

Did You Know?

Your favorite place(s) are not there by accident. In most cases, years of planning went into placing that ice cream parlor next door to your favorite coffee shop that is only two minutes from your child's elementary school. Make no mistakes, most "successful" places are planned opposed to a serendipitous happenstance. In this issue, we will explore what makes some places attractive, others repulsive and techniques to create good places and prevent failed ones.

As in previous issues of our newsletter, we will highlight the top elements that contribute to, positively and negatively, making urban spaces desirable "places". This issue will focus on "**Place-Making**" as its' topic.

Place-making, summarily, is the idea of creating places within cities, regions and other areas. These places range from: Business Improvement Districts (BID's) to Entertainment Districts, Amusement Parks to Wildlife Conservancies to entire cities. Whatever the area is or how it is defined, it is an area that has a common theme and attracts patrons to the area for that exclusive purpose. To begin, let us look at the five most common elements that contribute to place-making.

Five Common Elements That Contribute To Successful Place—Making

- 1) **Location** - Without reducing the conversation to real estate jargon, "passive location" is not the best method for "creating" places. What do we mean? In terms of real estate investment, location is the best method for selection of a particular investment venture. A property for investment seeks a location that is desired, will sustain its' value over time and has an early foreseeable return on the investment costs incurred. This is not true when thinking in terms of "Place-making". Consider one of the most obvious attractions that is prime real estate now, but violates every rule of the "location" theory; Las Vegas.

Las Vegas is located in a desert. For all practical purposes, it is one of the most difficult desired "locations" to reach. It is remote, isolated and barren. By all accounts, very few, given the description of Las Vegas, without explaining the spectacular elements of the city from a location perspective, would choose to visit this location. Place-making and place-makers view the idea of Las Vegas as the foundation for success. "Location", from an urban planning perspective, is only a parameter to define the project at a later time. In this regard, all locations are potentially attractive when a plan to attract is created.

- 2) **Population** - The Population, when dealing with place-making, does not necessarily deal with a population that currently exists in the area. When planning a "place", the focus is most often on the desired population and not the existing population. However, in some cases, the desired

population is the existing population. There are many considerations to understanding the desired population; income, education and age are amongst the most considered elements. For each of these variables, careful consideration must be given to each; as well as consideration as to how they will all co-exist with each other.

- 3) **Access: *The Friction-Experience Ratio*** - This area deals directly with what is involved in accessing your “Place” or how much does the patron of your place have to endure prior to their experience. Again, in the Las Vegas scenario, there exist a considerable amount of friction for most people to experience Las Vegas. For most patrons, a long ride is the least of the friction involved in accessing Las Vegas, but for patrons, the friction is well worth the trade in experience(s) attained by the trip. Conversely, this same location would not be desired if the primary attraction was a cinema complex alone. The ratio between the friction of access and the experience attained must weigh heavily in favor of the experience; the more friction is involved.
- 4) **Product(s) Offered** - Similar to the Friction-Experience Ratio, the product offered must clearly surpass the friction incurred to attain it by the population desired. For example, your favorite restaurant might attract you to patronize it once a week. But place that same restaurant in a place that required two modes of travel; say car then ferry whereas it only required one vehicle trip before. The frequency of that trip would be reduced to a bi-weekly venture. Now, assume the same experience required an additional train ride. This trip may become a monthly endeavor or you may begin to look for a different restaurant altogether. But say the same friction existed, but substitute the restaurant with football tickets to your favorite college or professional team. The product offered dictates the amount of friction a consumer/population is willing to accept in return for the experiences attained by the “Place”.
- 5) **Replication of Experience(s)** - In sequence with the aforementioned elements, the replication of the experience is necessary to make a “Place” successful. What does this mean? Extensive marketing and a brilliant promotion campaign can attract a population to a venue or place “Once”. After the initial patronage of the “Place”, an assessment will be performed by every individual that visited. The final, individual, evaluations will determine the overall success or failures of the “Place”. Too many bad experiences will develop a reputation of not being a desired place to frequent. More favorable reviews will create a desirable “place” to be. The more patrons that have a positive experience, considering all of the above elements (1-4), the more likely it is that a desired “Place” will be created.

Five Methods To Achieving Successful “Places”

- 1) **Understand Your Location and the Vision Therein** - As stated in the previous section “Location”, the success of a location is largely dependent on the vision established by you as a leader/decision-maker. Oftentimes, areas tend to want to replicate the success of other areas by “template planning”. By thinking the utilization of a template plan will be successful in any area, many leaders make egregious errors in their decision-making. What works in Manhattan will not necessarily work in Phoenix. Understanding your area and “ALL” of the impacting and attributing factors of a given location within your area will assist in the determination of what type of “Place” you can and should create. To better understand these elements, decision-makers would be wise in consulting specialist to help frame the vision for their location(s); as well as a detailed plan of implementation.
- 2) **Understand the Desired Population and How to Attract Them** – This element is vital to the success of any plan to develop a “Place”. It is also highly controversial and can become a socio-political catastrophe if not done correctly. In efforts to plan for the future, current elements are often neglected. In terms of developing “Places”, the understanding or misunderstanding of the population element can be the difference between success and failure. In regards to developing attractive “Places”, many area decision-makers fail to understand the population question(s) presented to them. By not understanding this area, many are accused of re-visiting racially motivated urban renewal and gentrification patterns of the past. Our suggestion in this area is to “always” consult competent professionals to assist in understanding populations.
- 3) **Understand the Urban Design/Physical Layout of Your Area** - Prior to any attempts to develop an attractive “Place”, decision-makers should understand the physical landscape of the areas in which they are held responsible. By doing this, the parameters in which to create are established and the “Place(s)” will be better accessed by potential patrons. Upon completion of a comprehensive layout map highlighting the strengths and limitations of your areas, decision-makers can then begin to develop ideas for creating “Places”.
- 4) **Define Your Product and Market Accordingly** - By knowing your product and the population that utilizes it, decision-makers can better market the product to attract the patrons/population desired. Entertainment Districts, as an example, are most effective when the population seeking the types of entertainment offered are familiar with the product(s) offered therein. When this is known, consistency and credibility is established; thus leading to repetition in users of the products. To fully understand this requires an expert blend of talents that understand



product development, from the perspective of urban development and marketing. Without this consultation, many projects remain in the idea phase or fail as a result of missing too many essential elements needed to guide the project towards success.

- 5) **Replicate the Experience** - To Fully Understand How to Replicate Positive Experiences is a matter of understanding how to increase the soft-skill capacities of the service providers. For all that physical planning and development can bring into fruition, it cannot account for the human element when developing successful places. In short, the people delivering the services of the products at or within the “Places” developed can positively dazzle or devastate the entire project. To replicate experiences requires an understanding of human interaction and an ability to develop core values and procedures in which all service providers can be trained. Without this final element, none of the above elements will ever reach the levels of repetition needed to create a successful place.

These are summaries of the thoughts and ideas of Central Place Planning Professionals, LLC regarding the Place-Making. For specific Urban Planning and implementation strategies, please contact our office at (866) 546-2722. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

TOLL FREE (866) 546-2722

Info@CP3Plan.com

FAX (866) 370-0466