



Vermont Better Places Program

# PLACEMAKING TOOLKIT



February 2023



## Thank You to the Better Places Partners

The Better Places program is managed by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in partnership with the Vermont Community Foundation (VCF), Vermont Department of Health, and Patronicity. The program relies on the expertise and generous support of the Better Places Partners which include: the Vermont Arts Council, AARP Vermont, Local Motion, Preservation Trust of Vermont, Vermont Department of Health, Vermont Agency of Transportation, and Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets.

Special thanks to all the local placemakers across the state doing this important work, and for the Vermont Legislature and Governor Phil Scott for supporting the Better Places program.



Front cover photo credit: Downtown Brattleboro Alliance



## Land Acknowledgment

As Vermont placemakers, we acknowledge the places we live, play, and create occupy on the unceded traditional land of N'dakinna, the ancestral homeland of the Abenaki people. Our village greens, parks, community centers, main streets, murals, art installations, and other community projects sit on Abenaki land. We recognize the indigenous culture and people that existed in N'dakinna long before Europeans arrived in North America, and those here today. We acknowledge and honor with deep gratitude, the Abenaki people, the traditional placemakers and caretakers of these Vermont lands and waters.

## Inclusion and Equity as a Core Value

The Better Places partners believe that all Vermonters deserve access to vibrant and welcoming public places in their lives and communities. We are committed to lifting up placemaking projects, policies, and practices which contribute to social and racial equity for a more just, inclusive, and equitable Vermont.

Placemaking can be a vehicle for neighbor-to-neighbor conversations and can spur bigger social, environmental, and economic improvements. Above all, we hope this program increases access to inspiring public places for all people in Vermont, regardless of background, race, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, ability, religion, or geography. We invite you to join us in this important work, hold us to it, help us deepen it, and persevere until every Vermonter has equal access to vibrant and inclusive public places that are essential to a healthy, thriving, and democratic society.

## Accessibility and Language Translation



We strongly encourage and support placemaking initiatives that are welcoming and inclusive to a broad spectrum of people in integrated settings that include people with disabilities and from many different cultures and language backgrounds. The Better Places program will take meaningful steps to ensure equal opportunity and access to all people.

Accommodations are available to facilitate the participation of those persons with limited English language proficiency and/or disabilities during the application process.

If you or your organization requires an interpreter, document translation, alternative formats, or needs assistance or other accommodations, please contact **Richard Amore** with the Department of Housing and Community Development by email or at 802.585.0061. Voice and relay calls are welcome.



# Table of Contents

## Section 1. Introduction

Better Places Goals.....	5
How to Use This Toolkit.....	5
Better Places Program Process.....	6

## Section 2. Placemaking in Vermont

Who is doing it?.....	7
Why are they doing it?.....	7
Types of Placemaking.....	8
Project Examples.....	9

## Section 3. Pillars of Placemaking

People, Place, Process Overview.....	10
<b>People</b> , Questions to Ask.....	11
Resources for Inclusion and Empowerment.....	11
<b>Place</b> , Questions to Ask.....	12
Resources for Understanding Good Places.....	12
<b>Process</b> , Questions to Ask.....	13
Resources for a Collaborative Process.....	13

## Section 4. Project Success Checklists

<b>1. Understand Your Project</b> .....	14
<b>2. Gather Resources</b> .....	16
<b>3. Plan Your Project</b> .....	18
<b>4. Make it Happen</b> .....	20
<b>5. Learn and Share</b> .....	22

## Section 5. Printable Worksheets

<b>Better Places preflight questions</b> .....	24
<b>Budget worksheet</b> .....	25
<b>Action plan worksheet</b> .....	26
<b>Timeline worksheet</b> .....	27
<b>Press release example</b> .....	28

<b>Toolkit Contributors</b> .....	29
-----------------------------------	----





# BETTER PLACES TOOLKIT

This toolkit is a companion document to Vermont's Better Places program. It is a resource for anyone interested in working together to create vibrant public places in the heart of Vermont communities. Each page includes resource links to Vermont funding partners, project examples, technical guidance, and inspiration for getting community-led projects started, keeping them moving, and making them happen.

## HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

### SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

If you are interested in participating in Vermont's Better Places program, this section provides an overview of the program process, partners, and quick steps to get started.

### SECTION 2: PLACEMAKING IN VERMONT

Need inspiration? This section highlights Vermonters who are creating wonderful public places and programs in their community and why they are doing it.

### SECTION 3: PILLARS OF PLACEMAKING

This section introduces the three pillars of placemaking: People, Place, and Process, providing big picture questions to ask in each of these areas when embarking on a placemaking project.

### SECTION 4: PROJECT SUCCESS CHECKLISTS

Committed to making this happen? This section provides a series of checklists for the five stages of creating a collaborative placemaking project from start to finish.

### SECTION 5: PRINTABLE TEMPLATES

Take a look at the Better Places preflight questions and find printable worksheets and hyperlinks to editable files including: budget, timeline, action plan, and press release templates.

For a comprehensive list of placemaking resources and funding sources go to the [Better Places website](#).

