



CHARLOTTE
URBAN DESIGN
CENTER

CITY OF CHARLOTTE PLACEMAKING GRANT APPLICATION GUIDE

March 2026



2023 Placemaking Grant, Georgie Nakima

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NOTICE OF ACCOMMODATIONS

The City of Charlotte is committed to making our services and programs accessible to all. Upon request, auxiliary aids, written materials in alternative formats, language access and other reasonable accommodations or modifications will be provided.

To make a request, please email Ria.Naab@charlottenc.gov or call (980) 297-9105.





WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

PLACEMAKING

Project to Public Spaces defines placemaking as a hands-on process that inspires people to reinvent and reimagine their public spaces in a way that contributes to their health, happiness, and well-being.

Spaces should be vibrant and active, serving the needs, wants, and hopes of the communities where they live. The Charlotte Urban Design Center sees placemaking as a collaborative process to better connect community members to the spaces and people around them.

PUBLIC REALM AND PUBLIC SPACE

Publicly owned spaces that anyone can enter for free including streets, sidewalks, parking spaces, right-of-ways, alleys, plazas, greenways, odd-shaped “leftover” land, floodplains, buffers, etc.

STREETSCAPES

Everything that you can see on a street including the actual road, the fronts of buildings, sidewalks, benches, trees, medians, and plantings that combine to form a sense of place.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The constructed elements that create the places where we live, learn, work, and play from buildings to curbs and roadways, and everything in between. The quality of the built environment can influence health, safety, and economic opportunity within a community.

RIGHT-OF-WAY

Transportation easements that encompass all the land that sits between private property. Typically this includes a roadway and sidewalks but sometimes can extend several yards past the sidewalk.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The elements, buildings, plants, and people that define a place and combine to give it an “identity.”

HOW CAN PLACEMAKING IMPACT THE COMMUNITY?

Small projects can have a big social impact, like making fresh food more accessible with community gardens, improving comfort with bus stop benches, or preserving culture through celebrating community stories. What broader opportunities or issues do you see in your daily life where placemaking can help?



CITY OF CHARLOTTE PLACEMAKING PROGRAM

Within the City of Charlotte Planning, Design & Development Department, the Urban Design Center uses urban design and placemaking to transform underutilized public spaces into vibrant places for people. The City of Charlotte’s Placemaking Program was launched in 2018 to create opportunities for neighborhoods and residents to use placemaking to promote community collaboration and accomplish public space goals.

Charlotte’s Placemaking Project Grant Program provides project funding and technical support to residents to create and enhance community vibrancy, safety, and creative identity through:

- Activation of leftover and/or underutilized spaces
- Streetscape improvements
- Art and beautification efforts
- Creation of community gathering spaces

CHECK OUT THE PLACEMAKING HUB!*

Select project how-to guides and our placemaking manual can be found at the [Placemaking Hub](#).

** Note: grant applicants do not need to submit a separate Placemaking Permit Application.*

“Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community.”

-Project for Public Spaces



2022 Placemaking Grant, Hasheem Halim



CITY OF CHARLOTTE PLACEMAKING GRANT

Do you have a specific project idea to address an issue or opportunity in your neighborhood? Are you ready to design and implement a project with the help of your project team and city staff? If yes, use this guide to complete your grant application!

The Grant includes:

- Design assistance
- Help choosing materials
- Coordination with other city departments
- Help obtaining necessary approvals or permitting
- Communication and support for community meetings



** Grantees issued funding by the City of Charlotte's Placemaking Program may be issued a 1099, creating potential tax liability. While the funds are meant to be a reimbursement program to implement placemaking projects, grantees are encouraged to reach out to a tax professional to better understand prospective responsibilities.*



2025 Placemaking Grant, Makayla Binter



GRANT OBJECTIVES

Empower neighborhoods, individuals, and businesses to define the character and identity of their communities.

Provide opportunities for local artists to work with communities and enhance the city's public realm.

Promote collaboration between residents and business owners to better leverage public and private land for community use in Charlotte.

Activate our public spaces and infrastructure to create safer, more vibrant, and unique character to Charlotte's neighborhoods.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Neighborhood and homeowners associations
- Community organizations
- Businesses or merchant organizations
- Individuals in a project team (minimum of three people)
- Applicant groups must be significantly composed of people who live within the city of Charlotte limits

This application is through the City of Charlotte's Urban Design Center (UDC). Please note that receiving grant funding does not constitute city approval of your project. If you are selected, the UDC will assist you with communication and collaboration across city departments to obtain the necessary permits and permissions prior to installation.



PLACEMAKING GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

To begin, follow these steps from forming an idea to gathering and submitting your application materials. If you need assistance please reach out to the Urban Design Center. Email Ria Naab at Ria.Naab@charlottenc.gov with questions or concerns.

1. FORM A TEAM

Gather a group of 3 or more people and assign roles. Diverse backgrounds enrich the project!

2. DEVELOP AN IDEA

Pick a project type, location, and write a project description (250 word maximum).

3. SITE DOCUMENTATION

Take measurements and photos of the location you plan to put your project.

4. LETTERS OF SUPPORT

All projects need documented support from the neighborhood association and property owner of your project location. See page 16 for more.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Describe your strategy for engaging your community to participate in planning meetings and your outreach efforts. Consider potential partnerships with local groups, businesses, and organizations.



6. PRELIMINARY DESIGN

This is a visual representation and can be hand drawn or created on a computer. Graphic ability is not important! You may also submit case studies of similar existing projects in Charlotte or other municipalities.

7. COST ESTIMATE

Applications should include an estimated amount of funding from \$5,000 to \$25,000 with breakdown of costs. Items over \$1000 will require a quote. Please see page 18 to get a better understanding of how much your project might cost.

