# THE SUBTLE ART OF

# Place making

# PERKINS—EASTMAN DESIGN RESEARCH

Perkins Eastman is a global architecture, planning, and design firm dedicated to the idea that design can have a direct and positive impact on people's lives. For almost forty years, our experts have shared a passion for research and design that focuses specifically on improving quality of life. We create places and spaces that put the user at the heart employing best practices, sustainability, and a thorough understanding of our clients' missions and operations. Our diverse teams partner with our clients globally to deliver thoughtful projects suited to users who will live, work, play, learn, age, and heal within the environments we plan and design.

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**COVER PHOTO: STANFORD UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL**

# WHY DISCUSS *Placemaking* NOW?

The timing of this study was driven by a desire to re-affirm the value of the physical environment (built and natural places) at a moment when many sensationalized media headlines in 2020 predicted the death of places and promoted online alternatives. Despite these views, we've found that this period demonstrated just how essential quality places are to people's holistic well-being.

Although placemaking is not a new topic of inquiry nor a novel design approach, this study makes two important contributions to the existing body of knowledge:

**1) Placemaking can occur at multiple scales, from an armchair to the city.** However, this study focuses on placemaking at three scales—city, building and interior—as it seems discussions of the building and interior scales were scarce in the literature we reviewed.

**2) The study shares a single, focused, and easily understandable list of twelve place attributes and two lenses**, which have been synthesized from some of the major work on the topic and presented in fun and useful conversation-starter Place Cards. The authors intend these twelve Place Cards and two lenses be used by designers, clients, and stakeholders to create more meaningful and positively-impactful places.

**The study proposes:**

- **Placemaking can occur at three scales: city, building, and interior.**
- **Twelve place attributes and two lenses.**

THE WHARF

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# ABOUT THE *Study*

Architects, planners, and designers strive to turn spaces into places. But what is "place," and how is it created? In simple terms, place is a space that holds meaning. How space acquires meaning, however, and what meaning it acquires, is partially based on the choices of those architects, planners, and designers.

Over the past few decades, a placemaking approach to design emerged within the context of urban design, informed by the work of prominent planners, journalists, landscape architects, geographers, and environmental psychologists. At the heart of placemaking is a collaborative process through which communities are engaged to create public places that contribute to their health, well-being, and happiness. Through this collaboration, the meaning a space acquires is one that is a collective—an amalgamation of personal meanings held by individuals within a community.

But how do architects, planners, and designers go about creating opportunities for profound experiences and meaning in the places they design? To address this question, **this study explored the ideas of place and placemaking and considered the concepts at multiple scales**.

We began by exploring existing literature on place and placemaking, particularly work that sought to identify the meaning and qualities of place. Many of the prominent principles, processes, and frameworks on placemaking were analyzed, synthesized, and layered with insights from Perkins Eastman architects, planners, and designers. We interviewed twenty-two people within the firm to understand how a designer's mind considers place and the ideas that guide their effort to generate meaningful places. Participants represented various national and international regions and had a variety of educational and professional backgrounds, years of experience, and sectors of industry expertise (refer to the full list of contributors, including interviewees, on page 49).

**This led to our development of placemaking guides, the twelve Place Attribute Cards, and two lenses** that can be used to inform the creation of meaningful places. We concluded the study by reflecting on the future of place in a post-pandemic world, followed by a series of case studies that show the attributes within the context of Perkins Eastman projects.

Place is a space that holds meaning.

# *Place* AN INTRODUCTION

> "The sense of place, or the *genius loci*, is all of the things, both built and unbuilt, that create a focus or a sense that there's something important." [1]

PETER CAVALUZZI, PERKINS EASTMAN

Place is space endowed with meaning, but how do spaces acquire meaning?

Notions of space and place have captured the imagination of many throughout the centuries and have generated much debate among philosophers and geographers.[2] Our exploration of place is most aligned with the definition offered by Yi-Fu Tuan, a highly esteemed geographer and winner of the Vautrin Lud Prize (the highest award in Geography). Tuan wrote that space is an unambiguous geometric quantity, like a room, whereas place is space endowed with familiarity, value, and meaning.[3]

Spatial meaning can be acquired through experience, time, and design.

**EXPERIENCE**—Often 'experience' can be a catch-all term for all the different ways people construct their reality, including their sense of place.[4] Lynne Manzo, an environmental psychologist focused on place attachment and meaning, reached a similar conclusion asserting, "Feelings about places cannot be divorced from one's experiences of them."[5] She argued a place's physicality and the nature of the experiences people have in them are "inextricably bound"[6] to one another.

**TIME**—It would seem place and experience cannot be divorced of time either, as the three share a curious relationship. Where some places gain meaning through the "steady accretion of



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SAP PITTSBURGH

experiences,"[7] others acquire meaning through a singular "intense experience of short duration."[8] For instance, a café one frequents over the years may collect meaning slowly as layers of familiarity and experiences accumulate, whereas an emotional moment of farewell in a park can also bestow instant meaning to that particular place.

DESIGN—When people visit meaningful places, they often feel they "are going somewhere that is … not generic."[9] Conversely, generic and indistinguishable places (such as chain restaurants and retailers) can create what social critic James Kunstler termed the "geography of nowhere."[10] Although, at times, some might find comfort in the familiarity of structures that belong everywhere yet nowhere, these spaces often do not attract people in the same way authentic places do—particularly places rooted in history, identity, geography, culture, and local context.

It is through the experience of place, not space, that we find meaning in the world around us. Architects, planners, and designers may be viewed as being biased towards the importance of place, guilty of romanticizing its virtues. Although that may be so, they are in the good company of many psychologists, environmental psychologists, geographers, and philosophers who have also explored and argued its value.

In a holistic study, environmental psychologist Leila Scannell and psychologist Robert Gifford identified psychological benefits of feeling a sense of attachment to place. The most cited benefits included connections to personal or ancestral pasts and traditions through memories; evoking a feeling of belonging and rootedness; providing opportunities for relaxation and restoration; and eliciting positive feelings of joy, hope, and pride.[11] They also referenced authors who found attachment to place can reinforce social capital, resulting in community activism and support,[12] which is important during devastating circumstances such as rebuilding after natural and man-made disasters.

With this in mind, as architects, planners, and designers, we strive to turn spaces into places.

# *Place* A SETTING FOR SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES

**"We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us."** [13]

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Places set the stage for human experiences, which may include people discovering themselves and the world around them, aspiring to embody ideals, forming meaningful relationships, reflecting on pivotal moments, and reliving profound memories. In the absence of such unique places that connect us to our past, tantalize our dreams, and remind us of our humanity, who are we truly?[14]

Place can provide the setting for these significant experiences:

**DISCOVERING**—People's relationships to places are important to their psychological development,[15] as places allow them to work through and discover their identities as well as how they relate to the world.[16,17] Whether it be a childhood home, a place of worship, or a family boat,[18] people often reference an array of places that they believe contributed to their identity and sense of self, ultimately making them "who they are."[19]

**ASPIRING**—Some have argued that we build structures to declare our values and to simultaneously be reminded of these declarations.[20] In this process of building, people create a sense of familiarity and security and feel anchored to their world and community. People seek places that meet this need—places that are both the reflection and aspiration of individual and community identities. The contemporary philosopher Alain de Botton proposed that the purpose of historical, monumental buildings is "not to remind us of what life was typically like, but rather to keep before our eyes how it might optimally be, so as to move us fractionally closer to fulfillment and virtue."[21]

**BEFRIENDING**—People can play a major role in encouraging meaningful experiences in places. Interestingly, "places can become meaningful through social relationships, but special places help to create meaningful relationships as well."[22] For instance, a public library designed to foster casual interactions can lead to the development of friendships. In turn, the formation of these friendships can strengthen people's attachment to that library.

Ways in which people's presence can contribute to experiencing places can be subtle. For instance, Deborah Lloyd Forrest, founder and principal of ForrestPerkins, a distinct studio of Perkins Eastman, stressed the importance of the "human connection" and the instant feeling of welcome that occurs when a hotel concierge greets a guest by name.[23] Similarly, within the context of senior living communities, the familiarity of a caregiver's voice along with the use of a resident's name, is one way in which caregivers become "place-makers" themselves.[24] On a larger scale, unique places like the world's Blue Zones (five locations in the world where people live the longest and healthiest) can support close relationships as well as social integration (i.e., the interactions that occur naturally as a person moves along their day, such as with the barista, baker, and bus driver).[25] These social interactions are the highest predictors of longevity—more so than other healthy habits, like physical activity.[26]

**MARKING**—Places can mark profound milestones and moments of transition and change. Realizing a goal, experiencing something for the first time, or even ending a relationship[27] can all foster opportunities for personal growth, despite not being exclusively positive feelings. Such experiences create markers in people's lives, and people assign value to the places in which these important events or changes occur. For David Levo, a Perkins Eastman principal and board director, occasionally passing through Times Square in New York City connects him to the time he decided to live in the city.[28] On the other hand, for Mark Van Summern, a fellow Perkins Eastman principal, a solitary hike in the serenity of dawn, up a challenging mountain to a breathtaking view, is a moment and a place that marks a personal victory and an immense feeling of tranquility and joy.[29]

**REMEMBERING**—Perhaps the most powerful experience places can offer, at least in the view of this study's authors, is that they not only mark time, but can transcend it and remain with a person through memory. Particularly when experienced holistically through all the senses, places are "etched in the deep recesses of memory and yield intense satisfaction with each recall."[30]

It was fascinating and humbling to witness an example of reliving a memory during one of our interviews. We listened as the mere memory of a place that embodies aspirational ideals evoked strong emotions in one of our interviewees. Through waves of feeling, he relived a moment when, late on a still night, he sat on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.: "Sitting on those steps, staring out at the monument without humans around, so many ideas surface as you think of all the ways this country feels so big, and how at its best, it could be beautiful. Admittedly, history is flawed, but ideas of striving to be better, more inclusive, and thoughtful—which are captured and communicated through this architecture and experienced in the stillness of the night—are so powerful. It's so powerful."[31]

Although a singular profound moment like that can create a strong memory, repetition can also form lasting ones. Leslie G. Moldow, a Perkins Eastman principal, observed that special places are often easy to understand, natural, familiar, and help people "feel whole."[32] It is perhaps this familiarity, or feeling of wholeness, that draws people back to visit a place over and over again, generating attachment and memories in the process.

The interplay between design and memory can often require a delicate and thoughtful hand guiding the design process, one that balances memory with nostalgia, and personal experiences with that of the collective. As Perkins Eastman's senior living principal, Martin Siefering, noted; when creating places for older adults, for example, who have lived long lives with rich histories that guide their responses to the world around them, it would be easy to assume that these older adults would experience places exclusively through the lens of nostalgia. In fact, many environments created for older adults rely almost exclusively on nostalgia—quite often resulting in inauthenticity, and a sense of being disrespectful of their abilities to comprehend and enjoy new and meaningful experiences. Furthermore, an approach that creates an environment targeted at one persona's nostalgia can leave other people with different backgrounds feeling excluded and uncomfortable. These nostalgic and inauthentic environments also struggle to be timeless, given that any cohort's nostalgia is different than the cohort that follows.[33]

Despite memory being such an important part of creating unique places, designing environments for those who are experiencing cognitive challenges as a result of dementia, for instance, can add an extra layer of difficulty for designers. What happens when someone's cognitive abilities decline and they struggle to hold onto what is familiar? Martin Siefering, along with architects Jennifer Sodo AIA, and Max Winters RA, grapple with this question often. "Humans are incredibly diverse; people experience cognitive decline in different ways," Siefering explained. This complexity makes it crucial that a place is able to connect people with a variety of experiences that are "normal, familiar, and authentic." The key to achieving this connection is providing opportunities for familiar and deeply human experiences that range from calming to stimulating, allowing each person to thrive in unique ways. Accordingly, the design team mines for experiences and strives to create places that can stir up warm memories while also helping people move forward and continue to embrace life fully.* For example, enabling residents to experience the weather or to participate in daily routines, like raking the leaves or preparing a meal, surrounded by autumnal aromas or the smell of bread baking, can be comforting, grounding, and enlivening.[34]

Leveraging experiences that are deeply part of being *human* (such as biophilic connections with nature, cross-generational human interactions, and a primitive desire for prospect and refuge) can be used to create environments that are inclusive, timeless, and responsive to everyone's abilities—regardless of their age or their physical, cognitive, or emotional needs and abilities.

## Creating Place

Through deep understanding and thoughtful decisions, architects, planners, and designers set the stage for experiences—but they cannot enforce or guarantee them. Yi-Fu Tuan uses the example of trees planted on a campus: he explains the trees are "part of a deliberate design to create place … each sapling is a potential place for intimacy."[35] The tree, however, cannot force meaningful moments to occur there, as that depends on the choices people make around the trees, "on chance and on the play of imagination."[36] Without the thoughtful presence of the trees, however, the opportunity for meaningful interactions dwindles. Such thoughtful approaches to creating places—and understanding the importance of discovering, aspiring, befriending, marking, and remembering—are part of the practice of placemaking.