### Better Places Goals

- ▶ Activate and revitalize public spaces to build vibrant communities
- ▶ Empower residents to play an active role in shaping their community
- ▶ Increase integrity of and equitable access to green spaces
- ▶ Advance "quick build" projects which boost community confidence and local pride
- ▶ Build inclusive and welcoming spaces for social connection, health, and recreation
- ▶ Stimulate the creative economy and provide equitable access to the arts
- ▶ Spur entrepreneurship, partnerships, and public and private investment

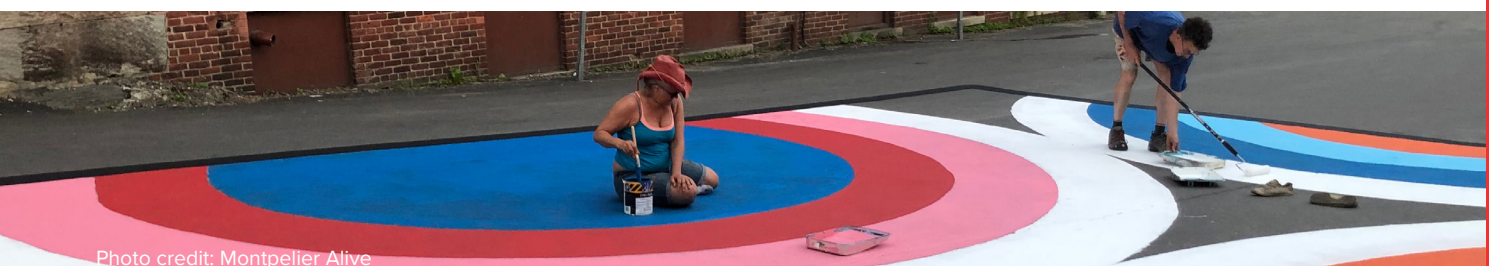


Photo credit: Montpelier Alive

# BETTER PLACES PROGRAM PROCESS

Better Places is a community matching grant program empowering Vermonters to create inclusive and vibrant public places in the heart of their neighborhoods and communities. The program is led by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in partnership with the Vermont Department of Health, Vermont Community Foundation (VCF), and Patronicity. This partnership provides project teams one-on-one coaching for local crowdfunding and a 2:1 matching grant to bring community-led placemaking ideas to life. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$40,000 depending on project needs.



## 1. APPLY

**Tell us about your project.** We want to hear from you! You can tell us about your project here, in the Better Places [preflight form](#), or contact us directly.

**Work with a project coach.** Applicants will work with a Patronicity project coach to develop an online fundraising campaign page specific to your project needs and interests of your local community.

**Receive project approval.** DHCD approves the project and give the green light for launching the crowdfunding campaign.

## 2. LAUNCH CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN

**Cultivate local support.** Applicants work with their project coach to launch their crowdfunding campaign, with the goal of raising 33% of the project funds.

**Complete grant agreement.** Once the 33% of project funds are successfully raised, participants work with the Better Places team to receive the matching grant funds. More Information regarding the [grants management system](#) can be found here or in the [Better Places program guide](#).

## 3. INITIATE PROJECT

**Move forward.** Project team works within a 12-month period to complete their project. Better Places offers training, outreach materials, and resources for all project teams.

**Celebrate success.** This will look different in every community but celebrating the team and the community is essential to any good placemaking project! Have fun!

## HOW TO START A BETTER PLACES PROJECT

1. Go to: <https://www.patronicity.com/BetterPlacesVT> and click the **STEP ONE** button, or go directly to the [preflight form](#) here.
2. Or contact us by emailing: [richard.amore@vermont.gov](mailto:richard.amore@vermont.gov)
3. To check location eligibility go to the [Vermont Planning Atlas](#) and determine if your project is in, or in safe walking distance to, a designated center or neighborhood. See the [Better Places Program Guide](#) for complete project eligibility criteria.



# PLACEMAKING IN VERMONT

Village greens, outdoor markets, grange halls, fairgrounds, main streets, skating ponds, community gardens, walking trails, and fishing docks are examples of public places Vermonters have enjoyed for centuries. Skate parks, playgrounds, dog parks, pop-up food, entertainment, cultural events, and public art projects are more modern examples. These places and experiences provide Vermonters with meaningful opportunities to connect with one another, share ideas, recreate, grow food, share a meal, shop, or simply rest and enjoy the unique sights and sounds around them.

## WHO IS DOING IT?

Vermont residents in partnership with local neighbors, businesses, municipalities, and community organizations are leading inspiring placemaking projects across the State. Projects succeed where local leadership recognizes the assets and skills within the community, providing an environment which welcomes idea-sharing and encourages collaboration between various community groups and organizations.

## WHY ARE THEY DOING IT?

Vermonters see the social, environmental, and economic benefits of investing time and resources into public places. Doing so can bring beauty to a neighborhood and provide safe and enjoyable places to walk, roll, meet up with others, eat, play, or exercise. Having such places within a town or village center can help people feel connected to a place, increase economic activity for existing businesses, and attracts new businesses and visitors needed for a more resilient local economy.

Vermont's Better Places program supports placemaking as an opportunity for neighbors to come together and create the kind of places they want and need, becoming stronger, more resilient communities in the process.



*"Placemaking, in a nutshell, is about positioning the human experience in everyday life above all else." Patronicity*

## QUICK LINKS: PLACEMAKING PROGRAMS AND PARTNERS

**AARP's Vermont Placemaking Meet-ups**  
**Local Motion**  
**Preservation Trust of Vermont**  
**Vermont's Better Places Program**  
**Vermont's Better Connections Program**  
**Vermont Community Foundation**  
**Vermont Department of Health**  
**Vermont Arts Council**

**Vermont Community Garden Network**  
**Vermont League of Cities and Towns**  
**Vermont Agency of Transportation**  
**Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets**  
**Vermont Regional Planning Commissions**  
**Vermont Natural Resources Council**



