



STOREFRONT TOOLKIT

Thank You

Thank you for your interest in creating a friendly front in your community; your passion to make your storefront, your neighborhood, and your community a more welcoming place.

We'd also like to thank everyone who participated in the creation of the Friendly Front Platform and to those who gave their time, energy, and funding to create this storefront version of the toolkit, the second of our Friendly Front initiative. Special thanks to Hennepin County, the City of Hopkins, and the Hopkins business and community partners who participated in the pilot program that inspired this storefront version of our toolkit.

We are truly grateful.

-The Musicant Group

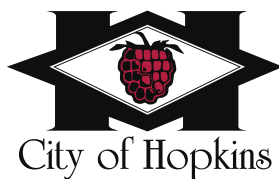


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Create Community & Drive Value

Places, like people, have personalities. They can be warm and inviting or they can be desolate and cold. Continuing this metaphor, if your business is a body, your storefront is its face. The storefront is the border that binds the public world of sidewalks and customers to the goods, services, employees, and owners within. Just as a human face communicates a dynamic array of information, reflecting our constantly changing feelings, so does a storefront reflect the values, personalities, and organizations within.

What does your storefront and the storefronts of your community communicate? Do they reflect a sense of invitation, respect, and joy? Or do the storefronts make one feel like a commodity, merely a “consumer”, someone to transact but not form a relationship with? Just as a smiling face invites conversation, does your storefront call potential customers to community and commerce within?

No matter where you or your community falls along this spectrum, this toolkit provides you—and entire retail districts—with an easy, fun, and effective path to create community and drive commercial activity, one Friendly Storefront at a time.



Guiding Principles

1. Place matters. Who we are as individuals, community members, and business owners is deeply affected by the places we inhabit. Physical places have the power to foster or inhibit our personal, civic, and commercial life. It is important, natural, and essential that we all create places that make people feel alive.

2. Everyone has the power to create great places. Everyone has the innate ability to shape spaces and places in their community to best meet their needs and desires. By working together, we can create places that respond to the local context, foster community, and boost business.

3. Feelings and questions serve as our guide. As human beings we inherently know what makes spaces and places feel good and beneficial to us (or those that do not). By asking the right questions and trusting our feelings, we can create places of value..

4. Think and act holistically. Human beings are multi-faceted creatures. We are physical beings with intellectual, emotional, relational, and spiritual aspects. Places too, are whole things, not collections of isolated pieces or siloes. When creating great places, it is important to consider all of these elements and how they relate to each other.

5. Process is more important than product. Each community and business is unique. The key to the process of placemaking is finding the right action for

each step and situation. There is not a one-size-fits-all solution, so we must wisely use the process to tailor actions we take to best serve the local context.

6. Great places benefit both community and commerce actors. The positive effects of placemaking extend beyond the people that inhabit these places. When and where there are people, commerce thrives too. Creating commercial and community value should never be mutually exclusive.

The Relationships Are Where the Value Is

Place of value, are such because of the relationships between elements, rather than the elements in of themselves. What this means, is that the location of any given thing—a chair, a window, an isle of merchandise, etc.—has more or less value due to its relationship to the things around it. In an extreme example, a piece of merchandise is more valuable on the shop floor than in the basement. This toolkit provides you with a process to get the relationship between elements just right.

How to Use the Toolkit



This toolkit, the second of our Friendly Front initiative, is designed to help you take action, to affect real change, to the benefit of your business and community.

Every user will have a different goal in approaching this toolkit, responding to your unique location, situation and goals. But the process to achieve those goals will be the same. That said, we suggest using this toolkit as:

- A way to bring more community and commercial vitality to your business and/or business district;
- A way to run an experiment that serves as a precedent for getting something big done within your business, commercial district, or community;
- A tool to mobilize stakeholders and resources;
- A framework to develop new programs and initiatives;
- A way to meet and bond with your neighbors.