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* Read more about the team's approach to designing senior living communities in their whitepaper, Missing Main Street: Reconnecting Older Adults with Dementia to the Fabric of Authentic Living.

## DISCOVERING

"Throughout our lives, our psychological development is punctuated not only by meaningful emotional relationships with people, but also by close, affective ties with a number of significant physical environments, beginning in childhood." [37]

## ASPIRING

The purpose of historical, monumental buildings is "not to remind us of what life was typically like, but rather to keep before our eyes how it might optimally be, so as to move us fractionally closer to fulfillment and virtue." [21]

## MARKING

"Important places were those in which events occurred that marked [a person's] particular life journey in new or unique ways." [38]

## BEFRIENDING

"Places can become meaningful through social relationships but special places help to create meaningful relationships as well." [22]

## REMEMBERING

Places "are elusive and personal. They may be etched in the deep recesses of memory and yield intense satisfaction with each recall." [30]

In the graphic above, places set the stage for human experiences such as: discovering one's self and the world around them, reflecting on pivotal moments, aspiring to personal ideals, forming meaningful relationships, and reliving precious memories.

# *Place* MAKING

Vast contributions to placemaking literature have been made through the decades, with each author adding their unique understanding, values, and process to the conversation. Summarized here, from the literature and interviews, are a number of suggested guides to placemaking and a synthesized list of attributes that special places often include.

## Guides to Placemaking

Placemaking is a collaborative process that aims to provide "quality places that people want to live, work, play, and learn in."[40] Although there are different approaches to placemaking,[41] one of the more prominent is the approach based on the groundbreaking studies of journalist and urbanist William H. Whyte, later developed by Project for Public Places (PPS).

In its definition of placemaking, PPS stresses the collaborative nature of the process that involves people reimagining public spaces and turning them into the heart of their communities.[42] It may be noted that the literature on placemaking provided insights on city public spaces, while insights from Perkins Eastman interviews tackled the idea of placemaking in different project types and at multiple scales: city, building, and interior.

In reviewing insights from the literature and the interviews with Perkins Eastman architects, planners, and designers, the following high-level guides to placemaking emerged. This list is not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, it aims to capture and summarize the spirit of the

literature and interviews we explored. It is worth noting, too, that not every design or planning project necessitates a focus on creating "place." However, the following guides, in full or in part, may be useful for when a project type, scope, stakeholders' needs, or other factors warrant a deeper and more focused consideration of creating place. Additionally, knowing these general guides can be informative and empowering for stakeholders (be they community members, users, clients, or residents) as they collaborate with their design teams on creating places they find meaningful.

Architects, planners, and designers may refer to these high-level guides when a project type, scope, stakeholders' needs, or other factors warrant a deeper and more focused consideration of creating place. Additionally, knowing these general guides can be informative and empowering for stakeholders as they collaborate with their design teams.

**LISTEN ATTENTIVELY**—In its *Community is the Expert* principle, PPS emphasizes the importance of tapping into existing knowledge that the community members have on history

NORTH HAVEN MIDDLE SCHOOL

and critical issues. Incorporating these insights can create a sense of connection and ownership over places.[43] The Perkins Eastman architects, planners, and designers we interviewed stressed the importance of listening to "everyone and anyone"[44] willing to speak to the design team. In one story shared, a sixth grader pointed to huge wooden stairs in an existing building and told the design team, "This is what's important to us; we all run into each other here and interact." That was crucial information the team needed to understand the community's interactions so they could create meaningful experiences at the school.[45]

Architects, planners, and designers can risk failure if they presume "they know the answers before asking the right questions."[46] Even if an architect, planner, or designer is from the community they are designing for, they should not assume they fully know and understand a

culture in all its complexity and variety. They should still listen, be "receptive," and make no assumptions.[47]

**OBSERVE BEHAVIORS AND PLACES**—In addition to asking the right questions and listening to people, researchers and designers often use observation and reflection. Observing people in "great places" can offer insights into "why these places work and are valued, and the different kinds of experiences they offer."[48] In fact, some of the most prominent literature dedicated to understanding public places relied heavily on observing people, including the work of William H. Whyte, Jane Jacobs, and Jan Gehl, to name a few.

In their book, *How to Study Public Life*, Jan Gehl and Birgitte Svarre urged readers to "get out in the city, see how it works, use … common sense, use all senses"[49] to evaluate and determine what is and is not working. Although the art of observation can be challenging, the book offers a

variety of observation tools, important questions to ask, and examples of how observation has illuminated studies of public life around the world.

Observation as a method is not unique to studying public places; it's used by environmental psychologists and researchers studying all kinds of environments. Through our interviews we heard how designers of workplace environments rely on the information obtained during the critical discovery and visioning process. Oftentimes the visioning phase includes observations and evaluations that uncover a firm's existing work processes, spatial needs, and how space supports the organization's culture: "who they are, how they work, what they want and why they are in the office."[50]

Investigative clues designers uncover from engaging with staff and observing their environments and behaviors aid in informing places that support and enhance a firm's authentic culture and particular needs. It should be noted that an environment should be viewed within the context of a particular point in time, and places should be able to adapt over time, not unlike the functions they support.[51]

In this respect, Gehl and Svarre's writings about studying public spaces can arguably apply to any environment. By slowing down, noticing the seemingly ordinary, and reflecting on its drivers and meanings, architects, planners, and designers can develop a more layered understanding of people and places.[52]

ENGAGE WITH STAKEHOLDERS—At the heart of PPS's placemaking is a collaborative process through which partners and stakeholders (i.e., a wide range of people including clients, users, community members, and so forth) are engaged to create public places that can contribute to health, pride, and well-being. Similarly, journalist and urban activist Jane Jacobs said, "Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when,

they are created by everybody."[53] Although each stakeholder group will likely look for different experiences and meanings within a place, based on their views and aspirations, architects, planners, and designers are uniquely positioned to help navigate a process through which everyone has the opportunity to contribute and collectively "build up the design, principle by principle."[54] Ultimately, the goal of engagement—and sometimes even of co-creation—is to create places stakeholders recognize as "a reflection of their goals and values, impacted by the discourse of design,"[55] and the result of active and robust dialogue.

It is important architects and designers endeavor to be "honest brokers" when negotiating with diverse stakeholders, helping participants understand that "often, no one gets everything they want, but assuring them that through their participation they will very likely be able to identify aspects of the final result that hold high value for them."[56] Such an approach can lead to places many people find meaningful as they represent an amalgamation of stakeholder visions, instead of manifestations of a singular architect's, planner's, or designer's aspirations.[57]

CREATE MOMENTS NOT MONUMENTS—Architecture is often shared as "three dimensional renderings, pictured from a drone overhead. That is not a viewpoint that anyone will actually experience."[58] Although such iconic architecture can be powerful and valuable, "standalone buildings are not what make a great city [or place]."[59] Conversely, special places often challenge architects, planners, and designers to resist their instinct to stand out. They rely instead on: holistic strategies that engage with buildings and the spaces in between them, context and history, and the multi-faceted stories a place may already have. These unique places often seem to have been so delicately designed as though "there was an accident, from which the place just happens to emerge."[60]

Crucial to creating such places is breaking down the intimate moments people might have in different environments and crafting places to support them. For example, office space design aims to support creativity and productivity by considering staff's diverse needs, ideas, talents, and skills.[61] In healthcare, on the other hand, spaces are designed to anticipate people's needs at a fragile time, and attempt to provide them with "the things they may have lost by being [in a hospital] in the first place."[62]

In one instance shared in our interviews, Perkins Eastman architects and designers working on a cancer care center heard from staff about the moment some visitors have when leaving the hospital. Staff observed that at times, "just as a person is getting ready to leave the hospital after a particularly difficult day, they can feel the weight of a particular diagnosis."[63] Moved by learning about this intimate and difficult moment, the design team added the "get it together" program and room. This gives staff the opportunity to identify and lead someone

in need of support and privacy to a simple and comfortable room and "support them back to feeling like they can face their world again.[64]

Even in instances when creating a stand-out structure may be appropriate and beneficial to the project, design professionals can accomplish this while employing a level of sensitivity to the human experience. In one example shared by Nicholas Leahy, Perkins Eastman's Co-CEO, the design of tkts Booth, the international icon located in Times Square New York, intentionally sought to "fit-in" with its environment while simultaneously standing out. Although unmistakably recognizable, the structure reflects its surroundings and almost fades into its context, allowing the focus to remain on the people. "In many ways, it provides a seat overlooking a large and open urban room," explained Leahy. The structure transformed how Times Square is experienced—moving people from its edges to its very core. The building itself does not flash or blink, instead, it quietly glows a warm red as everything around it moves and pulses. Seated



TKTS BOOTH

at the steps, one feels as though they are in a moment of calm in the midst of a sensorial storm, protected by the steps' elevation, yet connected and engaged with the "town square." The eye-catching sculptural centerpiece, adds more than beauty and excitement by redirecting people's gaze back to the square.[65] Sitting on one of the most recognizable steps in the world, people can "enjoy the 'second best show on Broadway:' Times Square and urban life itself,"[66] with all its rich moments of splendor.

Whether they be difficult moments or more pleasant ones, the details of a journey people take in an environment are very important. Architects, planners, and designers should try to create places that allow people to cope with personal moments of grief, joy, and everything in between.

**LEAVE ROOM FOR GROWTH**—As tempting as it may be to want to 'finish' a public space project, PPS believes such projects are never truly finished.[67] Because public spaces are meant to respond to communities and their evolving needs, flexibility, maintenance and responsiveness are paramount to their success.

Such characteristics are also essential for projects of different scales and types, as demonstrated by Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger's work. He embraced the idea of "incompleteness" and intentionally created "imperfections" meant to provoke people to transform them into something that better meets their needs and desires.[68] In one project, for instance, he left unfinished concrete blocks in front yards, suggesting the beginning of a fence but not providing it. Transforming the blocks into something meaningful—a fence or otherwise—gives people a sense of ownership and personalization.[69]

Other authors spoke of the same concept, suggesting a place should "fit" the needs and program while also allowing some "slack" to accommodate change and adaptability.[70] Chhavi Lal, a Perkins Eastman associate principal, shared an example from a newly constructed Ashoka University in India, where a simple and open lawn meant to be an attractive break-out and circulation space became a hub for interactions and events on the campus. Carefully huddled between dining, library, and classroom spaces, the lawn (affectionately named: The Mess Lawn by the university community) allows students and faculty to spill out into it, gather and invent different ways to use the space, like meeting friends, acting out dramas, dancing and holding fairs.[71] It is perhaps its shaded, informal, neutral, and human-scale design that empowered students to use the lawn as a backdrop for their vibrant banners, colorful additions, and lively activities. According to Lal, witnessing these activities on their visits to the multi-phase campus project "is the biggest gratification" for the design team, seeing how "users start to own spaces, personalize them and express themselves through them in ways beyond the design vision."[72]

By leaving some room and opportunities for growth and customization, architects, planners, and designers can balance two competing goals: anticipating and responding to people's immediate needs and allowing space for evolving and future demands.

**MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE**—PPS stated that those attempting to create quality public places may be faced with obstacles and even claims that their goals cannot be achieved. To overcome this on an urban scale, they advise starting with "small scale community-nurturing improvements"[73] to demonstrate success and remove the obstacle of disbelief. Some may know this as the "Theory of Small Wins" where, once it is proven that positive change can occur through small-scale achievements, larger or loftier goals can then be tackled with greater ease and/or less resistance.

**ZERVAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Budget, program and schedules can also pose challenges to achieving big goals right out of the gate on a variety of different scales and project types. Despite this challenge, architects, planners, and designers often try to find "moments where they can create a place within the constraints of the type of project and the client."[74] The smallest idea can go a long way, according to Joseph Aliotta, a Perkins Eastman principal who shared an example about the impact of two seating areas arranged against the backdrop of huge windows at either end of a school hallway. The client was thrilled to see how activated and beloved these places became as teachers and students regularly spilled out of classrooms into these spaces to interact, read, work on projects, and create memories.[75]

It is important to work with stakeholders, ensuring all the different parties are left with something they value. One way of achieving this is "to always extend, enhance, and artfully interpret what is already part of the site or place."[76] For example, in the Target Field Station design (refer to the Case Studies section), there was a need to circulate people up through the site to the station and stadium above the adjacent street. The program called for escalators enclosed in a structure. Instead, the design team transformed this requirement into a grand stair and amphitheater that leads to a lush lawn. This design solution provided the necessary vertical circulation and transformed this requirement into a public place that is a destination and landmark with the added bonus of a community space for events and performances. This creative transformation of a functional element into a community destination offers a two-fold win: one for the community and another for the developers, because the site became an activated and sought-after destination, drawing in more people and providing an appreciated return on investment.[77]

# PLACEMAKING *Attributes*

> "Sometimes you can't put your finger on that one thing that makes a place special, because it's not one thing. It's so many things combined that feel as though they were designed especially for you, wrapping you in an overall sense of well-being. It takes a long time to create these places, and it takes a lot of people." [78]

**DEBORAH LLOYD FORREST, FORRESTPERKINS, A DISTINCT STUDIO OF PERKINS EASTMAN**

The literature about placemaking includes various frameworks and lists of spatial qualities to help architects, planners, and designers create places. Having reviewed a number of the most prominent frameworks in the literature, this study synthesized one list of twelve attributes. The graphic to the right illustrates the main publications referenced during this study and points to the attributes gleaned from them.