# TYPES OF PLACEMAKING

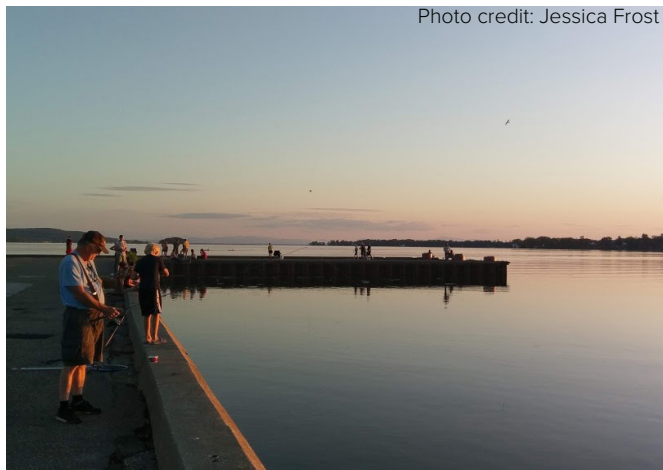
Placemaking projects vary in scale and can be temporary, seasonal, or permanent, from large community development projects, such as community parks and reimagined main streets, to small, incremental improvements like outdoor seating or a well-placed neighborhood bulletin board. Most placemaking projects, no matter their scale or permanence fall into broader categories shown below.



**Arts and Culture** Montpelier, Vermont



**Beautifying and Greening** Waterbury, Vermont



**Recreation and Physical Activity** St. Albans, Vermont



**Community Events** Braintree, Vermont



**Access to Local Food** Brattleboro, Vermont



**Street Improvements** Bradford, Vermont



# CASE STUDIES

Vermonters are placemakers. From small, rural villages to larger towns, Vermont residents are coming together to create public spaces that feel safe, welcoming, and inspiring. Vermonters are building places together that provide social connection, opportunities to contribute to their neighborhood, and build a sense of community.



Photo credit: Barton Community Giving Garden

## Barton's Community Giving Garden and Ampitheater

This community-led project provides a beautiful space for residents to learn how to grow food, share healthy local produce, and enjoy a safe place for all ages to connect, celebrate gardening, and build community.

The Village of Barton is in the Northeast Kingdom with approximately 2,800 residents. The giving garden and amphitheater are adjacent to the library, church, and school in the walkable village center.

The Barton Community Giving Garden was started in 2020. It is volunteer-run and supported by the town, community members, local businesses, and state and regional funders.



Photo credit: Rupert Village Trust

## Rupert's Sheldon Store Cafe and Community Center

Rupert's efforts to revitalize an historic village center for social connection and economic vitality began in 2018. A restored general store hosts a cafe and event space with an adjacent village green, community gardens, and connection to the Delaware and Hudson Rail (D&H) Trail. Rupert, Vermont is a small, rural village in Bennington County with a population of under 800 residents.

Rupert residents created the non-profit, Rupert Village Trust to purchase and revitalize the general store as a community gathering place. Support and funding were provided by the town, community members, local businesses, and state and regional funders.



Photo credit: Downtown Rutland Partnership

## Rutland's Center Street Improvements

The City of Rutland is transforming Center Street into a safer, greener, more vibrant place to walk, shop, and dine. Center Street is the heart of downtown and is home to retail shops, restaurants, offices, services, and the Paramount Theater. Rutland City is one of Vermont's largest cities with a population near 16,000. Center street offers residents and visitors walkable connections to parks, a farmers' market, a grocery store, and other retail stores.

The City of Rutland and Downtown Rutland Partnership co-led the re-imagining of Center Street. Funding and support were provided by the city, local businesses and organizations, and state and regional funders. These improvements began in 2020.

# PILLARS OF PLACEMAKING

**People, place, and process** are essential areas of understanding, sometimes called the ‘pillars’, of placemaking. They provide a starting point for considering the social, physical, and organizing elements of a placemaking project.

## Digging Deeper to Find Each Other



Successful community building projects empower people who are historically marginalized and underrepresented due to systemic racism, and other inequalities based on a person’s ethnicity, gender, class, ability, age, or sexual orientation.

**People:** Consider the diversity of who is involved, who’s perspective is missing and why, and how to respectfully include them.

**Place:** Consider who can get to and access the space, how to make the space feel safe and welcoming, and how to make access easier and accommodating to all users.

**Process:** consider who holds power and whether the project roles are fairly distributed.

## PEOPLE

### EMPOWER PEOPLE TO CREATE PLACES THEY LOVE

Placemaking depends on local ideas, enthusiasm, values, skills, cultural traditions, and local knowledge to inform how a project is organized, built, and cared for. Without the infusion of this local engagement, places lack personal connection for community members and are less likely to thrive.

Projects with greatest community impact provide ways for different people across the community to participate and engage with all phases of a project, with the goal of feeling connected and excited about the public place or experience being created.

## PLACE

### USE WHAT YOU HAVE AND TRY SOMETHING OUT

Placemaking begins with what’s there, who’s using it, and how people feel in that place. Placemaking also considers what resources (materials and skills) exist within the community to help make something happen, quicker. Topography, ecology, climate, seasons, surrounding environment, utilities, and street connections impact how people feel and move within and through a space. Experimenting with short-term placemaking ideas provides an opportunity to take notes, gather feedback, and understand opportunities and challenges for future expansions of the project.

## PROCESS

### BUILD AND LIFT EACH OTHER UP

Community-led placemaking thrives when collaboration is embraced, trust is built between partners, and municipalities provide ways to enable both temporary and permanent placemaking initiatives. The project team must outline a clear process, roles, and responsibilities to start, build, and sustain their project. Above everything, project teams must be inclusive, adaptable, and not afraid to reach out to new partners to create something inspiring together.

Check out **Jay Pitter’s Equity in Placemaking Checklist** to get started. See more resources on the following page.



