

# 2020 INSIGHT



Artwork by Rick Pinchera





# **THE POWER OF CONNECTION, AUTHENTICITY, AND BEAUTY**

by Christina Lanzl

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**Design professionals**—from architects to planners, landscape architects to arts and culture makers—continuously feel the pulse of the communities we work in. As practitioners and theorists, we produce research, findings, and workable models. Here’s a current compendium of Top 10 placemaking concerns.

## FEELING THE PULSE OF THE COMMUNITIES WE WORK IN IS ESSENTIAL.

### 01

#### Awareness

Climate change, shrinking resources, global warfare, world migration, threatened species, and persistent hazardous chemicals contamination—how can placemaking help us think holistically, consider the interrelatedness of all things large and small, and grow a conscience that leads to responsible action?

### 02

#### The great connector

Placemaking has the power to connect people to one another and to *place* through social interaction and multidisciplinary contributions. Its values and practice can help establish cross-cultural connections that offer a seat at the table for everyone.

### 03

#### Aesthetics

The creative potential of transformative placemaking projects and the psychological effects of our built environment on the individual and society have been acknowledged. Experiencing beauty helps us thrive. The care we take in shaping our personal spaces can extend to sidewalks and beyond so that we embrace all public places as our commonly shared living rooms.

### 04

#### Equity

As a driver of economic development, placemaking can mean new opportunities, particularly for communities suffering from past disinvestments. How can we ensure dignity and respect for people and places while weighing long-term benefits and sustainable solutions?

### 05

#### Authenticity

Conceptually, placemaking benignly embraces what already exists and enhances sense of place through aesthetics, storytelling, and usability. A goal should be to empower local residents to achieve and maintain these common principles.

### 06

#### Storytelling

In telling the story of a place, care must be taken: Whose story is being told, and how? Inclusivity must be paired with a careful consideration of intent to avoid excessive memorialization of individuals, no matter how great their contributions.

### 07

#### Placekeeping

Places that are already popular tend to attract the attention of new initiatives and market forces. What are the limits to growth? A high concentration of features should not necessarily increase the cost of real estate.

### 08

#### Creative problem solving

Whether labeled under tactical, radical, guerrilla urbanism, maker movement, or pop-up culture, successful projects and models have emerged worldwide in both urban and rural communities, particularly where resources are limited. Placemaking should help stimulate the idea that small is beautiful and promote adaptive reuse.

### 09

#### Critical thinking

A vital tool for the creative transformation of place, critical thinking can help us grapple with the exploding cost of real estate and housing, the disconnect between urban and rural, and the inequities of a free market economy.

### 10

#### Education

Placemaking’s biggest threat is ignorance in all its forms. How can placemakers improve equitable access to successful public places and the quality of education?