



## Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of December 9, 2021

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** November 25, 2021  
**From:** Karen Hoese, Director, Sustainable Planning & Community Development  
**Subject:** Placemaking Toolkit

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### RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the Placemaking Toolkit, 2021.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to bring forward a proposed Placemaking Toolkit for Council's consideration. Placemaking broadly refers to a collaborative process by which the community helps shape and program the public realm to infuse meaning, identity and shared value. Victoria has a history of successful community-led placemaking. The Placemaking Toolkit celebrates and builds on this success with design strategies and tools, and a clear application and grant funding process that links to and expands on existing City placemaking programs. In this way, the Toolkit is intended to both simplify and inspire implementation of even more creative placemaking throughout the city.

The city's public spaces have been continually shaped through grass roots community projects through many existing programs that allow for community-led actions. The *My Great Neighbourhood Grant Program* is one of the City's key mechanisms for creating small scale, community-led placemaking projects. These include street murals, street plazas, park enhancements, school projects and a myriad of other interventions that add to the unique character and identity of Victoria neighbourhoods.

The Placemaking Toolkit includes strategies and guidance for placemaking projects of different scales and includes a Kit-of-Parts catalogue with City-selected and pre-approved choices for placemaking elements and materials. The Toolkit was created through a collaborative process involving the public, key stakeholders and staff across City departments. It will be a new resource that will help anyone interested in placemaking find, understand and apply for the existing City programs supporting creative placemaking across the city.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to bring forward a proposed Placemaking Toolkit for Council's consideration.

## BACKGROUND

The creation of a Placemaking Toolkit is a 2020 Action in the City's Strategic Plan.

Placemaking broadly refers to a collaborative process by which the community helps shape and program the public realm to infuse meaning, identity and shared value. An explicit goal of this action is *“to support citizens and businesses to take action to create public play spaces, parklets, and gathering places within neighbourhoods”*. The Placemaking Toolkit builds on the *My Great Neighbourhood Grant Program* and provides information, strategies and guidance to encourage more community-led placemaking. Please see Attachment A – Placemaking Toolkit, 2021.

The Placemaking Toolkit was created through a collaborative process that involved engagement with the public and key stakeholder groups. Several workshops were held to build awareness and support citizens in implementing placemaking in Victoria, including during the Village and Corridor planning process, and an online survey was used to receive feedback. The Toolkit was also informed by staff across City departments. Please see Attachment B – Engagement Summary.

## ISSUES & ANALYSIS

### 1. The Placemaking Toolkit

The Toolkit is an umbrella document for placemaking initiatives in Victoria supporting temporary, easy to implement and collaborative design interventions that provide more spaces to gather, meet and play.

The Toolkit provides:

- **Education:** It introduces and explains the concept of community-led placemaking through definitions and examples. Throughout the document, there are number of links to external resources provided to expand the basics covered in this document.
- **Information:** It links to existing City programs and provides a step-by-step process from ideas generation through to design, funding and implementation.
- **Guidance:** It provides simple, one-page explanations, definitions and design strategies to help guide the design process and expediate applications.
- **Inspiration:** It contains examples of a range of different types of successful placemaking projects in Victoria.
- **Equity:** Equity involves fair and just considerations for access, opportunity and participation of equity seeking groups in placemaking projects and strives for equitable outcomes and benefits for everyone.
- **A Catalog of Elements:** It provides a set of 'off-the-shelf' furnishings, patterns, materials and other placemaking elements including links to suppliers and rough cost estimates to support easier implementation.
- **Usability:** It uses plain language and clear graphics to make the Toolkit easy to use and implement.

- **Accessibility:** It ensures placemaking projects minimize barriers and maximize accessibility in built environment and participation strategies and approaches.

The document includes a clear set of guidelines focusing on physical design elements and strategies to make them successful. The Toolkit also lays out a process for working with other community members to identify, design and implement a range of different types of placemaking projects.

This is the first version of the Placemaking Toolkit. This resource is intended to be a 'living document' that will be updated with new resources, visuals, and materials as needed, based on ongoing evaluation and opportunities for improvement.

## 2. Strategies and Guidance

The Placemaking Toolkit is focused on community-led projects that can be implemented fast and with less effort through existing grant programs. The Strategies and Guidance section explains how time, effort, complexity and cost affect the scale of placemaking. The Toolkit divides these into three options:

- A. **“Small is Simple”:** These types of placemaking projects are focused on those of a small scale that range in cost up to \$10,000. This can be achieved through a single grant application as the *My Great Neighbourhood Grant Program* provides funding up to \$5,000 based on matching funds. Examples here include little libraries, boulevard gardening, seating, small lighting projects, street murals, etc.
- B. **“In the Middle”:** These types of placemaking projects require more time, resources and funding to be implemented. They are still community-led projects that could be implemented through the *My Great Neighbourhood Grant Program*, but they may need additional support.