# PEOPLE

## EMPOWER PEOPLE TO CREATE PLACES THEY LOVE

*“Our community’s generosity and resilience are not a surprise, but nonetheless the extent of support and enthusiasm for this project was wonderfully affirming. In the planning process, we conducted brown-bag lunches with local organizations and individuals to gather their visions and suggestions.”* First Fridays project, White River Junction, Vermont



Photo credit: Claire Telsa, Bristol, Vermont

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

- » Does the idea come from the community?
- » Who will be impacted and how?
- » Who have we not heard from?
- » Who are the trusted voices already working in partnership with different groups in the community?
- » How will the project welcome collaboration and provide a sense of shared ownership within the community?
- » How will the project reflect and build from local ideas, cultures, values, and experiences?
- » How can we sustain and support the project team from beginning to end?

### 8 80's Cities' Civic Engagement Rules:

- 1. Take it to the street**  
Meet people where they are
- 2. Be inclusive**  
Reach out to historically underrepresented groups
- 3. Play with purpose**  
Make engagement fun
- 4. Create buzz**  
Fun, bright physical, and virtual outreach
- 5. Value people's time**  
Reflect their ideas
- 6. Take action**  
Try it out!

Check out **8 80 Cities' Civic Engagement Tools** for more ideas.

## RESOURCES FOR INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT

**Equity Resources** | Vermont League of Cities and Towns

**Accessibility and Anti-Racism Resources** | Inclusive Arts Vermont

**Creative Placemaking for Welcoming Communities** | ArtPlace America

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility** | ArtsNow

**Equity Toolkit** | Sustainable CT

**Homelessness in parks: an inclusive practices guide** | 880 cities

**Placemakers Blog** | Patronicity



White River Junction, Vermont

# PLACE

## UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU HAVE AND TRY SOMETHING OUT

*"Many locals did not realize that the Black River was literally right there and were amazed to see this beautiful resource that goes right through their downtown corridor. There was genuine excitement about the park by concert-goers." Concerts at the Comtu project, Springfield, Vermont*

Three essential ingredients for pop-up places:



places to sit



things to see and do



things to eat and drink

See more from **AARP's PopUp Toolkit**

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

- » Where is it?
- » What is here?
- » How does this place connect to its surroundings?
- » What do we like best about this place?
- » What already happens here that could be expanded or improved?
- » What stories can we tell and share about this place?
- » How can we help people feel safe, comfortable and welcomed here?
- » What is the space like in different weather, times of day, and seasons?

## RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING GOOD PLACES

**Placemaking Toolkit** | Public Place Network

**Navigating Main Streets as Places** | Main Street America and PPS

**Vermont Design Toolkit for Villages and Downtowns** | DHCD

**Walk-Audit Worksheet** | 8 80 Cities

**What Makes a Successful Place** | Project for Public Places

**Making Temporary Events Accessible** | ADA National Network

**Winter Placemaking** | 8 80 Cities



# PROCESS

## BUILD AND LIFT EACH OTHER UP

*"We raised \$1,600 in two hours and those funds were focused for student art instruction. Businesses want to be involved and want to know that they are making a difference for their community." The Gathering Spot project, Ludlow, Vermont*



## QUESTIONS TO ASK

- » What are we trying to do?
- » What resources and capacity do we have?
- » What could we start doing now?
- » Who do we need permission from?
- » How can we build trust and create a culture of collaboration and mutual benefit between partners and local and/or state government?
- » How will we organize to keep the project moving from start to end?
- » What organizations and groups are doing similar work and could be partners in advancing the project forward?

### Potential Partners:

- Local library
- Art organizations
- Local artists and designers
- Municipality
- Community Center
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion teams
- Hospice
- Parks and Recreation Dept.
- Cycling club
- Local businesses
- Youth/teen group
- Local schools/preschools
- Downtown organization
- Place of worship
- Local farms/food organization
- Local land trust
- Lions Club
- Rotary Club
- Senior Center
- Master gardener club
- Master naturalist club
- Conservation committees
- Energy committees
- Climate-solutions groups

## RESOURCES FOR A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

**Creative Placemaking Toolkit** | How-to worksheets | LISC

**Community-Led Demonstration Project Policy + Guide** | City of Burlington

**DIY Community Cookbook** | AARP

**Locally-led Neighborhoods** | Co Design Studio

**The Place Game: How We Make the Community the Expert** | Project for Public Spaces

**Engaging with Local Electeds and Agencies** | David Brigdon | ioby



# 1. UNDERSTAND YOUR PROJECT

## WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO?

**Understanding the who, where, what, why, and when lays the foundation for your project.** These are determined in no specific order and are often revisited and adjusted throughout the life of a project.

### Project Success =

1. Understand It
2. Gather Resources
3. Plan It
4. Make it Happen
5. Learn and Share

Check out this inspiring video from the Vermont Arts Council on **Strengthening Vermont Communities with Public Art:**



### WHO

**Take time to build an inclusive team.** Your team needs to provide positive energy, time, a complimentary skill set, and should tap into different expertise, organizations, and life experiences from across the community. Determine community members who could provide a new perspective to the project and how best to reach them. Establish clear roles and responsibilities based on the interests and availability of each person. **See also Engagement Plan.**



### WHERE

**Visit your site.** Understand the physical and social character of your site. How is the site used and by whom? Understand how the site is connected to its surrounding and how people of different physical abilities get there? Who owns or manages the land and what permissions do you need?

continued ►

## RESOURCES TO GET STARTED

**Community-Led Placemaking Manual** | Co Design Studio

**Neighborhoods Made by Neighbors** | Co Design Studio

**Creative Placemaking Toolkit** | Local Initiatives Support Corporation

**Resource Hub** | ArtPlace America

**DIY Community Cookbook** | AARP and Community Workshop

**Placemakers Blog** | Patronicity

**Action Lab** | Strong Towns



# UNDERSTAND YOUR PROJECT

## WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO?

continued from page 14 ►



### WHAT

**Describe your project.** Be able to explain your project in one or two sentences in a way that others can understand and feel excited about it. Is everyone on the same page with what's envisioned for the project?