As placemaking is primarily based in urban design, the reviewed frameworks were centered on the city scale, with limited focus on creating places within buildings and interior spaces. However, it was important to consider Yi-Fu Tuan and his assertion that "Place exists at different scales. At one extreme a favorite armchair is a place, at the other extreme the whole earth." [79] To that end, even though placemaking can occur at



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# EXISTING CONCEPTS

## PUBLICATIONS

**Lynch,**[80]
*A Theory of Good City Form*

**Jacobs and Appleyard,**[81]
*Toward an Urban Design Manifesto*

**Bentley,**[82]
*Responsive Environments: A Manual for Designers*

**PPS,**[83]
*Placemaking: What if we built our cities around places?*

**Whyte,**[84]
*The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*

**Gehl,**[85]
*Twelve Quality Criteria*

**Gehl,**[86]
*Inclusive Healthy Places*

**Hasler,**[87]
*Place Standard: a practical tool to support the creation of healthier places*

**Coffin and Young,**[88]
*Making Places for People 12 Questions Every Designer Should Ask*

### Concepts

Control
Fit
Vitality
Justice
Sense
Access
Community and public life
Access to opportunities, imagination, joy
Urban self-reliance
An environment for all
Livability
Authenticity and meaning
Identity and Control
Legibility
Variety
Visual Appropriateness
Permeability
Personalization
Richness
Comfort and image
Uses and activities
Comfort and image (Sittable)
Comfort and image (Safe)
Sociability (Diverse)
Access and linkage (Accessible)
Food
Sun, wind, trees, water
The undesirables
Sitting space
Effective capacity
Options for seeing
Options to stand and linger
Options for play, exercise, and activities
Options for sitting
Options for talking and listening/hearing
Scale
Opportunites to enjoy the positive aspects of climate
Experience of aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experiences
Protection against harm by others
Protection against traffic and accidents
Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences
Quality of public space
Accessibility
Access
Uses and users
Safety and security
Moving around
Public transport
Traffic and parking
Streets and spaces
Natural space
Play and recreation
Social interaction
Identity and belonging
Feeling safe
Influence and sense of control
Whose place is this?
Where is this place?
How big is this place?
What logic orders this place?
Balance community and privacy
What makes this place useful?
Does this place support health?
What makes this place sustainable?
Who likes this place?
Does this place foster social equity?

## PROPOSED LENSES

Equity
Culture

## PROPOSED ATTRIBUTES

Sensory
Activated
Gradient
Captivating
Supportive
Understandable
Proportional
Accessible
Customizable
Supportive
Healthy
Safe
Authentic

In the graphic above, the first column shows a number of the existing placemaking publications reviewed, while the second column lists some of the concepts and frameworks they included, and the final column shows these concepts synthesized into Perkins Eastman's proposed lenses and attributes.

a wide range of scales, this study purposefully considered each attribute identified in the literature and its applicability to three built-environment scales: city, building, and interior. If an attribute was exclusive to one scale and not others, it was not synthesized into our list.

Along with the twelve attributes listed herein, this report introduces Culture and Equity as two overarching concepts related to successful placemaking. Due to their importance and complexity, we argue they transcend the attributes and are lenses through which the attributes should be viewed. For example, an architect, planner, or designer considering the Captivating attribute may choose to use color to entice people's senses and imagination. Viewed through the lens of Culture, however, one would need to consider the cultural associations each color might have and how it may contribute to the meaning and experience being created in that place. Similarly, applying the lens of Equity may drive an architect, planner, or designer to eliminate certain colors as they may be difficult for certain populations such as older adults or those with color blindness to discern.

A third lens was also considered—Holistic Sustainability. But due to its undeniable importance and multi-faceted nature, we felt it should inform every aspect and attribute of design, so we opted not to imply that it's optional by labeling it as its own lens in this report.

Inspired by the checklists and exercises devised by PPS and Gehl Architects, we aimed to make our twelve placemaking attributes easily accessible and usable. To do so, these attributes have been organized into Place Attribute Cards (see next section), that can be used at different stages of a project to inspire conversation on any new, renovated, or repurposed environments.

> "
> Place exists at different scales. At one extreme a favorite armchair is a place, at the other extreme the whole earth.[79]
> "
>
> Yi-Fu Tuan

# ATTRIBUTES*

### Accessible
Welcoming, free of obstacles, and easy for all users to reach, enter, navigate, and enjoy.

### Captivating
Captivates visitors' imagination and memory while offering them beauty, comfort, and an overall sense of well-being.

### Activated
Provides diverse activities with broad appeal.

### Gradient
Affords degrees of social and solitary spaces as well as opportunities for passive and active engagement.

### Supportive
Supports the behaviors people are accustomed to while nudging them towards beneficial opportunities.

### Understandable
Incorporates universally recognizable spatial elements such as paths, landmarks, and signage to welcome, orient, and guide people.

### Safe
Provides a sense of safety by limiting exposure to physical, emotional, and cognitive harm.

### Healthy
Promotes holistic wellness and environmental sustainability.

### Sensory
Enables a rich sensory experience of space, with options to suit diverse needs.

### Proportional
Sized in relation to human perceptions of scale and personal space (whether utilizing the vastness beyond human scale or cozying up to it).
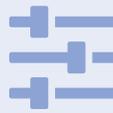
### Customizable
Affords degrees of control and personalization that allow a sense of ownership and attachment.

### Authentic
Based in and a reflection of local culture(s).

# LENSES*

### Culture
Sensitive and responsive to aspects of cultural variations, association, meanings, preferences, history, and more.

### Equity
Sensitive and responsive to diverse cognitive, emotional, social, physical, economic and cultural needs, abilities, and preferences.

*Holistic Sustainability should be an underpinning to every aspect of design, including the attributes and lenses.

# *Place* ATTRIBUTE CARDS: CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR PLACEMAKING

The following set of Place Attribute Cards may be used to inform placemaking in multiple building types and at multiple levels: city, building, and interior. They can be applied at different stages of a project to inspire conversation and design ideas both within the design team and among the project stakeholders. The Place Attribute Cards presented here are meant to add to the existing knowledge base, such as those published by Project for Public Spaces, Gehl Architects, and others. Our intention is that they be used alongside these other resources for placemaking as appropriate.

# ACCESSIBLE

## Is the design welcoming, free of obstacles, and easy for all users to reach, enter, and navigate?

**RELATES TO:**
Understandable, Safe

For people to experience a place, they must first be able to access and reach it easily and through multiple means (e.g., walking, public transport, stairs, elevators, etc.). Accessible places embrace ADA/Universal Design, are welcoming, joyful, and balance excitement and safety.

Through the lens of **Equity**: Consider ways through which Universal Design and access can elevate a place's appeal for people with varying cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical abilities.

**"Too often solutions meet the letter of the [accessibility] code but lack common sense."** [89]

COFFIN AND YOUNG

# CAPTIVATING

## Does the design captivate visitors' imagination and memory, while offering them comfort and an overall sense of well-being?

**RELATES TO:**
all attributes

A true sense of place emanates from authenticity and an ability to evoke deep delight. Whether through striking statements of aesthetic splendor, or quiet and subtle details of lingering beauty in the backdrop, special places exude an unidentifiable element of interest coupled with an overall sense of comfort and well-being. In such places, visitors are captivated and compelled to linger and return.

Through the lens of **Culture**: Consider strategies that allow an authentic understanding of a locality's shared sense of comfort, beauty, and aspiration.

**"A city should have magical places where fantasy is possible, a counter to and an escape from the mundaneness of everyday work and living."** [90]

APPLEYARD AND JACOBS

# ACTIVATED

**Does the design provide diverse activities with broad appeal?**

## RELATES TO:
Gradient, Customizable, Healthy, Safe

*"Excitement, spirit, sense, stimulation, and exchange are more likely when there is a mixture of activities than when there is not … It is the mix, not just the density of people and uses, that brings life to an area…"* [91]

APPLEYARD AND JACOBS

In activated places, people have access to a wide array of activities and opportunities to eat, play, sit, stand, watch, socialize, etc. These activities can spark joy, create memories, and prompt serendipitous interactions. Activated places can also give crowds a reason to use places during all seasons and in varied weather, drawing more people to the place while contributing to a feeling of safety and comfort.

Through the lens of **Culture**: Consider activities (e.g., food, games, conversation) and opportunities (e.g., reflective solitude, exercise) that can appeal to many cultures.

Through the lens of **Equity**: Consider activities and opportunities that can appeal to many abilities and needs.

# GRADIENT

**Does the design afford degrees of social and solitary spaces as well as opportunities for passive and active engagement?**

## RELATES TO:
Activated, Proportional, Supportive

*"To give a group a chance to be together, as a group, a room must also give them the chance to be alone, in one's and two's in the same space."* [92]

CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER

Comfortable places are dichotomous; they balance people's need for both community and solitude by providing spaces along a gradient, from open to sheltered. People should be given the opportunity to choose their degree of engagement with their surroundings (e.g., basking in the sun or finding respite in the shade), and the degree of engagement with other people (e.g. actively, such as sitting with a group of friends in a square, or passively, such as people-watching from the sidelines). Edges and alcoves can be ideal as they provide both prospect (connection) and refuge (shelter).

Through the lens of **Culture**: Consider how different cultures exist in a place and their differing perceptions of safety, crowdedness, and personal space.

Through the lens of **Equity**: Consider different engagement preferences (active, passive), ages, abilities, and the corresponding spaces that can support that.

# SUPPORTIVE

**RELATES TO:**
Customizable, Gradient, Healthy

"My contention is that architecture cannot make you do anything, but it sure can prevent you from doing things. An example: A bench in a hallway can't make you stop and talk to your neighbors, but no bench in the hallway sure discourages it." [93]

JUDITH WASSERMAN

Does the design support the behaviors people are accustomed to while nudging them towards beneficial opportunities?

Well-designed places nudge people toward better personal performance. For instance, research has shown that thoughtful design can support collaboration and creativity, break down social barriers through opportunities for serendipitous interactions in public spaces, support the healing process, encourage more physical movement, and enhance learning.

Through the lens of **Equity**: Consider how the design of a place can support people with varying needs, beliefs, emotions, and circumstances.

# UNDERSTANDABLE

**RELATES TO:**
Accessible, Safe, Sensory

"A distinctive and legible environment not only offers security but also heightens the potential depth and intensity of human experience." [94]

KEVIN LYNCH

Does the design incorporate recognizable spatial elements such as paths, landmarks, and signage to welcome, orient, and guide people?

People tend to share a common logic for understanding and moving through the world, guided by universal elements such as paths, landmarks, and nodes. Places that incorporate these innately recognizable elements can feel fundamentally safe and welcoming, ushering a flourished sense of belonging. Inclusive signage, color, and tactile variation of surfaces can also increase inclusivity.

Through the lens of **Culture**: Recognize local manifestations of the universal spatial elements like landmarks, paths, edges, and nodes.

Through the lens of **Equity**: Consider how the understandability of a place can vary among people with different cognitive, socio-emotional, or physical abilities.

# SAFE

**Does the design provide a sense of safety by limiting exposure to physical, emotional, and cognitive harm?**

**RELATES TO:**
Activated, Proportional, Understandable, Accessible

On a fundamental level, places should provide physical, emotional, and cognitive safety—securing people from the elements, traffic, and antisocial behaviors (e.g., bullying, crime, or distraction). There are instances where elements of small risk may be desirable to add interest, joy, or levity (such as walking across rocks in a running stream), but they should be balanced with measures of security for people to feel comfortable enough to pursue such risks.

Through the lens of **Equity**: Consider the individual journey for people with different abilities (cognitive, physical, sensorial, etc.) in a place and strive for a design that projects safety as well as levity for all abilities.

"We appreciate buildings which ... make us feel as safe in the open air as we do in a room." [96]

ALAIN DE BOTTON

# HEALTHY

**Does the design promote holistic wellness and environmental sustainability?**

**RELATES TO:**
Activated, Sensory, Supportive

Healthy places are committed to ecological sustainability and the promotion of people's holistic health and well-being. The use of passive design strategies and locally sourced, sustainable, and healthy materials can add layers of authenticity and support individuals' and the planet's well-being. In addition, access to daylight, good air quality, activity, nourishment, and interpersonal connections can support people's physical, socio-emotional, and cognitive well-being.

Through the lens of **Culture**: Look to and beyond high-tech approaches to ecological sustainability and incorporate, where appropriate, indigenous or vernacular innovations rooted in different cultures, geographies, and climates.

Through the lens of **Equity**: Reflect on the impact the design can have on its users and surrounding context, and how design decisions can reduce—or exacerbate—health and wellness inequities.