Another major difference is the locations that fall under this category. In addition to sidewalks and boulevards, they tend to occur in existing city plazas, corner bump outs, wider sidewalks and larger green spaces. They also can occur in streets but in very prescribed ways. Medium scale costs range from \$10,000 to \$30,000 and typically require more than one grant application for funding.

- C. **“Large is Complex”:** These types of placemaking projects are complex, like public parklets and street plazas, and require budgets of \$30,000 or more of combined in-kind and cash contributions. These initiatives typically require more substantial time and investment to plan, engage, develop, deliver and evaluate. Because these treatments are beyond the scale of a typical *My Great Neighbourhood Grant Program* submission, they are defined in the Toolkit as a placemaking initiative that would be led by the City. Resources for such projects would be presented for consideration in the annual financial planning process in a context of other City initiatives.

## 3. Catalogue

The Kit-of-Parts catalogue is an essential resource for community-led placemaking projects in Victoria. It includes City-selected and pre-approved choices of elements such as seating, lighting and paint that are key elements for any scale of placemaking. This catalogue is meant as a starting point, not a requirement, that can be added onto and modified. The catalogue will grow and change over time based on the feedback and use of the elements.

#### 4. Next Steps

Creation of the Placemaking Toolkit document is a first step to help to empower the community in city building. The next steps to facilitate this include promotion and monitoring.

##### a. Promotion

Staff will continue to develop additional materials and strategies and host workshops to promote the Toolkit.

##### b. Monitoring

As part of the Placemaking Toolkit evaluation process, staff will be monitoring for changes in the frequency, type and interest of placemaking focused grant applications in 2022.

The City currently considers public parklets through a number of existing opportunities including: the *Sidewalk Café Bylaw* process, greenway enhancement projects and AAA capital projects. The City does not have a formal program for public parklets. Monitoring will help to better understand and further define the need for a stand alone parklet program and/or street plaza program outside of existing capital initiatives. Staff will report back on placemaking achievements in 2022, along with potential budget requests to further support placemaking efforts that may fall under the “Larger is Complex” category as part of financial planning in future years.

#### OPTIONS & IMPACTS

**Option 1:** Approve the Placemaking Toolkit (Recommended).

This option would allow the City to provide this resource immediately to guide future placemaking initiatives and include promotion and monitoring of the Toolkit.

**Option 2:** Refer the Placemaking Toolkit back to staff with any adjustments recommended by Council.

This option would allow Council to direct any revisions to the draft Placemaking Toolkit. This option is not recommended as the Toolkit summarizes existing City programs and processes around placemaking, and changes to those programs are not proposed as part of this initiative. However, if there is additional information Council would like included in the Toolkit, Council could provide further direction.

#### *Accessibility Impact Statement*

Accessibility is a key aspect of any open, publicly accessible space. All elements of placemaking recommended in the catalogue have been examined through an accessibility lens to make sure they are safe and enjoyable for all, including wheelchair accessibility.

The Toolkit has also been examined for accessibility to ensure it is easy to read and understand for diverse community users.

#### *2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan*

The development of the Placemaking Toolkit completes a 2020 action in the City’s 2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan.

### *Impacts to Financial Plan*

Implementation of this Toolkit must be balanced with available resources and other City priorities which may change over time. Opportunities for community-led placemaking initiatives will be directed through existing City grant programs. The larger, City-led improvements envisioned in this Toolkit are aspirational and may be accomplished through future budget processes where City priorities will be determined, including opportunities to coordinate with other City capital projects.

### *Official Community Plan Consistency Statement*

Placemaking aligns closely with the goals of the *Official Community Plan* by contributing to vibrancy, walkability, arts and culture, inclusivity, community health and well-being, environmental sustainability and resiliency for all Victoria neighbourhoods.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

With completion of the Placemaking Toolkit, the City has a document that will help guide citizen-led transformation through placemaking with a clear set of guidelines and a process to get there, focusing on physical design elements as well as strategies to make them successful.

The Toolkit is an umbrella document that will help the public navigate the City programs available to the community to help implement creative placemaking. It is hoped that this resource will draw more people and will encourage more action.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna Kapusta  
Urban Designer  
Community Planning

Karen Hoese, Director  
Sustainable Planning and  
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**Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.**

### **List of Attachments:**

- Attachment A – Placemaking Toolkit, 2021
- Attachment B – Engagement Summary.