### WHY

**Determine the goals of your project.** Understand why your project matters to the people in your community. Make connections with community groups, programs, or projects already in existence. Build capacity and excitement together by reinforcing each other's goals and supporting one another.



### WHEN

**Coordinate with others.** Investigate what other events or construction activities are happening in your community and whether they are compatible. Reach out to neighboring businesses and community groups to understand how you could coordinate your projects to benefit each other. Think about how your project will adapt to the time of day, to the seasons, and weather.



Photo credit: Kerry O. Furlani, Poultney, Vermont

### Things to know about your Vermont town:

Does your town have a designated village, downtown, or neighborhood development area (NDA)? **Find out on Vermont's Planning Atlas**

Is your street controlled and maintained by the State or by the local town? **Find out on Vermont's State/Local Roads Directory**

Does your project require a permit from the Agency of Natural Resources? **Check the Permit Navigator**

## RESOURCES BY PROJECT TYPE

**Demonstration Projects in the Right of Way** | Vermont Agency of Transportation

**Art Installation in State Right of Ways** | Vermont Agency of Transportation

**Parklets** | City of Montpelier

**Pop-up Placemaking** | AARP

**Public Art and Placemaking Toolkit for Rural Communities** | JH Public Art

Resources for many other project types can be found on the **Better Places website**



Photo credit: Mad River Valley Planning District

## 2. GATHER RESOURCES

### WHAT DO WE NEED?

To respond to community interest and implement quicker, more affordable projects, **start with the energy, skills, and resources already in your community.**

#### Project Success =

1. Understand It
2. **Gather Resources**
3. Plan It
4. Make it Happen
5. Learn and Share

*“a [community] asset could be a street, a senior center, a school, a corner store, a long-time neighbor, an empty lot, a park, a playground, a church... you name it!”*

- ioby’s **Recipes for Change, Asset-Based Community Development**



#### SUPPORT

**Connect with key stakeholders.** Think about who needs to know about your project, including key partners, community members, and everyone who will benefit or be impacted. Think about neighbors, local businesses, local government/municipality, schools, clubs, and organizations.

Your outreach efforts and stakeholders should include organizations and people of different backgrounds, including race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and ability. **See also Engagement Plan.**



#### LAND AND SPACE

**Know your site.** How much space do you need? What utilities (electric, water, etc.) do you need? What permissions or permits do you need to use the site? Will it cost anything to use? Who will maintain or manage the site or event? Reach out to your town clerk, town manager, public works department or road commissioner, to gain more information about the site.

continued ►

## RESOURCES ON MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

**Burlington’s Quick Build Design + Material Standards** | City of Burlington, Vermont

**Tactical Urbanist’s Guide to Materials and Design** | The Street Plans Collaborative

**Better Block Manual** | The Better Block

**Recipe Library** | The Better Block

**Materials and Equipment Pricing** | District of Columbia Office of Planning



# GATHER RESOURCES

## WHAT DO WE NEED?

continued from page 16 ►

### ☐ FUNDING

**Ask for help.** Community projects are funded by people who are excited by your idea. This can include small contributions by individuals, giving from local businesses and banks, state or federal funding, and other grant providers. **Vermont's Better Places program** incorporates crowdfunding to raise local funds and build a sense of shared excitement and ownership of the project.

### ☐ SKILLS AND LABOR

**Make a skills wish-list** and determine who has these skills in your community. Do you need to hire project management help, an artist, or landscape designer? Will you need to train volunteers or hire contractors? Is there a partner organization or group that may have staff or volunteers who could assist with the project?

### ☐ MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

**Write a materials list.** Whether your project is temporary or more permanent, writing down your materials and equipment is a helpful way to think through your needs. Consider who in the community may be willing to donate materials or plants, loan tools, or volunteer time for construction or organizing events. Knowing these costs is essential to understanding your budget and expenses. Create a wish-list for donations and share widely.



### What is Crowdfunding?

Crowdfunding raises small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the internet for community projects or businesses.

All Better Places projects work closely with one of Patronicity's crowdfunding coaches to create and launch a crowdfunding campaign to raise excitement and local investment for local public places in Vermont.

See **Patronicity's Crowdfunding Strategy**

## RESOURCES TO UNDERSTAND CROWDFUNDING

**Placemakers Blog** | Patronicity

**Sustainable CT** | Connecticut's Community-Led Projects

**Creating Places** | Indiana's Place-based Crowdgranting Program

**Public Spaces, Community Places** | Michigan's Public Placemaking Initiative

**Spacehive** | UK-based Crowdfunding for Local Projects

For a comprehensive list of funding resources go to the **Better Places website**.



## Project Success =

1. Understand It
2. Gather Resources
3. Plan It
4. Make it Happen
5. Learn and Share



Photo credit: Dana Harris Brattleboro, Vermont

# 3. PLAN YOUR PROJECT

## HOW WILL WE DO THIS?

Once you have a good understanding of what you are trying to do and what you need, dive into the next layer of details to **understand tangible next steps**.