And don't forget to have fun! If you—and everyone else—don't enjoy the process of creating places, your places probably won't feel very good either. So enjoy yourself!



If You Do Just One Thing

It all started in front of my apartment during the late Summer of 2013.

I had been living in my building in Minneapolis for a little over a year. I liked the area—the tree-lined streets, the shops and parks I could easily walk to, the friends and family who lived nearby. But something was missing. The apartment building had no space to sit and be outside, no porch or patio. So when the weather was nice I had to go to a café or a park to enjoy the outdoors; the 6-foot expanse of concrete and landscaping that was our front yard wasn't doing anybody much good.

One late Saturday afternoon the fire alarm went off. As the building's residents shuffled outside in their undershirts and sweats, I glanced around at my neighbors. I realized I didn't know any of them. In living there for more than a year I hadn't forged a single meaningful relationship, which made sense; we had no comfortable venue where we could come to know one another.

I wanted to do something about it.

The next weekend I went to my local hardware store and bought two canvas bucket chairs for \$20. When I got home I set the two chairs out in the small expanse of concrete walkway that was within our six foot buffer. With permanent marker I scrawled on the chairs: "Please sit here!"

That evening, I returned with a book and read in those chairs for an hour. The next afternoon I did the same thing with a newspaper, and then I decided to eat my dinner there as well. Over and over that first week I was simply present in those chairs in front of my building, on my block.

And I started meeting people. Over that week I got to know almost half of the residents in my building. Their names, where they worked, their personal interests and goals, what movies they liked, what movies they didn't. They sat down with me, we shared meals, drinks, books. The simple presence of two chairs, inscribed with an invitation to sit, had created a comfortable place to have meaningful interactions.

That experience led to the creation of the Friendly Front Yards toolkit in 2016—a process that we found to have led people to meet over five new neighbors on average!

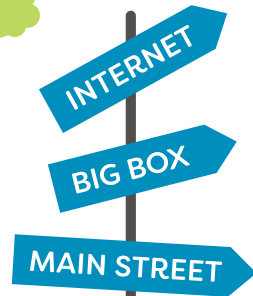
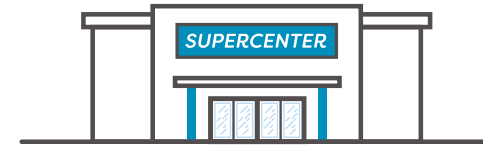
We believe that the lessons of front yards are easily translated from residential to commercial buildings. The idea that good things happen if you create a place with things for people to do and ways to stay comfortable holds for any type of place.

So, while there are lots of elaborate things you can do to improve your storefront, if you read no further and just do one thing, create a place to sit and something to do while there and just watch for what happens next!

Why Your Storefront Matters

From a business perspective, does the quality of your storefront really matter? The short answer is **Yes!**
If we think about the journey of potential customers to your storefront today...

- 1 Mobile technology allows people to do whatever they want, when they want and where they want.



- 3 People are choosing and seeking out *places* that make them feel good, that are inviting, that deliver a compelling experience, and that foster social connections.



- 2 Since people no longer HAVE to travel to shop, be entertained, get information and more, they end up only going to *places* where they WANT to go.

- 4 Your competitive advantage against big box and online retailers is to have your storefront (and the business within) be one of these places.

Why play the same game as online and big box retailers? Compete by maximizing your business' unique competitive advantages that they can't touch, starting with a Friendly Storefront!

Online Retailers and Big Box		Small-scale Bricks and Mortar Retailers
Assumes experience of shopping is horrible and should take as little time as possible	VS	Assumes experience of shopping should be enjoyable and the journey is part of the benefit
Extensive product information	VS	Touch, trial, sensory stimuli of actual product
Limitless selection and price comparisons	VS	Curation and in-person service
Speed (in purchasing)	VS	Speed (in obtaining the item)
Parking access	VS	Walking and biking access
Consistency: always the same	VS	Unique: customized with something new every time
In and out convenience	VS	Opportunities for social interaction and lingering
Forgettable	VS	Creation of memories and emotional attachment

6 Windows into a Friendly Storefront

As we mentioned in our Guiding Principles: relationships are where the value is. The 6 Windows into a Friendly Storefront provide us with a set of design relationships that you can apply in infinite number of ways to generate more commercial and community activity.

