# Placemaking: A Guide to Creating Thriving Community Spaces

Stratford Town Trust is committed to supporting vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive community spaces. This guide outlines key principles and practical steps for placemaking, ensuring that spaces serve the needs and aspirations of local people. Our approach is collaborative, participatory, and impact driven.

# Step 1: Understanding Placemaking

What is Placemaking?  
Placemaking is a community-led approach to shaping public spaces that foster well-being, connection, and local identity. It goes beyond infrastructure, considering how spaces are used, experienced, and sustained.

## Why it Matters:

* Strengthens social connections and community pride.
* Enhances accessibility and inclusivity.
* Encourages economic vitality and environmental sustainability.
* Creates safer, more engaging spaces for all.

# Step 2: Engaging the Community

Start with People:  
The most successful placemaking initiatives are shaped by those who use the space. Engage local residents, businesses, and community organisations from the outset.

## Ways to Engage:

* Public meetings and drop-in sessions.
* Online surveys and interactive mapping tools.
* Creative workshops and co-design events.
* Pop-up activities to test ideas in real-time.

## What to Explore:

* How do people currently use the space?
* What would they like to see improved?
* What cultural, social, or environmental aspects should be considered?

# Step 3: Developing a Vision

Core Principles:  
A great place is **welcoming, active, accessible, and sustainable.** Consider:

* **Inclusivity:** Does the space serve diverse community needs?
* **Identity:** Does it reflect local heritage and culture?
* **Functionality:** Is it safe, practical, and adaptable?
* **Sustainability:** How will it support environmental goals?

Co-Creating a Vision Statement:  
Summarise community aspirations into a clear, compelling vision to guide development and decision-making.

# Step 4: Design and Implementation

Test and Adapt:  
Before committing to large-scale changes, experiment with:

* Temporary installations (e.g., seating, murals, planters).
* Pop-up events to assess engagement.
* Tactical urbanism (low-cost, short-term interventions to improve public spaces).

## Long-Term Considerations:

* **Funding and partnerships:** Identify grants, sponsorships, and local investment opportunities.
* **Maintenance and stewardship:** Who will care for the space long-term?
* **Measuring impact:** Establish ways to track usage, satisfaction, and broader social benefits.

# Step 5: Sustaining the Space

Building a Lasting Impact:  
A thriving community space needs ongoing engagement and adaptability. Encourage local ownership by:

* Creating volunteer opportunities for upkeep and programming.
* Hosting regular community events and activities.
* Gathering feedback for continuous improvements.

Final Thought:  
Placemaking is not a one-off project but a continuous process of creating and sustaining places that people love. By listening to the community, experimenting with ideas, and fostering long-term stewardship, we can ensure that public spaces remain vibrant and meaningful for generations to come.

For more information or to discuss your placemaking ideas, contact Stratford Town Trust. Let's shape our shared spaces together!