



GrayIsGreen

Who are we?

Gray Is Green is an online gathering of older adult Americans aspiring to create a green legacy for the future. As environmentally conscious elders, we respond to a generational call: to co-create a future of economic justice, ecological sustainability and social justice.

We hold next generations of humans in mind and consider the future of ecosystems and other species. We are alert to the historic challenges facing our planet. And we are aware of the question arising from descendants generations hence:

What did you do, when you knew?

What do we do?

We aspire to embrace our eldership, living beyond consumerism and ageism. **Our Curriculum for Gray-Green Living** offers a variety of ways to join—and re-engage with—this elder movement.

We offer a periodic newsletter, a speaker's bureau, online resources, a [Facebook page](#) for relevant updates. In partnership with congenial organizations, we serve as a central clearinghouse of ideas and communications for older adults interested in greening their lives, learning about sustainability, advocating for sound public policy, being creative stewards or grandparents, emerging as elders, and mentoring young people.

*We invite **you** to get involved!*

www.grayisgreen.org

Community Resilience Urban Placemaking

For a long time, city planning has been dominated by architects and engineers whose goal is simply to design a shopping center or a parking lot or a building. However, there is a lot more to making a place that communities can use than just construction. Places have a strong influence on the physical, social, emotional, and ecological lives of those individuals and communities, and as such should be made with those needs in mind.

What is Placemaking?

Placemaking¹ is a way of thinking about urban planning that strives to create and reimagine places as the center of every community. It operates by looking at all aspects of a place – including the people who use it – as an integrated whole, rather than isolating out different components. It is an ideology that removes the barrier between people and their environment, and sees us as deeply linked to our physical surroundings.

Placemaking is changing the way people think about city planning all over the United States and around the world. Groups like the Project for Public Spaces² help people use the ideas of placemaking to make the public spaces near them better suited to community life. They hold workshops and provide tools on how best to involve community members in the planning process while also providing expertise on

how to make streets safer and more pedestrian friendly. Placemaking also pays attention to what kind of architecture is likely to attract people to a certain place.

City Beautiful

The seeds of placemaking can be traced back to the City Beautiful movement³ at the turn of the twentieth century. It was active primarily in the 1890s through the 1920s, but some remnants of the movement, such as the Memphis City Beautiful Commission⁴ remain active today. Though today much of city infrastructure is designed to be cheap and quick to build, at the time, a surge of optimism about America as a nation prompted people to build infrastructure that was designed to last and be beautiful at the same time. Broad consensus among politicians, architects, and business leaders about the importance of public building projects lead to a swift transformation of cities into beautiful places.

Urban Sprawl

Urban sprawl costs the government and its citizens an astonishing amount of money⁵ in infrastructure, transportation, and service costs. Beyond that, living in a sprawled neighborhood is worse for your health, worse for the environment, and worse economically than living in an urban center that is well planned for a dense population.

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Community Resilience: Urban Placemaking

Compact communities are more likely to be well-connected communities, and as a result they have better access to schools, public services, and jobs, and encourage mixed-income living.

Urban placemaking is one way to take the sprawl out of cities and reinvent them as close-knit, walkable, livable places. These reinvented communities provide for the needs of everyone who lives there, while reducing harmful human impacts on our natural world.

The Goals of Placemaking

Placemaking is all about putting the community first⁶, and that

starts with listening to community input above all else. Having a vision developed from what people already like and dislike about their public spaces helps planning stay grounded in the place they are trying to create. Planning requires more than just design to create a place. By taking elements like landscaping, seating and local shops into consideration, placemaking can transform unused spaces into places where people can feel comfortable spending their time.

Simple changes to paths or landscape can change the way people interact with the buildings around them, and the kind of activities that happen

in a community space. Tactical urbanism⁷ is one strategy that communities can use to realize changes that might be difficult to get through traditional avenues, and instead take placemaking into their own hands. These cheap, flexible improvements allow for a process that can adjust for unexpected outcomes, creating a dynamic process that is never over and always improving.

1 http://www.pps.org/reference/what_is_placemaking/

2 <http://www.pps.org/about/>

3 https://orionmagazine.org/article/city-beautiful/?utm_source=Fresh+March+18%2C+2015&utm_campaign=FRESH+3%2F18%2F15&utm_medium=email

4 <http://memphiscitybeautiful.org/>

5 <http://newclimateconomy.net/content/release-urban-sprawl-costs-us-economy-more-1-trillion-year>

6 <http://www.pps.org/reference/11steps/>

7 see Tactical Urbanism subtopic



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