In order to create a Friendly Storefront:

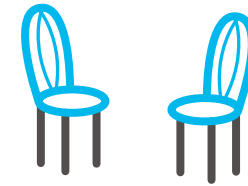
1 Follow the Desire Lines

How do people get to your store? What are the paths they take on foot and what are the paths they would like to take? Find and enhance the (often diagonal or curved) desire lines into your front door.



2 A Place to Sit

If people can't sit, rest, and wait comfortably in and near your store, then they won't stick around very long. Whether it's a yoga studio or a drug store, outdoor seating increases your customer's engagement by: 1.) providing those who accompany customers a place to comfortably wait (allowing the shopper more time and peace of mind) and 2.) communicating to the outside world that people patronize your store, creating a center of social life.



3 Surprise and Delight

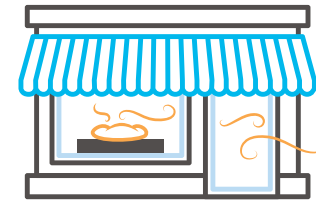
Get creative, get noticed and get people talking! Stand out on the street with fun and relevant street engagements; a skeleton mascot in front of a chiropractic business, a fanciful little letter drop for a toy store, or a dish with water for dog walkers. The possibilities are endless!



A storefront becomes a great one – like any place – because of how all the pieces relate to each other. These 6 Windows will help you create valuable bonds between you and your customers, your business and the street.

4 Engage the 5 Senses

Humans have 5 senses—appeal to them all! Have your storefront more than look good; have it sound, smell, feel and even taste good too. Tap into and create new positive associations with customers by creating multi-sensory storefront experiences.



5 Inviting Transitions

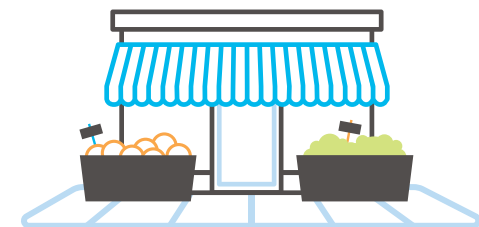
People need to slow down from the public life of the street in order to enter the more private life of your store. Create semi-enclosures, like the eddies along a stream, to pull people in. Outdoor merchandise, seating nooks, and slightly recessed doorways... the possibilities are endless!



6 Borders that Bind

Just as a beach binds the water to the land, a porch binds a house to the yard, how can your storefront create a meaningful bond with your community and customers? You can do so by celebrating and enhancing the places where two things meet: sidewalk to storefront, pathway to doorway, outside air to window, seating area and shopping aisle.

Each is a critical moment and place for your customer—celebrate and enhance them with color, decor, and sensory elements!



What a Friendly Storefront Looks (and Feels!) Like

So what does a Friendly Storefront look and feel like when the 6 Windows are in place? What can happen when a business introduces the Windows into their storefront?

The answer is...it depends! The 6 Windows, the Friendly Storefronts placemaking process, and this toolkit are the result of a six-month pilot program and partnership with the City of Hopkins (MN) its main street businesses and Hennepin County. Rather than just hope our ideas worked, we partnered with local businesses to test the process, implementation and efficacy of our methodology to create storefronts that surprise, delights, and foster valuable experiences. This toolkit distils those inspiring results.

LTD Brewing

Across town, LTD Brewing decided to enhance their storefront by simply helping people find it!

- 1 Follow the Desire Lines: Located just off mainstreet, the owners created a pathway from the main drag to their doorstep.
- 3 Surprise and Delight: A bikestand on the streetcorner provided a simple, flexible and unique way to stand out.