"Architects cannot teach nature anything." [95]

MARK TWAIN

# SENSORY

Does the design enable a rich sensory experience of space, with options to suit diverse needs?

**RELATES TO:**
Healthy, Proportional, Understandable

Places are experienced holistically through the senses. What people hear, see, smell, taste, and feel is imprinted in their mind's eye and recalled in their memories, along with the sixth sense of proprioception (also known as kinesthesia). In a well-articulated sensory design, stimuli are heightened and softened as appropriate to create a sensory journey suitable for diverse people and moods.

Through the lens of **Culture**: Consider how the meanings associated with scents, textures, colors, and so forth vary across the intermingling cultures occupying the place.

Through the lens of **Equity**: Consider the sensorial range of anticipated users and reflect on strategies to create equity across ages and diverse spectrums of need.

"Every touching experience of architecture is multi-sensory; qualities of space, matter and scale are measured equally by the eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle." [97]

JUHANI PALLASMAA

# PROPORTIONAL

Is the design sized in relation to human perceptions of scale and personal space (whether utilizing the vastness beyond human scale or cozying up to it)?

**RELATES TO:**
Safe, Gradient, Sensory

An understanding of how people perceive size, scale, and proportion relative to their human scale is crucial. Architects, planners, and designers can manipulate the built environment's proportions based on the emotion they are seeking to evoke in a place, be it awe and wonderment or comfort and sanctuary. It is important to note that larger places are not necessarily better, though, as a certain degree of crowdedness can draw people in and may also project a sense of safety.

Through the lens of **Culture**: Consider how perceptions of crowdedness, personal space, and grandeur vary by culture.

"Architects talk quite specifically about the 'scale' of a building ... Scale here means the effect the building has on us in terms of relative rather than absolute size." [98]

BRYAN LAWSON

# CUSTOMIZABLE
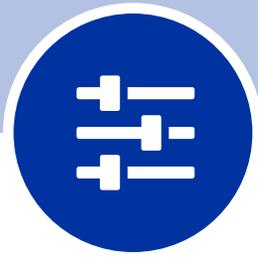


**RELATES TO:**
Activated, Supportive

**Does the design afford degrees of control and personalization that allow a sense of ownership and attachment?**

Allowing people to customize and personalize their space provides them with a sense of control, ownership, and attachment. These sentiments often manifest in people caring for and protecting these places. Architects, planners, and designers can allow customization on many scales, even in public/shared settings in addition to more private or territorialized spaces, from movable chairs in parks to leaving some spaces incomplete for people to finish and personalize as they see fit.

Through the lens of **Equity**: Consider how the design empowers all users to personalize their environment and feel a sense of ownership over the place.

"The more influence you can personally exert on the things around you, the more you feel emotionally involved with them, and the more attention you will pay to them." [100]

HERMAN HERTZBERGER

# AUTHENTIC



**RELATES TO:**
all attributes

**Is the design based in and a reflection of the local culture(s)?**

Memorable places can emerge from and reflect their geographical, historical, cultural, and emotional context—tied to the spirit of a locality, people, or environment. In an increasingly global and multicultural world, balancing the local, the new, and the old is a complex yet invigorating challenge for architects, planners, and designers.

Through the lens of **Culture**: Consider the architect's, planner's, or designer's hidden biases and seek strategies that allow for an authentic understanding of a locality's layered culture, geography, history, aesthetics, traditions, and values.

"When everyplace looks the same, who are we?" [99]

COFFIN AND YOUNG

# THE ENDURING NATURE OF *Place*

Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the world in 2019/20 changed the way people relate to and use the spaces around them—a change likely to remain even after people safely return to the public realm. Hardly anyone can now question the possibility of migrating aspects of people's lives to digital platforms, from working to learning and even healing. This disruption, however, can be reframed and seen instead as a chance for architects, planners, and designers to fully reimagine the human experience. We may seek new opportunities for people to reclaim more of the vehicular-focused outdoors, for workplaces to be rebranded as social hubs, or for doctors to resume house calls through telemedicine. These contemplations may result in place transformation or evolution. However, the architects, planners, and designers we interviewed in this study could not imagine that shared places will disappear.

At the moment, many seem to be holding their collective breath, looking forward to the day they can casually see one another, serendipitously join conversations, return a colleague's smile and look them in the eye, in-person.[101] There is value in what is "real" beyond what a screen or a book can communicate. As Leahy explained, "People leave an imprint. They leave their cultural DNA in the places they visit, and if you look hard enough, it speaks to you, too. This imprint cannot be fully captured or experienced in any other way."[102]

**Although technology will continue to progress and virtual platforms will edge closer to imitating real-life experiences, it is unlikely people will entirely forgo authentic experiences for simulated ones.** Case in point: Even as the pandemic raged on, people found ways to come together safely, not just virtually but in-person. Balconies, for example, emerged as places bridging neighbors as they were serenaded or led through exercise classes. In fact, in our interviews, we heard a story of how standing on an apartment building rooftop, cheering loudly for healthcare workers, led to new friendships forming among neighbors at a time when relationship-building seemed like an impossibility.[103] By merely crossing the threshold of their homes to their balconies or roof terraces, people instantaneously became part of a movement—and a community.

This goes to show how people seek people, regardless of the circumstances. Advances in technology will not change that fundamental desire, though it may create the opportunity, as noted above, for reimaging places—both in terms of their purpose and how they are designed.

Interestingly, however, regardless of how our cultures and our spaces evolve due to the pandemic, it is the laughter, the tears, the cooking, the friendships, and the chatter that will remain in the spaces we inhabit—long after we physically occupy them. These moments become folded forever into the DNA of the places in which they occurred. Even when a building is no more, its "placeness" will linger on in the memories of those lucky enough to have been part of it.

Such is the enduring nature of place, and what we strive for as architects, planners, and designers.

"People leave an imprint. They leave their cultural DNA in the places they visit, and if you look hard enough, it speaks to you, too. This imprint cannot be fully captured or experienced in any other way." [102]

NICHOLAS LEAHY
PERKINS EASTMAN CO-CEO

# CASE *Studies*

The following Perkins Eastman case studies have been included to help demonstrate the twelve placemaking attributes, and represent multiple building types and scales: city, building, and interior. These examples are meant to provide inspiration and can be a starting point upon which the design community can build and expand.

# PROJECT *Attributes*

| ATTRIBUTES | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Accessible | Captivating | Activated | Gradient | Supportive | Understandable | Safe | Healthy | Sensory | Proportional | Customizable | Authentic |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | Tauck |
| | ■ | | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | SAP |
| ■ | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | | | | ■ | | Canvas |
| ■ | | ■ | | | | ■ | | ■ | | | | Friendship |
| | ■ | | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | | ■ | | | Cleveland |
| | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | Dunbar |
| | | ■ | ■ | | ■ | | ■ | | ■ | | ■ | Ashoka |
| | | | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | | ■ | | ■ | Providence |
| ■ | | | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | | | ■ | | Koch |
| | ■ | | ■ | | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | | ■ | TKTS |
| | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | ■ | Target |
| | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | | | The Wharf |

**PROJECTS**

# Tauck Inc. Corporate Headquarters Relocation

## WILTON, CT

**①**

**AUTHENTIC:** The client curates its firm culture around everyone feeling like a family, so this familial feeling and the homey atmosphere they strive for is reinforced through design features including a fireplace, warm-colored finishes, and a harvest-style meeting table that is reminiscent of a family dinner table.

**②**

**SUPPORTIVE:** Options to easily plug in electronics anticipate people's needs and cater to them in an elegant fashion, reducing frustrations and workarounds.

**③**

**SENSORY:** Connection to nature is critical to this organization's culture. In response, rich, textured, and natural materials reinforce the company's values and culture and provide a sense of connection, calm, and serenity.

**④**

**HEALTHY:** Because the organization highly values access to nature, the design ensures visual and physical access to the outdoors, and supports work and leisure activities both indoors and out.

**⑤**

**UNDERSTANDABLE:** Both the flooring pattern and color define the collaboration area, communicating not only the functional change and behavioral opportunities of the space but also signaling that a person may be getting closer to the glass wall.

**⑥**

**CUSTOMIZABLE:** The furniture feels visually light and some pieces include handles that invite people to move them into arrangements that suit their needs. The armchairs can spin to face the breathtaking views or to face a group of colleagues. In addition, partitions can be maneuvered to add visual and auditory privacy.
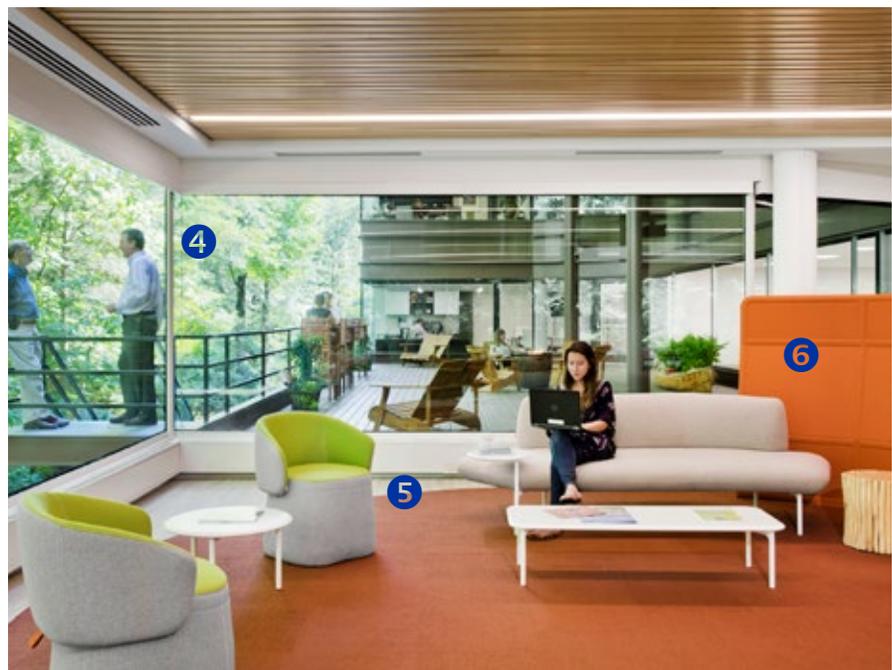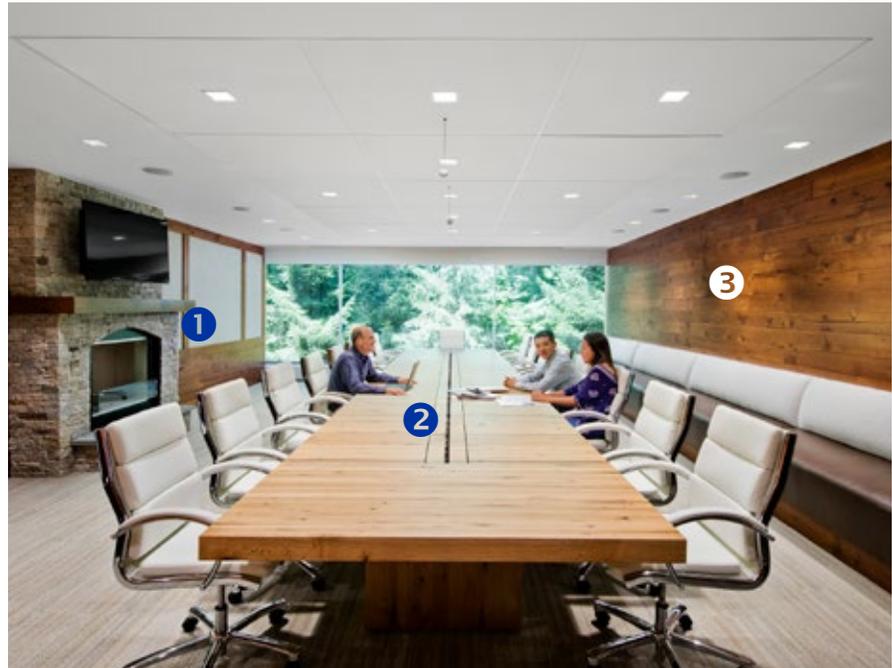
# SAP Pittsburgh Office
## PITTSBURGH, PA
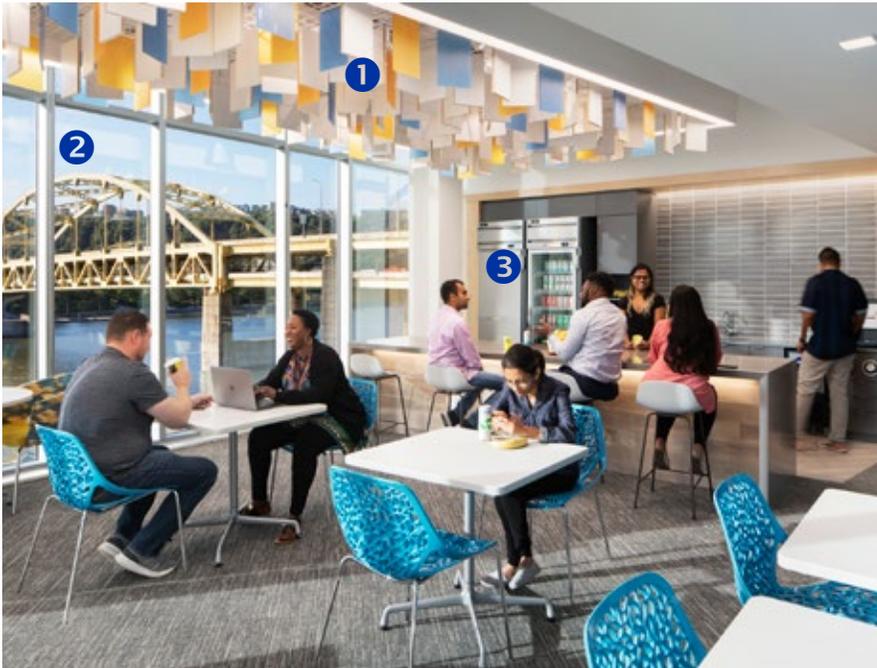


**1**

**AUTHENTIC:** The inspiration for colors, textures, and installations in the office interior can be found in the locality's rich palette of places, ecology, industries, and history.