### TIMELINE

**Create a simple timeline.** Estimate how long, from start to finish, the project take, and what the key milestones are along the way. It is helpful to look at timelines of similar projects to get a sense of how long different phases of a project may take. Ask people who might know (the municipality, regional planning commission, or local organizations, etc.).



### BUDGET

**Estimate your budget.** Using a budget template, brainstorm resources and expertise needed with associated costs. Ask others for estimates (for materials, labor, consultation, equipment, art installation, community engagement, etc.) to get an accurate idea of project expenses.



### SITE ANALYSIS

**Evaluate your site.** Visit the site, take pictures, and measurements. Use an on line map or visit **Vermont's planning atlas** to understand what surrounds the site and connects to the site.

continued ►

## RESOURCES FOR ORGANIZING YOUR PROJECT

**Time Line Template**

**Budget Template**

**Action Plan Template**

See also **Resources To Get Started**

See also **Resources By Project Type**



# PLAN YOUR PROJECT

## HOW WILL WE DO THIS?

continued from page 18 ►

Observe who is using the site and how. What is working and how does the space make you feel? Is the site in sun or shade? Note how the seasons may impact the site. Consider how accessible the site is. Who or what could be impacted during the process of improving the site? **See also PLACE.**

### ☐ **ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

**Enable participation.** Brainstorm opportunities for community participation in all phases of your project. Opportunities should be easy for people to find, easy to understand, and provide different ways to participate. Take time to reach underrepresented community members by bringing on others to your team, such as a translator or trusted liaison. Go to where people are already gathering to share project information. **See also PEOPLE**

### ☐ **ACTION PLAN**

**Write it down and check it off.** List specific tasks that need doing, who will do them, how, and by when. Use your timeline to determine ideal timing of tasks. Include routine check-in times with your team and provide opportunities for engaging with your community throughout the life of the project. Build in time to celebrate accomplishments!



### **Reciprocate**

Offer something in exchange for people's time and attention to your project. What would be appreciated by community members?

- **Childcare**
- **Good food**
- **Community Services**
- **Prizes**
- **Compensation**
- **An honorarium**
- **Coupons**
- **Raffle tickets**
- **Entertainment**

Show thanks and appreciation for people's time and support.

## RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Community Engagement** | Local Initiatives Support Corporation

**Civic Engagement Tools** | 8 80's Cities

**Involving Your Neighbors and Local Stakeholders** | Siphne Sylve | ioby

**Community Leadership Guide** | Vermont Council on Rural Development

**Making Programs and Events Accessible** | Vermont Arts Council

**Making Temporary Events Accessible** | ADA National Network



Photo credit: Lee Krohn, Manchester, Vermont

## Project Success =

1. Understand It
2. Gather Resources
3. Plan It
4. **Make it Happen**
5. Learn and Share



Artist: Sarah Rutherford, Jeffersonville, Vermont

# 4. MAKE IT HAPPEN

## HOW WILL WE KEEP IT GOING?

Once you have dug into the planning phases of your project, you'll soon be engaging with the broader community, breaking ground, and launching your project. **Get the word out and keep the project in motion.**



### COMMUNICATIONS

**Use relevant channels.** A simple spreadsheet can help keep track of who you need to reach and the best way to do so. Speak with community leaders already in trusted relationships with harder to reach community members to understand the best ways to extend the invitation. Understand how to make the project relevant and accessible to different groups. Determine translation services and/or accessibility services needed.



### SITE PLAN

**Sketch your idea.** A bird's eye view of your site with a simple design concept is a helpful education and communication tool. Site plans highlight important features, gathering spaces, and how people will move through and use the site. Depending on the complexity of your project, a very simple digital map, drawings over a photo, or even a quick sketch by an artistic friend may suffice. More complex, permanent projects may require hiring a designer for this step.

continued ►

## RESOURCES TO KEEP IT MOVING

**Partnership Basics** | Local Initiatives Support Corporation

**Hiring Artists: RFPs, Calls for Entry** | Local Initiatives Support Corporation

**Donor spreadsheet** | Patronicity

See also **Resources for a Collaborative Process**



# MAKE IT HAPPEN

## HOW WILL WE KEEP IT GOING?

continued from page 20 ►

### □ TOWN AND PARTNER CHECK-INS

**Keep communicating.** Checking in regularly with project partners will ensure a smooth launch and allow time for adjustments to project scope, budget, and other unexpected occurrences along the way. Finding and scheduling a reoccurring time for partners to touch base keeps the project moving forward with less stress and surprises.

### □ INSURANCE AND PERMITS

**Lower risk.** Insurance and permit needs depend on the type of placemaking project you are doing and where it is located. If it's on public land in your town or village center, start with a conversation with your town clerk or town manager. Other permits and considerations will be needed if your project is in a state right-of-way (a street managed by the state), or impacts a place listed on Vermont's State or National Register of Historic Places.

### □ LAUNCH DATE

**Celebrate your project.** Get something fun on the community calendar to signal the start of the project. What local partners or events might you coordinate with to help each other build support? Once you decide on dates and time, share widely through various communication channels. Write a press release and promote widely!



Photo credit: Local Motion, Rutland, Vermont

### Find people where they already gather:

- youth sports fields
- schools
- library
- place of worship
- community center
- transfer station
- food shelf
- health clinic
- community events
- playgrounds

### Use multiple channels:

- local newspaper
- social media
- front porch forum
- print/posters
- in-person
- text/call service

## RESOURCES TO GET THE WORD OUT

**Engaging with Local Electeds and Agencies** | David Brigdon | ioby

**Accessible Marketing** | Inclusive Arts Vermont

**Press Release Template**

See also **Resources to Tell Your Story**

PROJECT SUCCESS  
MAKE IT HAPPEN



Photo credit: Kyle Nuse, Johnson Vermont

## 5. LEARN AND SHARE

### DID WE GET THERE?

Placemaking is a journey. It's experimental, demonstrative, hands-on, and happens incrementally over time. Build in ways to evaluate, **ask for community feedback, record results ('what we learned') and mentor each other**, to bring a depth of understanding and meaning to current and future initiatives.