Good Vibes Yoga

Karen and Andy owned a yoga studio one block off Mainstreet in Hopkins, Minnesota. Since moving into the space they made many improvements to the space to make their studio as welcoming and inviting as possible to students and passersby.

Prior to starting their project, Karen and Andy had mostly thought about improving their studio room to create a more relaxing and welcoming environment, but had paid little attention to the storefront courtyard and the value it could bring to their business and community. They properly identified two of the major opportunities, or “windows” to enhance their storefront experience:

- 2 A Place to Sit
- 4 Engage the 5 Senses



By focusing on creating more comfortable edges to their storefront (by adding moveable seating) they were able to generate valuable engagement, turning customers into a community of advocates by simply creating a space for people to socialize, share class info and hear of new offerings.



“The day they went in, there wasn’t a class here,” Andy told a local reporter. **“We walked in and people were out there hanging out, chatting.”**

All Andy and Karen did was add three small tables, a few chairs and a string of patio lights to guide, welcome and attract students. Through the creation of a friendly front, they were able to engage with their customers like never before. They enjoyed getting to know new students and benefited from the facetime with customers.

KiddyWampus Toy Store



KiddyWampus toy store was looking for a way to take advantage of an empty storefront wall along a busy intersection, just across the street from a busy community arts center.

- 3 Surprise and Delight: They decided to create a fun experience on this empty exterior that mirrors the fun and that customers discover and enjoy inside the store.
- 6 Borders that Bind: By converting an empty wall of their building into a whimsical mail drop to engage kids (and their parents), they enjoyed more face-to-face time with regular customers and opportunities for deeper engagement through conversations about upcoming programming and events at the store.



Center for the Arts

The Center for the arts recognized that, while it has plenty of comfy seating inside the theater, there was nowhere to wait outside for a friend or discuss after the show.



- 2** A Place to Sit & **5** Inviting Transition: By adding some colorful seating and teaming up with the library around the corner, which lacked Main Street visibility) they created a win-win-win situation for their organization, customers and guests, transforming an empty patch of sidewalk into an outdoor “Info Café” that serves up donated books, programming updates, as well as conversations and programing recommendations amongst those using the space.

Clocktower Plaza

The Clock Tower Plaza is located in the center of downtown Hopkins, a natural gathering and resting place for Main Street shoppers and the downtown community. There was only one problem: there wasn't much for people to do once they go there.

- 2** A Place to Sit & **3** Surprise and Delight: But it was an easy fix with some colorful, movable seating to invite people into the space and a gamebox full of family fun. Now the surrounding businesses enjoy increased business from hungry hop scotch competitors.



HealthSource Chiropractic

HealthSource Chiropractic was looking for a way to engage and inform passersby of its busy Main Street storefront. They wanted to create an “ice breaker” with people who may not understand what chiropractic services are and who could benefit from them.

- 3** Surprise and Delight & **5** Inviting Transitions: After reviewing the 6 Windows they decided to leverage the recessed area of their doorway by adding a little surprise: Lux, a new skeleton Mascot welcoming clients and curious passersby alike—a creative solution that landed them headlines in regional daily newspaper, the Star Tribune!

Hopkins project adds novelty to Mainstreet storefronts

The city hopes 'Friendly Fronts' program proves popular with downtown pedestrians.

By Eric Roper Star Tribune | OCTOBER 13, 2017 — 11:53PM



ERIC ROPER • STAR TRIBUNE

Brenda Higgins, owner of HealthSource Chiropractic in Hopkins, poses with “Lux,” a skeleton aimed at attracting a little lighthearted attention to her business among everyday shoppers on Mainstreet.

Other Examples of Friendly Storefronts

Live Laugh Love • Edina, MN



Making the most of limited sidewalk space!