**2**

**CAPTIVATING:** The different lighting techniques and unique ceiling treatment create a stunning feature on several floors, which can be seen from the bridge and across the river. This installation provides a unique example of an interior design impacting the exterior architecture and those driving by it.

**3**

**HEALTHY:** The design supports holistic wellness: A break room filled with daylight and views buoys cognitive well-being; spaces that gather people from across the firm reinforce socio-emotional health by encouraging casual conversations and the potential for forming diverse friendships; and healthy nourishment options help employees maintain their physical health.

**4**

**SUPPORTIVE:** Every detail in a workplace is important and can enhance or hinder productivity. Examples include the ergonomics of the furniture; equipment and technology; daylight; and access to work spaces with varying degrees of privacy and/or collaboration.

**5**

**GRADIENT:** Variety of spaces that range from open/shared spaces (workstations) to enclosed and semi-enclosed zones (quiet rooms, meeting rooms), allow staff to choose settings that best support their tasks, be they collaborative or focused.

**6**

**CUSTOMIZABLE:** An elegant and simple backdrop encourages personalization and self-expression at particular locations, which in turn enhances the staff's sense of community and ownership over their personal space.
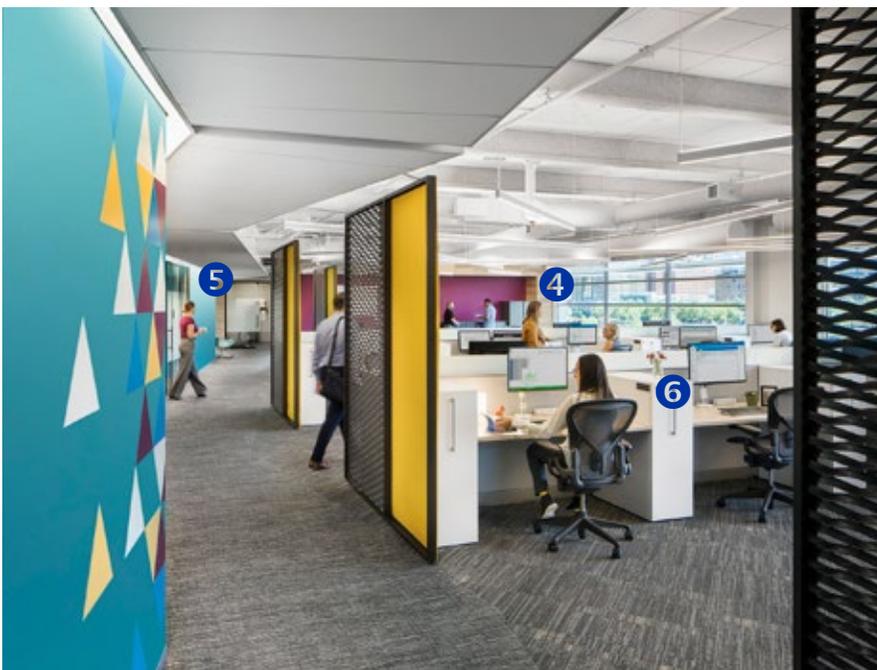
# Canvas: Valley Forge

KING OF PRUSSIA, PA

**❶**

**CAPTIVATING:** The rich materials, elegant textures, tall coffered ceilings, and floor-to-ceiling glass that melts the boundary between the inside and out work together to communicate a sense of unassuming grandeur and holistic well-being.

**❷**

**ACCESSIBLE:** Clear, open, and unobstructed paths with views to the outdoors balanced by column and furniture arrangements add visual complexity, mystery, and excitement through hiding small parts of the space for people to discover unhindered.

**❸**

**SAFE:** Warm-colored tones, soft furniture, intimate seating arrangements, round tables, and elegant columns frame the space and communicate a sense of containment, safety, care, and comfort.

**❹**

**CUSTOMIZABLE:** Movable furniture and empty corners invite people to create a private nook for two, and pocket doors can be closed to seal out noises from nearby gatherings.

**❺**

**ACTIVATED:** One or more activities are visible to people from their seat around the table. This layout activates the place and piques people's interests, encouraging them to engage in more social or reflective activities beyond the one they are currently experiencing.

**❻**

**UNDERSTANDABLE:** The layered elements in this space enhance the sequential readability and ease of navigation. For instance, a unique yet recognizable chandelier signals from afar that grouped seating may lay ahead. The patterned rug creates a stark contrast to the wood flooring and defines the dining area from the surrounding circulation path. A grand yet warm wood portal frames the entrance, transporting people from one experience to another.
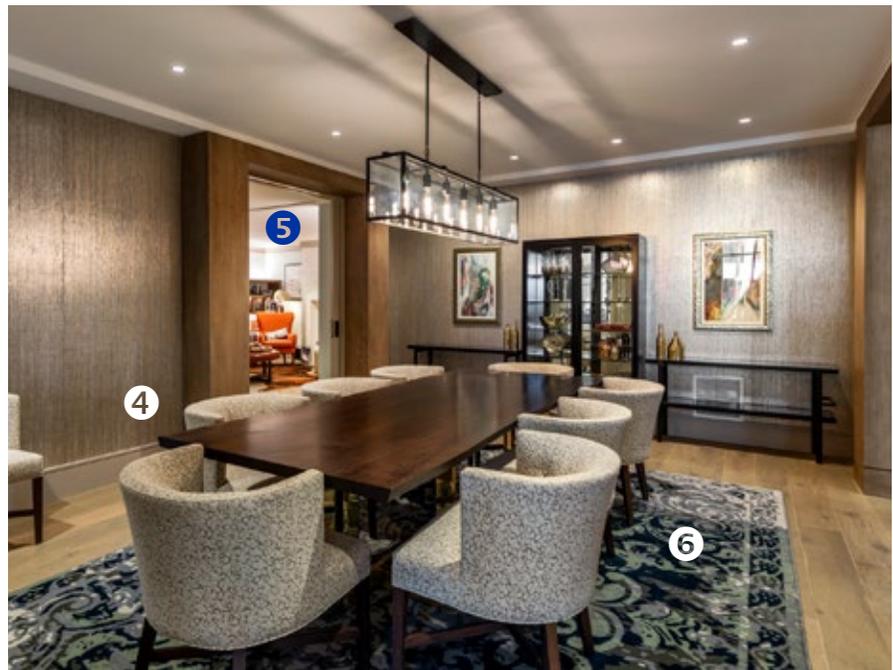
# Lifespace: Friendship Village of South Hills

## UPPER ST. CLAIR, PA



**1**

**SENSORY:** Natural materials that have sensorial value can be key to creating comforting senior-living environments without being exclusively nostalgic. A range of materials with varying textures can add visual and tactile interest, while a fireplace can exude warmth and auditory delight from its crackling wood. For most of us, these features create comfort and joy.

**2**

**ACTIVATED:** The environment can encourage routines and vibrancy, such as setting a table, gathering for a meal, curling up with a book, meeting for communal musical events, or simply observing the weather or seasonal changes through abundant windows.

**3**

**ACCESSIBLE:** Wide, clear paths with seamless flooring transitions mean that those who are living with mobility challenges can be self-sufficient, maintaining dignity and self-esteem.
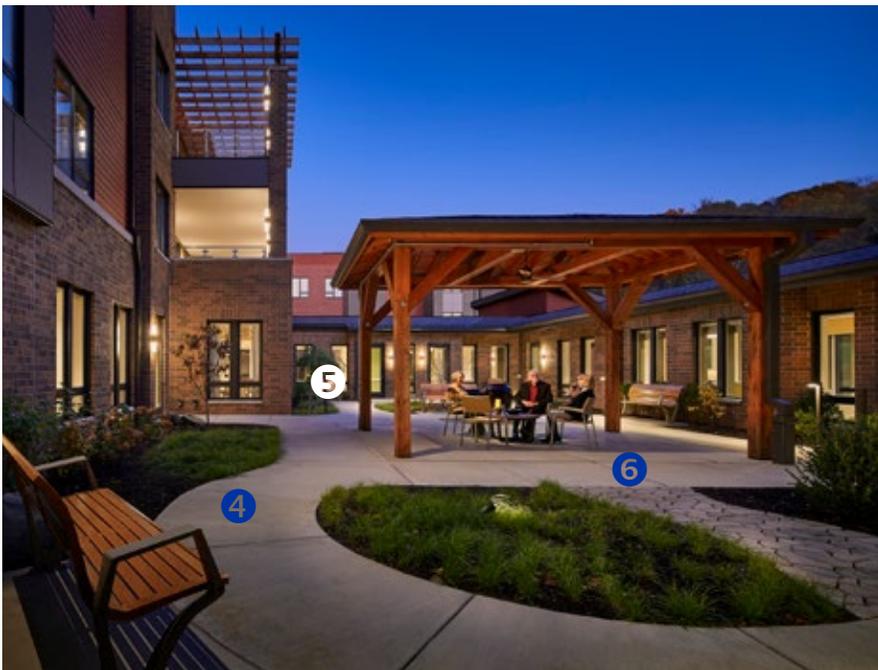
**4**

**SAFE**: Enclosed exterior spaces allow everyone to spend time outside, creating opportunities to benefit emotionally, physically, and cognitively from being out in nature. For those living with cognitive decline, a looping path can be meditative and reassuring.

**5**

**SENSORY:** The feel of textures like grass, brick, wood, or pavement under one's feet can be stimulating, familiar, and joyful. Being in nature provides a rich sensory experience, including scents from plantings, the sounds of birdsong, the feel of a warm or cool breeze, the heat emanating from a sunbaked rock, or the coolness of the shade under a tree.

**6**

**ACCESSIBLE:** Varied paving patterns along pathways can create visual interest while demarcating spaces without sacrificing accessibility.

DC Public Library:
Cleveland Park

WASHINGTON, DC

PRACTICE AREA: GOVERNMENT
PLACE SCALE: BUILDING + INTERIORS
CLIENT: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC LIBRARY
DESIGN TEAM[108]

**1**

**GRADIENT:** Multiple seating types can appeal to various users. From the excitement of sitting on a step as a child, to perching at a counter-height table, or reading in a comfortable chair framed by a window, there is a special spot for everyone.

**2**

**HEALTHY:** Abundant sunlight that washes the space, stairs that encourage physical activity, and natural wood that invokes the outdoors all contribute to an overall sense of wellness.

**3**

**PROPORTIONAL:** This space is broken down into multiple scales to appeal to the youngest of visitors as well as adults. The light, floating stairs also ensure the space feels airy and open to all.

**4**

**CAPTIVATING:** A charming and playful tree (disguising a structural column) draws children's eyes, creates a gathering place, and can inspire a memorable moment of delight.

**5**

**SAFE:** Comfortable seating, rounded edges, and soft carpeting ensure this part of the library is safe and appealing to young guests.

**6**

**SUPPORTIVE:** Ample daylight, various seating options, and plenty of books within reach contribute to a pleasant visit to the library, fueling children's imaginations and igniting their love of learning.

