

1. Implement small changes that build excitement and empower the community. Introduce business and government leaders to your work in the creative placemaking space and how your role helps drive the creative economy in your region which will eventually lead to economic impact far beyond the run of your events and festivals.
2. Listen to all audiences, including the underserved. Creative placemaking is for everyone, most of all the residents who can benefit so greatly from the improvement in the quality of life that is delivered through fabulous festivals and extraordinary events.
3. Proactively support local artists and creative entrepreneurs. For creative placemaking to be as successful as possible, it takes participation from individuals across the creative continuum. Artists tend to lead the way in many of these projects, but entrepreneurs including those in the social and artistic space are great influencers in making the impact necessary to drive change and allow for sustainability.
4. Share common language and understanding of the creative placemaking activities in your community. Many of the terms may be new to leaders and residents, but by acting as the beacon of change through this undertaking you can broaden your impact on the region

and educate these same individuals to a different way of thinking about your festival or event in assisting everyone and improving the overall quality of life.

5. Amplify your work in events and collaborate with museums, galleries and libraries to serve as cultural hubs. While not every community has a museum, everyone has a library or gallery that can serve as a cultural hub to help you build long term relationships with the community. Once you wrap your arms around the improvement of your community or region through creative placemaking, partnerships such as those with libraries and cultural institutions, will allow you to give voice to the residents and inform the decisions you make moving forward on programming, volunteering and overall organizational development.
6. Advocate for the arts and events with local government and business leaders and teach them the basics. No doubt you already have a positive relationship with leaders in your community, creative placemaking is an opportunity for you to deepen those ties and work together on a topic that is far forward on most community's economic development plan. If they are already entrenched, then join the work and become a trusted partner for those who are dedicated to moving your community forward.
7. Establish a creative placemaking steering committee or think tank to ensure all members of the creative community

are involved and their voices are heard. Enlist entrepreneurs, artists, educators, civic and neighborhood leaders and faith-based organizations to help you craft your strategy for how creative placemaking can affect all residents and guests in a positive way.

The term creative placemaking is barely a decade old, but it has created positive results coast-to-coast and around the world. We all know the work we do in the festivals and events community is extremely important beyond the number of people who attend and the amount of money we make.

The long-term impacts of your festival and event has the probability of improving the quality of life for everyone who lives in your hometown, even the most underserved among us. Use creative placemaking in order to reframe those conversations you've been having to illustrate and deliver on the greater promise of our festivals and events.

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