- 2 A Place to Sit: for two groups of people
- 4 Engaging the Senses: with color, touch and smell from the flowers
- 6 Borders that Bind: the benches, awning, and plants serve to bind the store to the sidewalk

Small Grocery Store • Brooklyn, NY

Convenience Store as a Community Hub

- 1 Follow the Desire Lines: picnic tables frame and support the customer's path
- 2 A Place to Sit: people outside communicate that something is worth buying inside
- 6 Borders that Bind: the energy within the store comes to life outside with a pop-up clothing sale and seating that allows customers to enjoy all that is sold within



Cooks of Crocus Hill • St. Paul, MN



Doing everything right!

- 2 A Place to Sit: especially important for a store selling a specialty product
- 3 Surprise and Delight: through window displays and the garden
- 4 Engaging the Senses: via the garden, colorful seating, displays, and signage
- 5 Inviting Transition: the pathway is celebrated via the awning
- 6 Borders that Bind: despite the distance, the store absolutely feels like it extends 20 feet from the door onto the sidewalk itself

Gigi's Parking Day 2015 • Minneapolis, MN

Putting the "park" back into parking

- 1 Follow the Desire Lines: the parklet lines the walking path, pulling people off to explore
- 2 A Place to Sit: with a variety of places to sit, people linger
- 5 Inviting Transitions: the café provides a welcoming transition via the patio seating and awnings
- 6 Borders that Bind: the parklet creates a border to protect visitors from traffic and it in of itself provides a welcoming—but porous—border between café patrons the busy street



Engine Repair Shop • Shakopee, MN



You don't have to be fancy to have a Friendly Storefront

- 1 Follow the Desire Lines: the row of lawn mowers seems to just funnel passersby into the garage to inquire
- 3 Surprise and Delight: the garage is brimming with life! The arrangement of the tools and engines captivates those who walk by
- 6 Borders that Bind: the lawn mowers displayed in the parking space and the open garage door create a think border from the back wall of the store to the middle the street!

Vacant Storefront Installations Platteville, WI

Vacancy doesn't have to mean a storefront lacks energy

- 3 Surprise and Delight and
- 4 Engaging the Senses: window decoration and "Snap, Crackle, and Pop-scotch" using packing bubbles on the sidewalk



How to Create Your Own Friendly Storefront

Now the fun part! The questions below will get you into the mind of your customers; to help you envision the user experience you want to foster for them. From there you'll be guided into how to create those experiences by applying the 6 Windows.

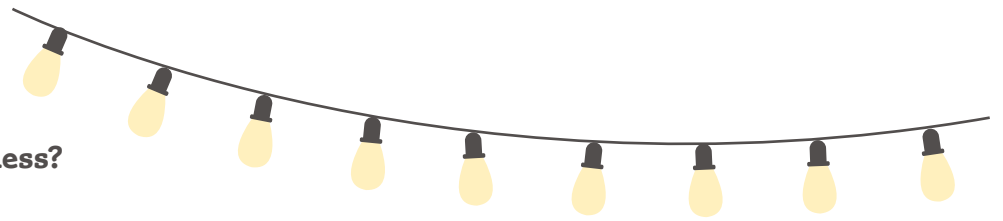
Who are your customers? List a few characteristics of a “typical” customer:

**Where is your storefront? Where does your engagement with your customers start, where could it start?
How do people arrive? Describe their journey during the 50 yards before they reach your storefront.
Go out and actually walk the journey yourself!**

How do people hear about your business? Why do they come in?



**Do you have seating for people to wait, talk and connect?
Is it comfortable? Is it in a location that supports your business?**



**What is your lighting like? Does it focus attention on the things you want people to see?
Does it celebrate borders and transition zones?**

**How many things can visitors do outside your storefront? How many are related directly to your business?
What other activities could be added to provide additional reasons to visit and linger?**

How are the 5 Senses being engaged?

Sight

Smell

Touch

Taste

Hearing

Now that you're warmed up, let's get creative and translate your assessment into ideas for action and reality! Answer the following questions below with words, drawings, or photographs to develop your Friendly Storefront Activation Plan.