# Dunbar High School
## WASHINGTON, DC
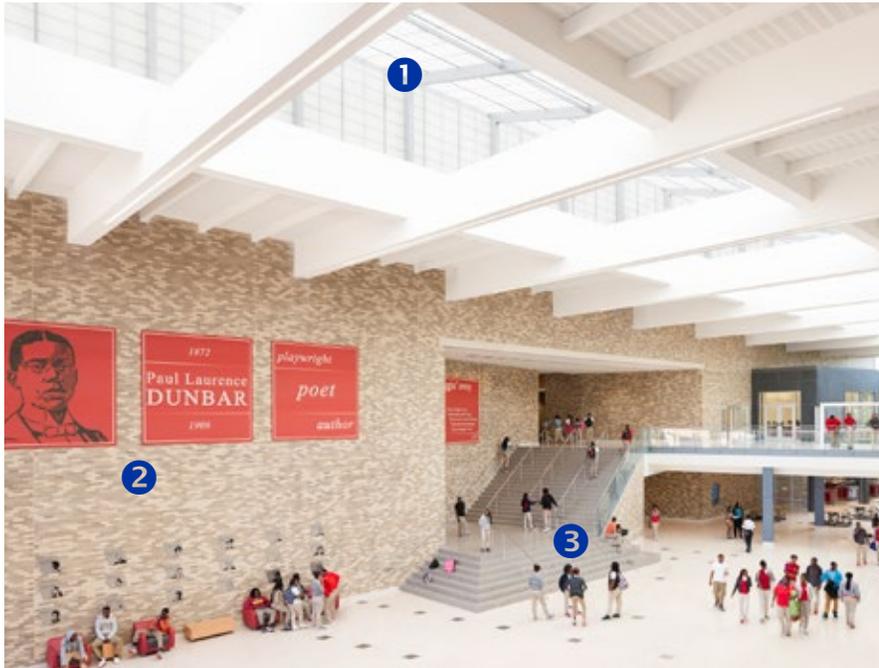




**1**

**HEALTHY:** This LEED Platinum building offers ample amounts of natural light, healthy materials, and opportunities for activity, nutrition, socialization, and rejuvenation.

**2**

**AUTHENTIC:** Wall graphics pay homage to: the building's namesake, 200 notable alumni, and its contextual history, to provide inspiration for generations to come.

**3**

**CAPTIVATING:** A grand staircase centers the heart of the school—"The Armory"—creating connections and opportunities for chance encounters.

**4**

**GRADIENT:** Students can be visually connected even when on separate floors. In the cafeteria, options are also available for students to sit in groups in the middle of the space or at its edges.

**5**

**ACTIVATED:** The design allows students to come together in one space for various purposes, whether to eat, chat, or learn.

**6**

**CUSTOMIZABLE:** Movable furniture allows students and staff control over rearranging the space to accommodate their needs for various activities.

# Ashoka University
## SONEPAT, HARYANA, INDIA
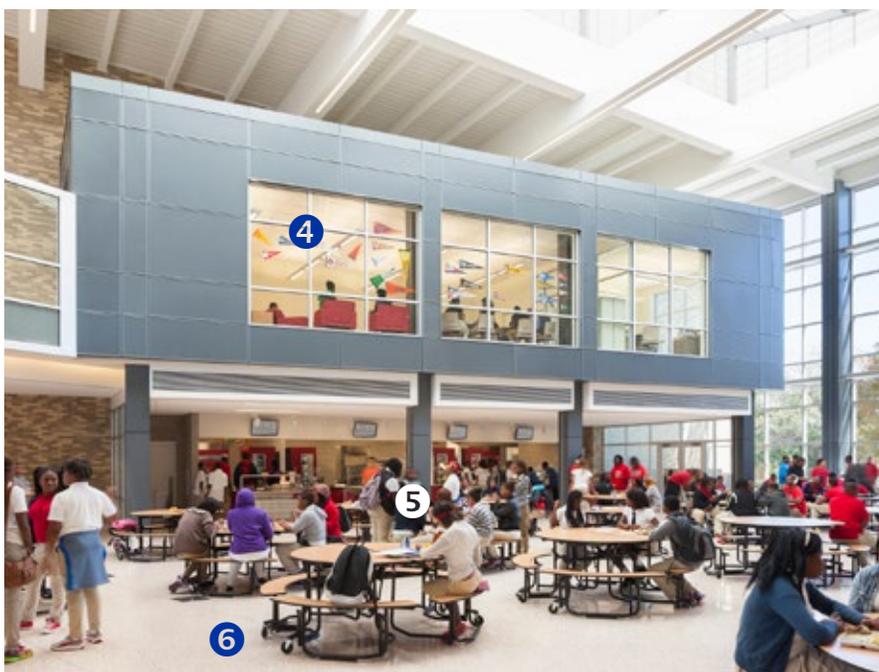
**1**

**PROPORTIONAL:** The building massing creates both small and grand scaled areas, which combine to create moments of awe as well as intimacy. Entrances of varying scales and sizes form threshold moments that transport people from one experience/space to another.

**2**

**ACTIVATED:** Several different sitting and standing options provide support for both group and individual lingering and usage.

**3**

**AUTHENTIC:** Inspired by local patterns and vernacular heating/cooling techniques, this intricate wall screen (which now serves as an icon for the university) links the campus to its context and local history.

**4**

**GRADIENT:** Balconies, group seating, benches along the main circulation path, and varying levels of translucency in the façades allow for different options of desired privacy and socialization.

**5**

**SENSORY:** Rich materials—such as stone, pebbles, grass, shrubs, and brick—can be experienced through multiple senses—visual, tactile, olfactory—helping to create memorable experiences.

**6**

**UNDERSTANDABLE:** A change in color, scale, and pattern signal the building's entrance, adds clarity, and draws people in the direction they need to travel.
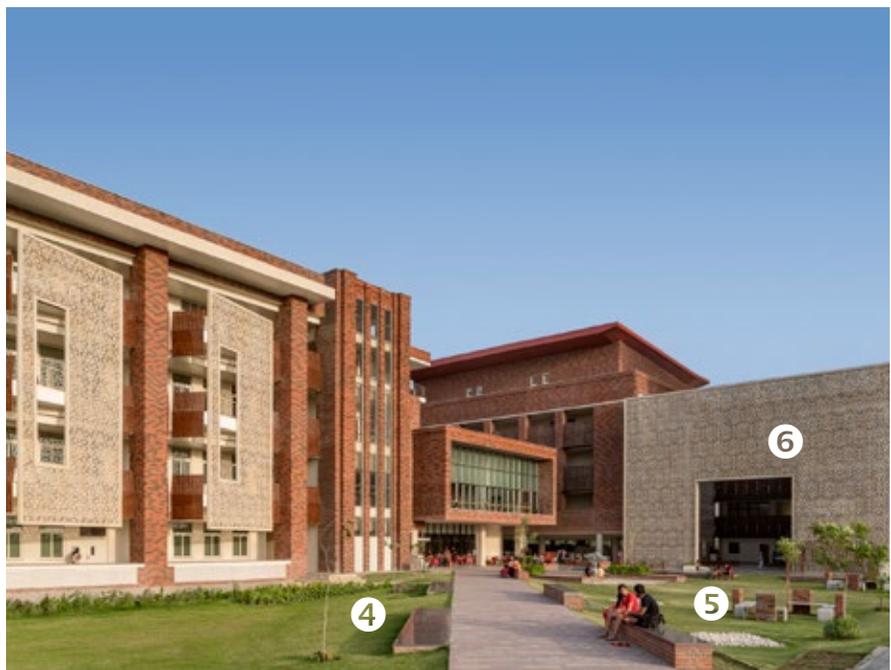
# Providence College: Ruane Friar Development Center

## PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND
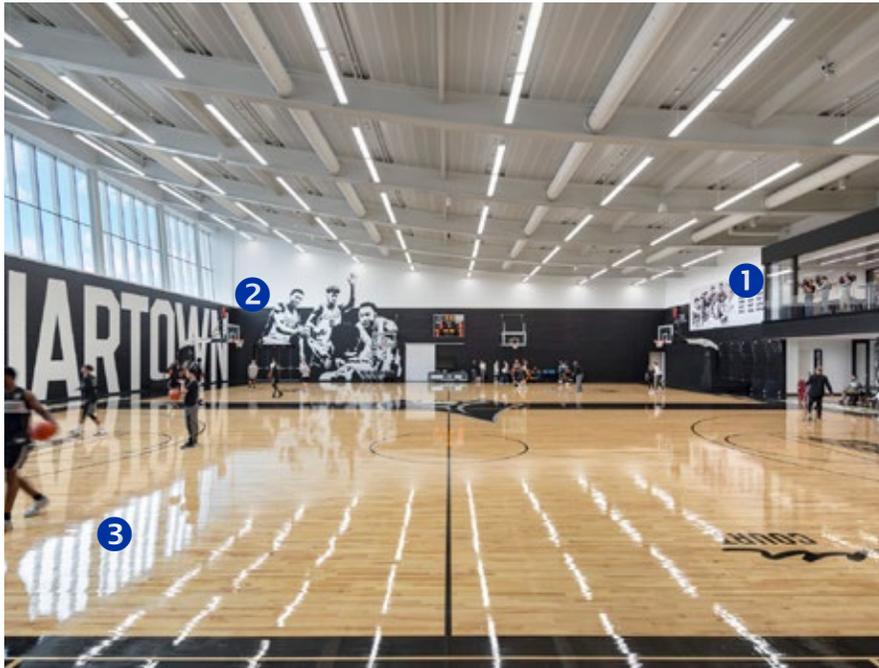


**1**

**GRADIENT:** A series of spaces with varying functions, privacy, and sizes offer athletes passive and active engagement with coaches, and teammates. For a future recruit and their family, the building journey arrives at a central viewing gallery overlooking the large hallowed courts—their future stage, and home.

**2**

**AUTHENTIC:** The courts—the team's sacred "temple"—are grand, and adorned with a mural of two Providence players helping up a fallen teammate, specifically chosen by coaches to reflect the team culture and spirit.

**3**

**SUPPORTIVE:** Through its openness, the building promotes strong connections between the coaches and players and supports the specific aspiration and philosophy of its coaches, namely; teamwork, mentorship, and comradery. The heart of the building—a state-of-the-art gym with abundant daylight—is a place for the team to gel, hone their abilities, grow and perform.

**4**

**PROPORTIONAL:** The new building—nestled within existing buildings—creates an enclosure around a track and feels human scaled despite housing massive sports facilities.

**5**

**HEALTHY:** Attractive, and functional outdoor athletic spaces surrounded by nature encourage physical activity while glass façades wash interior spaces with daylight contributing to holistic well-being.

**6**

**AUTHENTIC:** Transparent façades with views in and out of the building reflect Providence College's culture of integrating its sport team with the student body. Additionally, the building reflects the spirit, beauty, and aerodynamic qualities of the game through a sweeping roof that soars over the court in a gentle arc, lifting up for light to pour in.
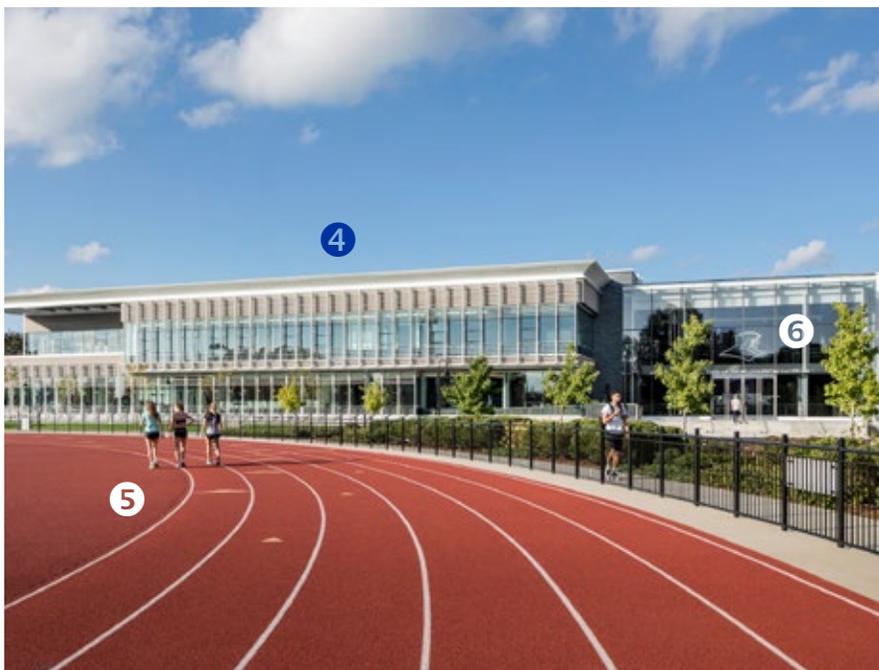
# The David H. Koch Center for Cancer Care at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

**NEW YORK, NY**

**1**

**SUPPORTIVE:** Natural patterns, curved lines, and wood finishes add visual interest, warmth, and a positive distraction for people seeking comfort and support.

**2**

**ACCESSIBLE:** The integration of advanced technology gives doctors and patients global access to the best care and resources.

**3**

**HEALTHY:** The wood selected for this space is a healthy material that also supports emotional wellness by radiating a sense of warmth and calm in a room that is traditionally cold and clinical.

**4**

**GRADIENT:** Varying space types, such as private areas for people to collect themselves and group seating for families to connect, meet the needs of different individuals looking to process difficult emotions in various ways.

**5**

**SUPPORTIVE:** Views to the outdoors, unique programming, and opportunities for positive distraction work together to provide relief, reduce stress, and combat the fatigue some people feel after having the same hospital experience month after month.