#### Project Success =

1. Understand It
2. Gather Resources
3. Plan It
4. Make it Happen
5. Learn and Share

#### Questions to ask:

*Did we achieve our goals?*

*What worked well?*

*Where did we get stuck?*

*How could we make it easier?*

*Who didn't we reach?*

*Have we asked for and received input from others?*

*How could we scale up?*

#### ☐ TAKE NOTES

**Observe the process.** Take pictures and videos of your process. Capture before and after photos and videos. Try to capture photos of people in the process of enjoying the space or activity. What is working well? What is not working well? What are the barriers to improving the project?

#### ☐ ADAPT TO CHANGE

**Expect the unexpected.** Creating great public places takes time, hard work, and dedication. Record the changes your project had to adapt to and why it was important to do so. Be flexible, stay positive, and keep the project moving forward.

#### ☐ MEASURE IMPACT

**Collect data and stories.** Measurable data provides solid evidence of project successes and challenges and is helpful for future funding opportunities. Measuring impact includes quantitative information, such as:

continued ►

## RESOURCES FOR MEASURING PROGRESS

**Measuring and Evaluation Resources** | ArtPlace America

**Measuring What Matters: DIY Toolkit** | Reimagining the Civic Commons

**Evaluating and Measuring Impact** | Local Initiative Support Corporation

**Toolkit: How to Measure Progress** | Knight Foundation

**Case Study, Bethel Vermont** | DHCD

**Case Study, Animating Infrastructure** | DHCD



# LEARN AND SHARE

## DID WE GET THERE?

continued from page 22 ►

number of participants, where they are coming from and when, and qualitative data such as: understanding people's negative and positive experiences of a place and its activities.

### ☐ SHARE LEADERSHIP

**Build and lift others up.** How can your project and process inspire others to participate, and enable them to step into leadership roles now or for future efforts in your community? Extend leadership to those in the community who are historically marginalized and underrepresented.

### ☐ ASK FOR FEEDBACK

**Listen to others.** Make sure there is a way for those participating in your program or project site, to share their experience. This can be as simple as asking what they love about it and what they would change. A chalk board, QR code, or a phone number people can text or call, are on-the-spot ways to welcome input.

### ☐ TELL THE STORY

**Make it relatable and meaningful.** Stories of real people doing real things in their community inspires others to do the same. Include not only what you did but the 'how we did it, what we learned, and 'why it mattered'.



Greensboro, Vermont

### Create a Spark

*"The library continues to use the space for children's programs. Storytime, dragon egg hunt, and potato digs are just a few activities... efforts are now being made to expand this programming activity now that the project is completed."*

- Cindy Delano, Barton Community Giving Garden

Learn more from Vermont's **2020 Better Places Pilot Projects**

## RESOURCES FOR TELLING YOUR STORY

**Storytelling and Documentation** | Local Initiative Support Corporation

**Telling Your Story with Video** | Liz Morrison | ioby

**Vermont Folklife Center**

**Vermont Story Lab**

PROJECT SUCCESS  
LEARN AND SHARE

## AT-A-GLANCE: BETTER PLACES PREFLIGHT QUESTIONS

For those interested in the Better Places program, below are the questions found on the preflight form, the first step in the Better Places application process. This is **NOT** the preflight form itself. The **on-line form** provides drop-down menus and multiple-choice answers and can be found by clicking the icon at the bottom of this page.

**NOTE:** Project teams do not need to know all the answers to these questions in order to complete the preflight form. The preflight allows the project team and DHCD to understand project eligibility, readiness, and best next steps.

---

- Contact's name
- Organization name
- Email
- Phone number
- Project location
- Project idea
- Organization type (municipality, nonprofit, volunteer group with fiscal sponsor, other)
- Project address
- County
- Project duration
- Project team
- Budget estimate
- Owner and manager of the project site
- Will your project be in or directly serve **a state designated downtown, village center, new town center, or neighborhood development area?**
- Does your project intentionally engage and benefit populations historically marginalized and/or disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 (including but not limited to): People of Color, Indigenous Peoples, Refugees or New Americans, English Language Learners, LGBTQ+, People experiencing Homelessness, People who are justice involved, People living with disabilities, and/or People living in rural communities outside of Chittenden County?
- Is your team committed to working with the Better Places program to crowdfund 33% of project costs to qualify for the 2:1 Better Places matching grant?
- Is your project located within a historic district or listed in the National or State Register of Historic Places or a State highway right-of-way?
- Do you have the necessary local, state, or federal permits needed to implement the project?
- Can you implement the project within 12 months?



Click here to go  
to on-line  
preflight form.

# BUDGET WORKSHEET

This is an example of a budget template for a placemaking project. This can be printed and used as-is or click on the icon at the bottom of the page for an **editable excel file** of this worksheet.

**Project:**

**Date:**

**Town/City:**

PROJECT BUDGET WORKSHEET			
Use the 'insert or delete row' function if you wish to add/subtract project costs.			
Cost description (amend as needed)	Supplier (if known)	Hours (if known)	Cost
Technical design services or artist fees			
Programming and/or public space activations			
Community outreach and engagement			
Construction labor			
Construction materials			
Traffic management/control			
Marketing and communication			
Other materials			
<b>Total costs:</b>			
Available Resources – such as staff time and/or in-kind volunteer time from community groups etc.			
Resource	Position description	Project contribution	Estimated value
Staff time			
Equipment donation			
Other			
<b>Total estimated additional contributions:</b>			





# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

This is a simple action plan template to record project goals, community values informing the project, top priorities of the project, and tangible steps to take to make the project happen. Print this page and make copies for the project team or click the icon below to go to an **editable excel file** of this worksheet.