1. Recalling the journey that your customers take to your storefront and the experience they have when they arrive, what are the best locations to enhance? Consider: pathways, sight-lines, adjacent and nearby uses, and "empty" spaces.

2. Once the best locations for enhancement have been identified, how can you use one or more of the "6 Windows" to activate these within your storefront area in order to get customers to better

KNOW
the business

ENGAGE
and patronize the business

STAY
longer at the business

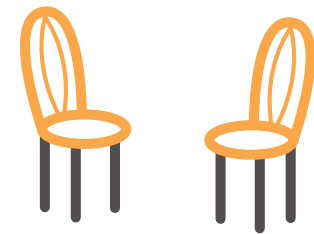
Here is a hint: if you can't remember all of them: Follow the Desire Lines, A Place to Sit, Surprise and Delight, Engage the 5 Senses, Inviting Transitions, Borders that Bind (pp. 8-9).

3. What items do you need to make this improvement/experience available? What do you already own that could be easily deployed? Do you at least have enough to run a little experiment? There's no substitute for action, taking the first step (no matter how small!), and trying something out.

Project Plan Sketch

Write, draw, or use photos to create a plan of your new friendly storefront below. Then gather the needed items to execute your plan. Place them, test out how it works and feels, and if your plan seems off, experiment by placing items in different areas until it is just right. Lastly, make sure to **ENJOY!**

Stuck? Start by focusing on the edges of things: doorways, pathways, windows, etc. and items that feel the most important. When in doubt, add some seating.



Why This Works

This toolkit is distillation of what we at The Musicant Group have learned through executing over 50 space-activation projects over the last half decade—from large office building atriums to vacant lots, small town main streets, to suburban strip malls, from block parties to bus stops. Along the way we’ve been insatiably curious about how to create places that people want to be, learning from what worked as much (if not more!) from what didn’t.

The frameworks, questions, and processes on the preceding pages are the same that we use for clients big and small. We believe that in order to live in a world where every space is a great place, where our physical environments and the people in them are truly alive, everyone needs to participate in the practice of place-making. And because of that, we care deeply about sharing what we have learned with the world at large.

The Strategy of Place

So why are places that people want to be valuable? It may sound like a silly or rhetorical question, but if we think seriously about the answer, we can unlock key insights into why creating a Friendly Storefront is such a valuable exercise.

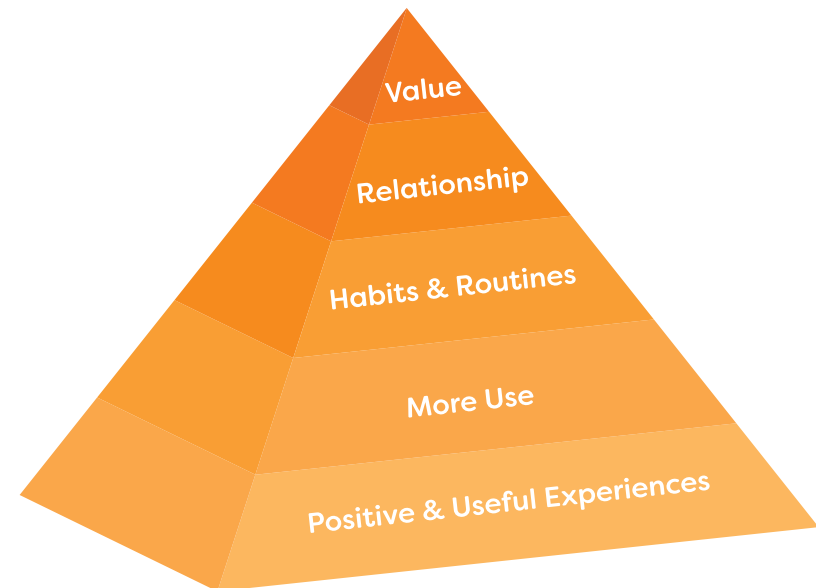
If people have **positive and useful experiences** in a place, then they will;

use it more frequently. By frequently using the space they establish;

habits and routines. These habits are the foundation that support enterprise and;

relationships, between people and the space itself. These relationships are non-portable and create;

value. A place where people want to be is the essence of real estate’s “location, location, location” value proposition.