**6**

**CUSTOMIZABLE:** Movable furniture offers patients and visitors a degree of control over their space—not only to support the varied activities that occur here but also to allow for some autonomy at a time when people may feel they have lost control over many other aspects of their lives.
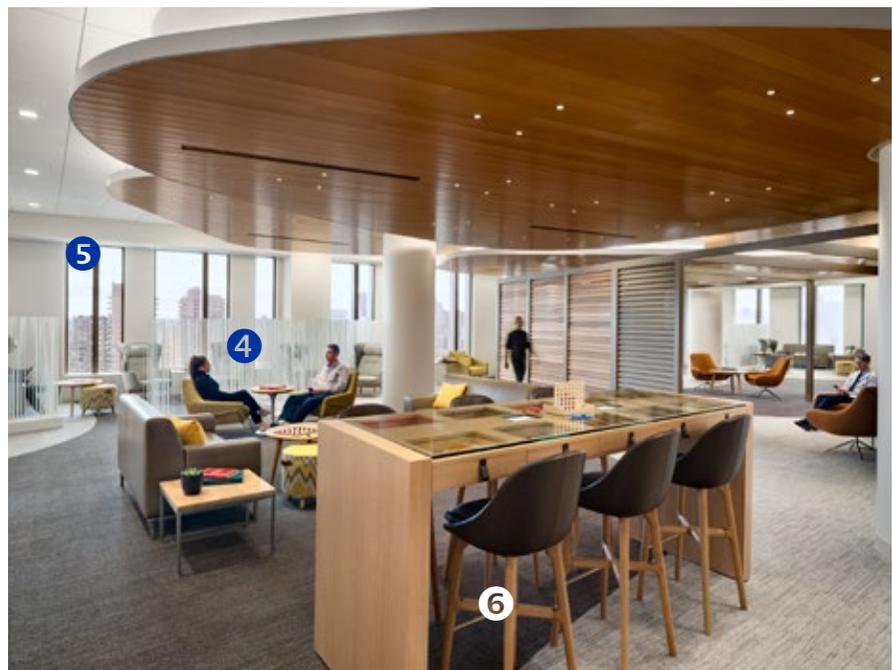
# TKTS Booth and the Redevelopment of Father Duffy Square

**NEW YORK, NY**
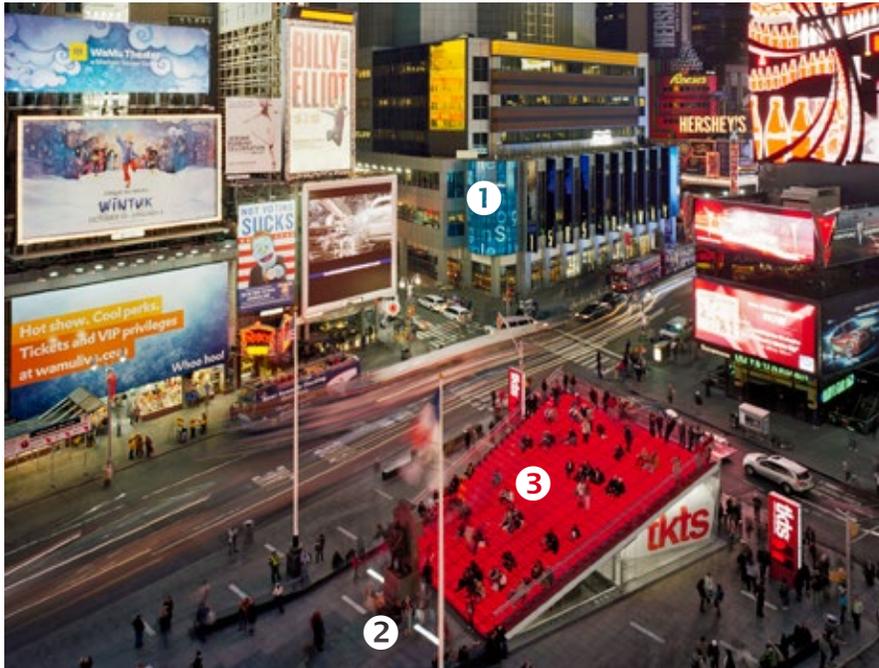




**1**

**PROPORTIONAL:** Adding a feature people are naturally drawn to climbing and sitting on, such as a staircase, creates a sense of human scale in the midst of the monumental square. Whether alone or in a group, people can sit and feel part of something bigger, without feeling dwarfed.

**2**

**AUTHENTIC:** The LED lit structure is at-home among the theaters, and high-tech, luminescent screens that make Times Square so iconic and dynamic. It glows as a jewel in one of the city's most recognizable places, celebrating people gathering in a true 21st century town square.

**3**

**SENSORY:** The structure is a unique and immersive sensorial experience that engulfs people with its vibrant red glow. Seated on the red steps, people can soak up the unique lights, sounds, and energy of this place and city.

**4**

**GRADIENT:** The steps offer varying degrees of visibility. Sitting/standing at the center, edge, top, or bottom of the steps, provides different perspectives and engagement degrees with the social dance of seeing versus being seen.

**5**

**CAPTIVATING:** The illuminated staircase transformed Times Square creating a destination for people in the middle of the energy and lights. A memorable viewing platform provides an elevated and safe perch to people watch, meet, and be part of the city. Featured in movies, songs and video-games, the structure is one of the most recognizable landmarks in the world and a desired feature in social media-friendly moments.

**6**

**UNDERSTANDABLE:** Clear, luminous, and recognizable red signs direct people and provide relevant information against a rich visual backdrop.
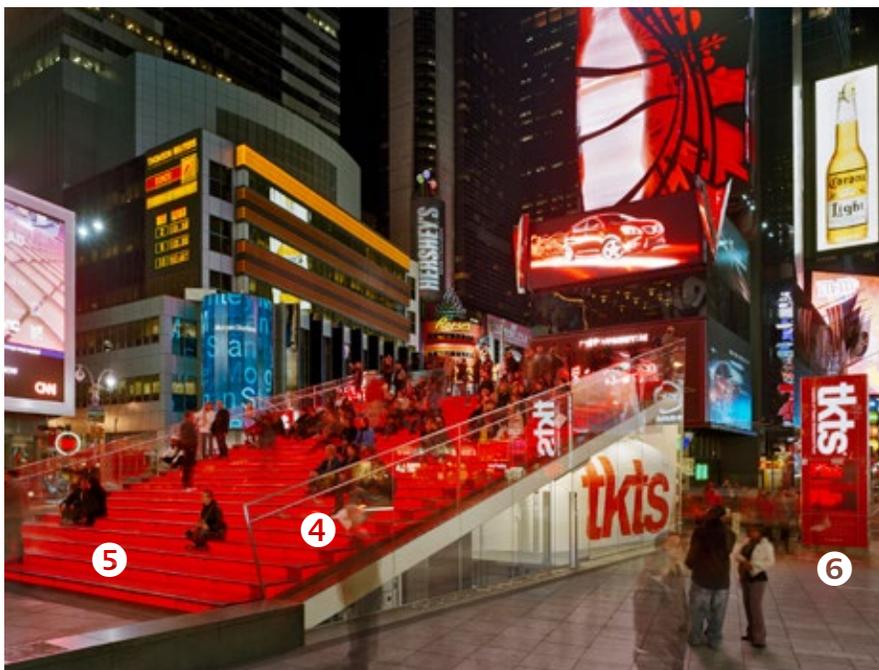
# Target Field Station

**MINNEAPOLIS, MN**

**1**

**ACTIVATED:** Ample seating activates the space during the day while thoughtful and plentiful lighting allows for activities and crowds to continue through the night evoking a sense of safety and welcome.

**2**

**AUTHENTIC:** The amphitheater's seating draws inspiration from the nearby Mississippi River cascades, subtly linking the station to the local context and geography.

**3**

**SAFE:** With many transit areas characterized as feeling unsafe, this design provides outlooks, open vistas, and lighting for people to see and understand the whole place from certain vantage points, increasing feelings of security.

**4**

**HEALTHY:** The beautiful lawn acts as a magnet for people looking for a communal game-watching experience or a convenient touch-point with nature and all its restorative value.

**5**

**UNDERSTANDABLE:** Linear paths and an easy-to-understand layout lead people organically to the node of activities and the functions they seek, whether it's the transit station, lush lawn for picnics and gatherings, or the amphitheater.

**6**

**CAPTIVATING:** Arcing across the transit canopy, a fascinating light show draws people to the station while adding visual interest and delight.
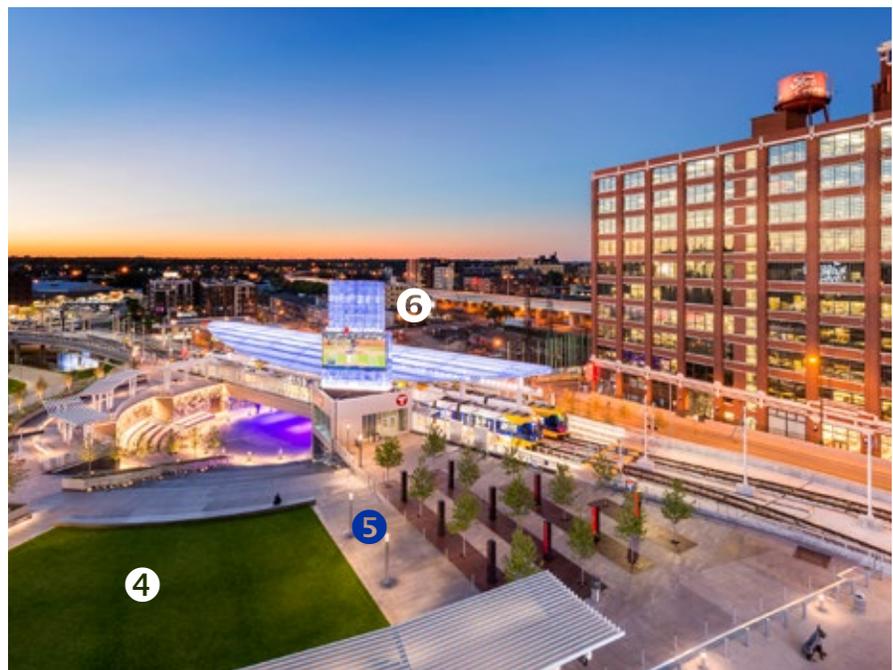
# The Wharf
## WASHINGTON, DC



**1 CAPTIVATING:** Multiple elements come together to create postcard moments that people can share and remember.

**2 SENSORY:** The movement, reflected light, and sound of water add a richness and depth to the place and heighten the spatial experience.

**3 PROPORTIONAL:** Smaller, human-scaled urban environments are creatively created within an otherwise massive project through simple details, like the intentional change in color and material in the first two to three stories of the building.

**4 ACTIVATED:** The design purposefully allows the convergence of multiple users and facets of life. People, whether walking or riding by, can enjoy the same waterfront space while engaging in myriad activities—from running, driving up to a restaurant, or simply stopping to enjoy the views.

**5 UNDERSTANDABLE:** Changing the paver colors and textures subtly yet clearly delineates pedestrian and vehicle paths. Rough pavers encourage drivers to slow down, while smoother ones make a walk more enjoyable.

**6 GRADIENT:** The space allows varying degrees of privacy and connectedness to suit people based on their activity and mood. One can choose to walk in the middle of the sidewalk, stand under the shade of a tree, or people-watch while enjoying a meal above the streetscape.
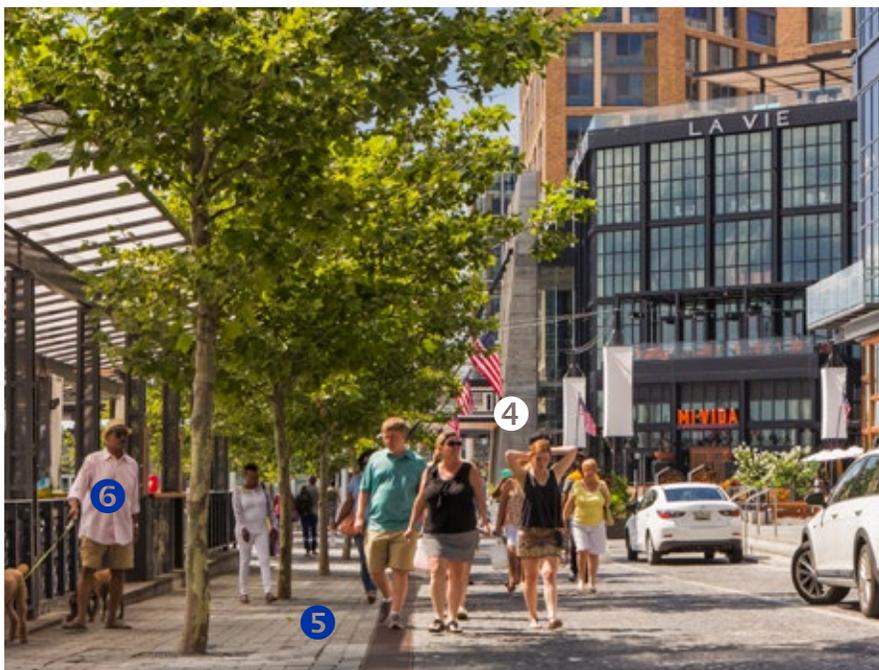
> 66
>
> … at its most genuine, the architectural
> impulse seems connected to a longing … to declare
> ourselves to the world through a register other than words,
> through the language of objects, colours and bricks:
> an ambition to let others know who we are —
> and, in the process, to remind ourselves.[116]
>
> 99
>
> *Alain de Botton*

# Research Team

## WHAT PLACE MEANS TO US
(In alphabetical order, by last name)

**Emily Chmielewski** EDAC
Design Research Director and Senior
Associate, Design Research

"The theory of place stems from
how we as human beings interact
with our environments and the way
our environment affects us. It has
developed from millennia of influence
and evolution. Place is and always will
be important."