Project:

Date:

Town/City:

Project Goal:

Based on these community values:

Top three priorities:

TASK	DESCRIPTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	BY WHEN	NOTES



Click here to go to editable excel file.

# TIMELINE WORKSHEET

This is a simple timeline template to guide the timing of tasks and key events. Print this page and make copies for the project team or click the icon below to go to an **editable excel file** of this worksheet. Copies can be made for each calendar year that your project falls within.

Project:

Date:

Town/City:

TASKS Year:_____												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec



Click here to go to editable excel file.

## PRESS RELEASE EXAMPLE

Here is a sample press release for Better Places projects. Click on the link below for more **communications information** for Better Places projects, including an outline for creating a newsletter article, and the best way to highlight Better Places projects on social media platforms.

---

### For Immediate Release

[Enter Date]

### State Media Contacts

[Name Title Community/Organization, Email, Phone]

### Local Media Contacts

[Name Title Community/Organization, Email, Phone]

## Better Places Crowdfunding campaign launched for [Project Name]

**[\$ Dollar Amount] goal to receive a 2:1 matching grant through DHCD's Better Places program.**

CITY/TOWN – City/Town residents will soon be able to enjoy [project description] thanks to a recently launched crowdfunding campaign ([update link](#)). The campaign is sponsored by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development's Better Places program and offered through the crowdfunding platform developed by Patronicity. The campaign is led by the [Community/Organization]. "DHCD/ACCD quote" said Secretary Kurrle/Commissioner Hanford. "DHCD/ACCD quote" If the campaign reaches its [\$ dollar amount] goal by [deadline (month, day, year)] the ["Project Name"] will receive a matching grant of [\$ dollar amount] from DHCD's Better Places program.

[Click here \(update link\)](#) for project details and to donate. The funds raised will [describe the projects and elements]. "Insert quote from local project creator" [said name, title] "Insert quote."

Residents, businesses, and neighbors ready to support vibrant public places, community gathering areas, and local opportunities are encouraged to get involved and support these projects. Learn more and [\[donate here\]](#).

### About Better Places

Better Places is a community matching grant program empowering Vermonters to create inclusive and vibrant public places serving Vermont's designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers, or neighborhood development areas. The program is led by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development in partnership with the Vermont Department of Health, the Vermont Community Foundation, and Patronicity, our crowdfunding experts. The program supports community-led projects that create, revitalize, or activate community gathering areas that bring people together to build welcoming and thriving places across Vermont.

###





## Placemakers Highlighted in This Toolkit

(in order of appearance)

Downtown Brattleboro Alliance  
Bethel Revitalization Initiative  
Montpelier Alive  
Town of Fairlee  
Community Workshop  
Montpelier High School, led by student Xavier Pinnock-Olbino  
Town of Waterbury  
Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program  
Town of St. Albans  
Town of Braintree  
Brattleboro Farmers Market  
Town of Bradford  
Barton's Community Giving Garden and Ampitheater  
Rupert's Sheldon Store Cafe and Community Center  
Rutland Downtown Partnership  
The Knoll, Middlebury College Organic Farm  
Town of Bristol  
Zeno Mountain Farm  
First Friday Project, White River Junction  
Concerts at the Comtu, Springfield  
The Gathering Spot, Ludlow  
Town of Orwell  
Artist Jess Graham, Morrisville  
Sculptor, Kerry O. Furlani, Poultney Historical Society  
Mad River Valley Planning District  
Town and Youth, St. Albans  
Artist, Christine Chartrand and the Paleteers, Barre  
Strolling of the Heifers, Brattleboro  
Town of Manchester  
Artist, Sarah Rutherford, Cambridge Arts Council  
Local Motion  
Town of Johnson  
Town of Greensboro  
Town of Warren  
Anthill Collective, Old North End, Burlington  
Strafford Edible Pocket Park  
Better Middlebury Partnership



If we have mis-credited or misrepresented anyone in these recognitions, please reach out to our team and let us know. This list only skims the surface of the amazing placemaking efforts happening across Vermont. **We'd love to see pictures of your Vermont placemaking projects!** Feel free to send them along to **Richard Amore**, Better Places Program Manager.

## Better Places Toolkit Team

The Better Places Toolkit was created by the DHCD Better Places team: Claire Tebbs, Richard Amore, and Gary Holloway with vital support from Jenni Lavoie and Jackie Cassino. We are forever grateful to the time and expertise of the Better Places partners who reviewed and provided critical feedback on the toolkit, including Michele Bailey, Vermont Arts Council, Kelly Stoddard Poor, AARP-VT, Suzanne Kelley, Vermont Department of Health, Sarah Waring (formerly) and Kate McCarthy, Vermont Community Foundation, and Jonathan Berk, Ebrahim Varachia, and Camryn Greer, Patronicity. Toolkit illustrations are by Juhey Kim, DHCD Intern 2019-2020.

The Three Pillars of Placemaking concept is credited to **Co Design Studio**, offering research on best-practices in placemaking, free placemaking guides, and a placemaking dictionary.

**This is a living document and will grow alongside the Better Places Program and you, Vermont Placemakers across the state. Your feedback on this toolkit, and how it can be adapted to reflect your work and meet your needs is important to us. Connect with us anytime.**