When one recalls the real estate adage: Location, location, location—what that really means is that there is a space that people visit so frequently and have such positive and useful experiences there that it is worth intensifying those uses through the creation/expansion of more space via a building. *Through placemaking we can create social and economic value.*

The Relationships of Place

Now that we know why a place is valuable, the question remains on how one creates those positive and useful experiences.

The practice of placemaking is a

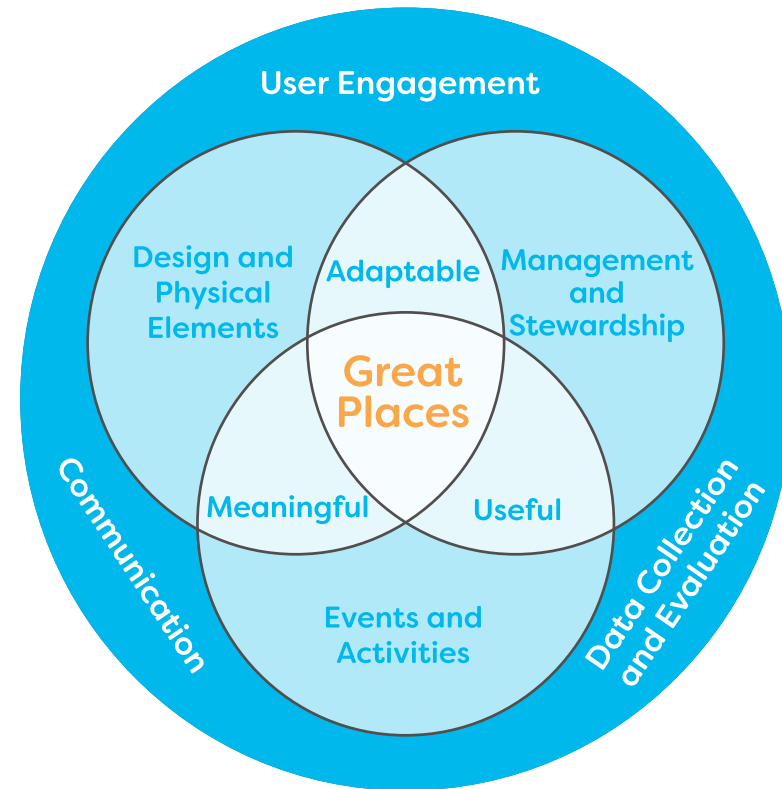
- **Holistic**
- **Iterative**
- **Process**
- That focuses on the **relationships** between things, rather than the things themselves
- And follows **feelings** to make design decisions

Holistic

A great place is so because of how everything comes together: the physical environment, how that environment is cared for, and then what activities, uses, and experiences are fostered within that environment. In creating places, we have to think about all three.

Iterative

Great places are created over time, not all at once. Each



improvement responds to what is already there and happening. There is a constant cycle of user engagement, data analysis, and communication to discern what design, management, and activities should be changed, enhanced, or removed.

Process

Placemaking is a process, more than a product - meaning it doesn't just copy the end-result of what worked somewhere else. The process itself (and the common questions it asks) accommodates an infinite variety of

circumstances, fostering unique solutions particular to the needs and desires of the specific users, stakeholders, and locations.

Relationships

This process focuses on the relationships between things, rather than getting too hung up on things themselves. Going back to our first example of the two chairs, the location of those—their relationship to the building, the sidewalk, the walkway, the residents—is what made them so valuable. The chairs themselves were “cheap”, but their impact was huge. Now having beautiful, well-made things are important, but it’s the relationship between each thing that makes each thing more or less valuable. The 6 Windows are a framework to get these relationships right.