**Danya Hakky** Ph.D.
Researcher and Interior Designer
Design Research and Workplace

"To speak of place is to speak of
self, family, community, homeland,
emotion, history, memory, and
hope. To be part of place creation is
tremendously humbling."

**Emily Scheffler**
Architectural Designer
Higher Education and Senior Living

"Place is a mental and physical
manifestation of self and how one fits
into the world."

# Contributors

## WHAT PLACE MEANS TO US

(In alphabetical order, by last name)

**Fawzia Ahmedali** AIA, NOMA, LEED AP
Associate Principal
Mixed Use/Multifamily

"Placemaking to me is creating a destination with a distinct identity that inspires, strengthens, and creates community."

**Joseph J. Aliotta** FAIA, LEED
Principal
Civic and Government

"Sometimes you need to find your moment, where you can create place within the constraints of the type of project and the client... Placemaking is an opportunity to fill a project with light and life."

**Matthew Bell** FAIA
Principal
Civic and Government

"As designers we have the opportunity *and* the obligation to design the building to be part of the context, part of defining and articulating a 'place,' one that enhances human interaction at all scales."

**Hilary Kinder Bertsch** FAIA
Principal
Large Scale Mixed-Use

"Unique places as designed, become future postcards marking special moments."

**Jeffrey Brand** AIA, EDAC
Principal and Executive Director
Healthcare

"When creating place in a hospital, you really have to look at the human side of things. The immutable human spirit is one that is optimistic and compassionate, sensitive, anxious, hopeful—and a hospital has to accommodate all that. It's more of an emotional building type for me than something else might be."

**Peter Cavaluzzi** FAIA
Principal and Board Director
Large Scale Mixed-Use

"Place is both physical and spiritual. If you think about a civic or religious building, a dome, a nave, or a tower all represent the way those specific places feel and the dreams, aspirations and cultural identity of the place and the shared human experience of the people."

**Vijo Cherian** AICP
Associate Principal
Large Scale Mixed-Use

"The most successful places are very carefully thought through, but not overly designed. You start with a clean slate, understand what the place *want*s to be, and you let it emerge."

**Eric Fang** AIA, AICP, LEED AP
Principal
Urban Design and Planning

"Place is not just a physical phenomenon; sometimes I like to think of it as comprised of hardware and software. The hardware is the physical infrastructure: the street walls, the landscape, the materiality of the buildings, etc. Then there's the software: ground level tenants, programming amenities, etc. It's all knit together into a larger narrative—the story of the place."

**Lindsay Fischer** RPP, MCIP
Design Strategist
Design Strategy Studio

"Successful public *places* have a democratizing effect on our populations. They engage and provoke us. They encourage us to move beyond what is comfortable or familiar. Because spaces that are accessible to a wide and diverse audience make up a large portion of our cities, they offer incredible opportunities that should not be wasted—there is big potential for big impact."

**Sabret Flocos** IIDA, Assoc. AIA, LEED AP
Principal
Workplace

"Place nourishes and enables a memory to be developed, evokes an emotion, facilitates learning and enables experiences to be scaled and repeated. In evolving work environments, adaptability, longevity and the strategic adoption of emerging data and AI help create places for sharing and collaborating towards common goals."

**Deborah Lloyd Forrest** FASID, ISHC
Founder and Principal | ForrestPerkins, a distinct studio of Perkins Eastman Hospitality

"In placemaking, both the subliminal and the obvious connect to capture the emotions. Whether through the use of big design features, or in the way the door handle is crafted and feels in [a person's] hand, design can connect people to places emotionally and physically."

**Connor Glass** IIDA
Principal and Board Director
Workplace

"The idea of place in a work environment is all about spaces that encourage connection and idea exchange. A successful workplace is a social network as much as it is a physical manifestation of a knowledge marketplace."

**Jason Harper** AIA, LEED AP
Principal and Board Director
Healthcare

"Creating places involves thinking about the stages of a journey ... breaking it down into a map of an experience, thinking about parts of that journey that are static and parts that are more movement from place to place ... There is an intentionality to creating a place and ensuring it is distinguishable and memorable."

**Chhavi Lal** IIA, IUDI,
LEED Green Associate
Associate Principal

"*Place is a layering of history, culture, and climate* in a physical environment enlivened by communities through everyday events, entertainment and festivals. *Placemaking* is designing this environment that is a canvas for people to fill with their activities, interactions, play, and artwork bringing in vibrancy. The most *endearing places are ones that invoke strong feelings* of vitality, bonding, thriving, nostalgia, inspiration, and comfort."

**Nicholas Leahy** AIA, LEED AP
Co-CEO and Executive Director
Civic and Culture

"Meaning is a big part of placemaking, and different people will bring different layers of meaning to something based on their history and context."

**David Levo** AICP
Principal and Board Director
Higher Education

"Meaningful places can connect you to all the choices you made through your life, they connect you to different scales of [your] community and simultaneously connect you deeper into yourself as an individual."

**Leslie G. Moldow**
FAIA, LEED AP
Principal
Senior Living

"Placemaking involves understanding a culture from its roots; from the depth of what is profound; the underpinnings of what is important to that culture ... There is an advantage, if you know how to use it, to jump-start this sense of meaning and place through the use of significant symbols."

**Barbara Mullenex** AIA
Managing Principal
Mixed-Use Interiors and Architecture,
Workplace, Hospitality

"Placemaking is putting yourself in the shoes of the user and thinking, 'What is my experience? What are the intimate details of my day-to-day needs?' And then designing for that."

**Sean O'Donnell** FAIA, LEED AP

Principal
Primary and Secondary Education

"Placemaking is a process, and it's different for everybody. If we do it right, then each school will be unique and specifically tailored to that culture and the identity of its place."

**Omar Calderon Santiago** AIA

Principal
K-12, Multifamily Residential,
Higher Ed, Senior Living

"It is not enough to be *in* a place, but we aspire to be *of* the place. This is the charge we are called for in creating places. This point of view is both an aspiration and the focus of our labor. Seemingly impossible, the task beckons us to ignore pastiche in favor of the authentic and above all, elevate experience and our relationship to the world, both natural and built."

**Scott Schiamberg** AIA, AICP, LEED

Principal and Board Director
Sports and Exhibition

"Place has character and identity. It's unique. You're going *somewhere*; it's not generic."

**Martin Siefering** AIA

Principal
Senior Living

"In senior living, something like setting the table or raking leaves can be experiences that are valuable... If your experience as a child in your front yard is associated with raking leaves, that place in your mind—the front yard, the smell of raking leaves, the feel of the autumn breeze—became part of your placemaking."

**Jennifer Sodo** AIA, LEED AP BD+C

Senior Associate
Senior Living

"A good place is memorable, distinctive, and identifiable. It has a story based in history, or a community, or a geography, so that it's either telling a story or recalling a story that is grounding this space with meaning."

**Sean Sullivan** Assoc. AIA, LEED GA

Senior Living

"A place is different than a location. A location can simply be coordinates on a map. In order to give that location a sense of 'place,' we must try to create destinations that draw people in. Giving them a reason to visit will allow them to connect to the true essence of that place."

**Mark Van Summern**
AIA, NCARB
Principal
Workplace

"Place for me is outdoors. That's the architecture I love."

**Zihan Wang** AIA, NCARB, LEED AP
Architect
Senior Living

"Place provides a sense of identity. Living creatures are tuned to be on a search for their identity. Good place-making can genuinely provide that, and sometimes, a true understanding across cultures, ethnicities, and history."

**Max Winters** RA
Senior Associate
Senior Living

"Placemaking in senior living is trying to strike the balance between something that is very scripted and predictable from an operations standpoint, but also leaving it open to interpretation for someone to live there and make it their own."

**Jeff Young** AIA
Principal and Board Director
Workplace | Commercial / Mixed-Use

"Workplaces post-COVID will be about celebrating coming back together again, and the right spaces can enhance that experience. In a virtual world, it's impossible to recreate the collisions, the accidentalness that connect people to each other and their organization."

**Ahmed Zaman** AIA, NOMA
Associate
Workplace

"Placemaking is the act of carving out a public realm within the urban fabric of our cities. From antiquity through today, we've seen a vested interest and prioritization in examining how placemaking can be a catalyst for urban cultural expression. Looking towards the future, I am most interested in seeing how public-private partnerships can garner a creative model to sustaining our cities through the vehicle of placemaking."

# ENDNOTES

## PLACE | AN INTRODUCTION

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**THE ENDURING NATURE OF PLACE**

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**CASE STUDIES**

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105 Perkins Eastman / CJL Engineering (MEP/FP) / Atlantic Engineering Services (Structural Engineering)

106 ForrestPerkins, a distinct Studio of Perkins Eastman / KTGY Architecture + Planning (Architects) / The Lighting Practice (Lighting Designer) / Ray Cavicchio (Photography)

107 Perkins Eastman / Greystone (Development Manager) / Lecesse (Construction Manager / Contractor) / JR Gales & Associates (Civil Site) / Alderson Engineering (MEP) / Barber & Hoffman (Structural) / Victor-Wetzel Associates (Landscape) / FFC (Food Service) / Direct Supply Inc. (Low Voltage) / BranchPattern (Building Enclosure Commissioning Consultant)

108 Perkins Eastman DC (Design/Builder) / Perkins Eastman (Architect) / Leftwich LLC (Legal) / Brailsford & Dunlavey, Inc. (Program Manager) / Gilbane Building Co (Design/Builder) / Saxon Collaborative Construction (Design/Builder Protégé) / A. Morton Thomas (Civil Engineer) / Setty & Associates (MEP Engineer) / Landscape Architecture Bureau (Landscape Consultant) / Library Planning Associates (Library Consultant) / Stroik Lighting (Lighting Consultant) / ReStl Designers (Structural Engineer) / Heller & Metzger (Sustainability Consultant) / Shen Milsom & Wilke LLC (AV/IT/Acoustical) / In-Posse (Sustainability) / Gorove Slade Associates Inc. (Traffic Engineer)

109 Perkins Eastman / Smoot/Gilbane, a Joint Venture (Contractor) / Moody Nolan (Associate Architect) / Setty & Associates (MEP/FP) / SK&A (Structural Engineer) / SM&W (AV/IT/Acoustics) / Applied Environmental Inc. (Environmental Consultant) / A. Morton Thomas & Associates (Civil Engineer/Landscape) / Project Cost Inc. (Cost Estimator) / Heller & Metzger (Spec Writer) / Sustainable Design Consulting (Sustainability Consultant) / ECS Mid-Atlantic (Geotechnical Engineering) / Aquatic Design Group (Pool Design) / Nyikos (Kitchen Design)

110 Perkins Eastman Design Consultants India Pvt. Ltd. / Space Matters, New Delhi (Local Architect) / Abaxial Architects Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi (Interior Designer) / BMSF Design Consultants Pvt. Ltd., Gurgaon (Structural Designer) / Ampower Consultancy Services, New Delhi (Electrical Engineers) / T2 Consulting Group, Bangalore (Acoustics and AV Planning) / Techno Consultants, New Delhi (LV and IT Planning) / Satish Khanna – Associates, New Delhi (Landscape Design) / Environmental Design Solutions, New Delhi (Environmental Assessment)

111 Perkins Eastman, Dimeo Construction Company, Robert Silman Associates, Caputo & Wick LTD., Arden Engineering, Sterling Engineering, Wilkinson Associates, The Skyline Group, HLB Lighting Design, Thornton Tomasetti, Advent, Jensen Hughes, Fennessy Consulting Service, Outside the Frame

112 Perkins Eastman Architects in association with Ennead Architects (Architects) / Perkins Eastman Architects (Medical Planning) / Perkins Eastman Architects (Interior Design, Clinical Spaces) / ICRAVE (Experiential and Interior Design, Public Spaces) / Jaros Baum & Bolles (MEP Engineer) / Thornton Tomasetti (Structural Engineer) / Turner Construction Company (Construction Manager)

113 Perkins Eastman (Architect) / Choi-Ropiha Architects (Concept) / PKSB Architects (Plaza) / Dewhurst MacFarlane and Partners (Structural Engineer & Façade Consultant) / Judith Heintz Landscape Architects (Landscape Architect) / Bresnan Architects (Preservation) / D. Haller Inc. (Construction Manager) / Lewis Engineers (MEP Engineers) / DMJM Harris (Civil & Geotechnical Engineer) / Fischer Marantz Stone (Lighting Consultant)

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