Feelings

It may sound silly in this day in age, but our feelings are our best guide to creating a great place and storefront. People do things, go places, and buy stuff because it feels good. We choose and arrange furniture in our own houses based on “feel”. The very same thing holds for spaces outside our private realms. By becoming more conscious about how spaces make us feel, we can start to see (and feel!) what changes would make any space more functional, beautiful, social, and even commercially successful.

Go forth!

Now you have all that you need to start making your storefront, your business, your street, your home—and your whole community—a great place that comes alive! There’s no substitute for action, so go forth and enjoy the journey and all that comes from it!

For Further Reading

These books have had an outsized impact on our work at The Musicant Group and the creation of this toolkit. Each author stands apart in large part because their ideas, theories and recommendations are based on their years of real-world practice, rather than vice versa. Each book is not only informative, but also fun to read—the mark of a great tome!

Placemaking and the Built Environment

A Pattern Language - (Christopher Alexander, et al., Oxford, 1977)

If you get one book on this list, this should be it. *A Pattern Language* lays out a new way of looking at and shaping our world; a path that allows all people to create physical places that foster community and commerce. It is both an assessment of and a manual to positively shape our world.

Timeless Way of Building - (Christopher Alexander, et al., Oxford, 1979)

The precursor to *A Pattern Language*, *Timeless Way of Building* provides a compelling critique of how the process used to shape our built environment has gone wildly off-track and how we can get back to a timeless approach.

How Buildings Learn - (Stewart Brand, Penguin, 1994)

This book examines how buildings can get better with time...or not. Brand proposes that buildings adapt best when they are constantly refined and reshaped by their occupants, and that designers need to think more about the human experience of their buildings.

The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces - (William H. Whyte, Project for Public Spaces, 2001)

The book that sparked the placemaking movement in America. Through careful observation of actual spaces, Whyte develops practical and easy to implement strategies on how to create life in small urban spaces.

Urban Planning and Economic Development

Strongtowns.org

Practical and thought provoking content and discussion about the financial and design systems that underlie our communities. One begins to see that the way we have been doing things for the last 50 years may not be working (and probably never did!). There is a treasure trove of data, analysis, and tools to help practitioners engage with stakeholders of all kinds.

Retailing

Why We Buy, the Science of Shopping - (Paco Underhill, Simon & Schuster, 2008)

A disciple of William H. Whyte, Underhill went on to apply placemaking to the retail and shopping environment. This classic book lays out compelling theories and practical steps to enhance the shopping experience—and sales!—for individual businesses and districts as a whole.

The Great Good Place - (Ray Oldenburg, Marlowe & Company, 1999)

The Great Good Place argues that “third places”—where people can gather, put aside the concerns of work and home, and hang out simply for the pleasures of good company and lively conversation—are the heart of a community’s social vitality and the grassroots of democracy.

Business and Strategy

Antifragile - (Nassim Taleb, Random House, 2014)

Just as human bones get stronger when subjected to stress and tension, many things in life benefit from stress, disorder, volatility, and turmoil. What Taleb has identified and calls “antifragile” is that category of things that not only gain from chaos but need it in order to survive and flourish. The book provides a new way of looking at the world and how to take measured risks that lead to long-term positive change.

Community: The Structure of Belonging - (Peter Block, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008) An insightful guide on how to structure conversations, meetings, and gatherings in order for groups of people to overcome problems and create a future that is better than where we are today.

The Lean Start Up - (Eric Reis, Crown Business, 2011)

A step-by-step guide to creating new programs, organizations, and businesses in an environment with limited resources and extreme uncertainty. While it is geared towards technology start up companies, the approach applies to any new endeavor within an organization or community.

For more info, please visit
www.friendlyfronts.com