8. MAINTENANCE AND/OR PROGRAMMING PLAN

Some projects require periodic maintenance to ensure longevity. If you plan to host community events, you will need to write a schedule with basic details.

9. REVIEW YOUR APPLICATION

Use the checklist on page 15 to ensure you have all the materials you need before you submit!



“Everyone has the right to live in a great place. More importantly, everyone has the right to contribute to making the place where they already live great.”

-Fred Kent



2024 Placemaking Grant, Luke Giduz



DEVELOPING A PLACEMAKING PROJECT IDEA

To begin, think about your **neighborhood or community**:

- Who else lives here? What are their needs?
- What amenities does it already have?
- Where does the community gather? What kind of events bring people together?

Next, consider **where** might your project be located. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What spaces are not being used and why?
- Which areas are more accessible for pedestrians?
- Spaces both large and small have the potential to become a beautiful place for your community!

PLACEMAKING PROJECT LOCATIONS

The first step to a great placemaking project is choosing a location. The goal of placemaking is to turn a space into a place, so it is important to consider where a project can make the most impact. Busy or quiet, big or small, placemaking projects can make large and lasting change in a community. When choosing your location, consider what areas need beautification, activity vs peace, accessibility, or resources. Grant projects must be accessible to all members of the public. As part of your grant application, you will need letters of approval from affiliated landowners, neighbors, and associations (see page 16 for more details).

PARKS / PLAZAS



SIDEWALKS



CITY-OWNED PUBLIC SPACES



STREETS/CROSSINGS



BLANK WALLS



UNDERUTILIZED LOTS





PLACEMAKING PROJECT TYPES

Below are the types of placemaking projects that will be considered for a funding. All projects and locations must be approved by the City of Charlotte and property owners.



WALL MURALS



STREET FURNITURE *



STREET PARKLETS *



SWINGS



SIDEWALK DINING *



POP-UP PLAZA/ PARK *



BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE *

Projects that absorb/filter water, remove air pollutants, or reduce energy use.



COMMUNITY AGRICULTURE *

Two-year timeline showing community commitment and training needed.



Thinking about something different? We love new ideas! Submit yours and the Urban Design Center can help you create a plan to see it through.



PAINTED CROSSWALKS



BICYCLE PARKING



PLAYSCAPES *



STREET MURALS



PAINTED TRAFFIC CIRCLES



SIGNAL CABINET WRAPS



PROGRAMMING & EVENTS

For previously completed Placemaking Grant projects and city-owned spaces.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

See page 14 for more.

MAINTENANCE PLANS

Project types with an asterisk * are required to have a maintenance plan for continued care after installation. Please submit a preliminary maintenance plan at the time of application.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Still unsure what you want to do? Apply for a Technical Assistance workshop! The UDC will help host a community workshop to determine what your neighborhood has, wants, and needs. We can also advise where in the neighborhood a project could make the most impact.

This is an engagement process and plan to help your neighborhood implement placemaking projects over time. After the community meeting, the UDC will create a placemaking manual of potential projects identified during the workshop with next steps and resources.

Additionally, you will be awarded \$5,000 in funding to kickstart a project from the playbook and will be eligible to apply for future funding the following grant cycles.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

ADDITIONAL FUNDING:

Additional funding may be available for projects that achieve carbon reduction goals, provide education on environmentally sustainable practices, address climate change or are aligned with the City of Charlotte Strategic Energy Action Plan or the Corridors of Opportunity program.

PUBLIC REALM:

All projects must enhance the public realm. If your project is on private property, make sure it is outside, visible, and accessible by the public all the time. For example, avoid recommending murals on walls facing parking lots or streets without sidewalks. Placemaking Grants for personal use (private residences, private/gated neighborhoods, inside storefronts, etc.) will not be considered.

NCDOT:

All proposed art in the NCDOT right-of-way (anything close to a highway or state maintained road) will have to pass through the NCDOT Public Art Committee. The approval process can take up to 12 months. Please work this into the application's proposed timeline. [Charlotte Explorer](#) is a free resource to check road maintenance.





APPLICATION AND MATERIALS

The following pages outline the materials needed for your application. Please read each requirement carefully and provide complete and accurate documentation. Applications missing requirements or do not meet the criteria as listed on pages 15 through 21 will be marked ineligible for the grant.

Start gathering your Placemaking Grant application materials early! Below is a checklist of all the materials required for this application. Depending on your project idea, additional documentation is needed. If you are applying for a technical assistance grant, you will not need to provide all the materials listed below; just provide as much as you can.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

REQUIRED:

- Project name.
- Project team (minimum 3 people).
- Estimated project budget (\$25,000 max.) with quotes for items over \$1,000.
- Project description (250-word max.).
- Description of the issue or opportunity your project will address (250-word max).
- Goals and benchmarks to measure project's success and social benefit.
- Outreach and community participation strategy.
- Estimated project timeline (completion by June 1, 2027).
- Letter of support from the neighborhood association or equivalent community organization where your grant project is located.
- Three site photos.
- A satellite photo (Google Maps, etc.) outlining the property boundaries of where your project is proposed.
- Images of similar projects or preliminary sketches of your idea.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (IF APPLICABLE):

- Maintenance and Programming plan.
- Letters documenting any in-kind or cash donations.
- Letters of permission from private property owners.
- Letters of permission from the county for parks and other county-owned property.



LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Follow these steps to determine how many letters of support you need and who to contact.

STEP 1: OBTAIN A LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION OR EQUIVALENT ORGANIZATION

All applications need a letter of support from the respective neighborhood association or equivalent organization for where the project will be located at the time of submission.

Equivalent organizations must meet the requirements as defined by the Housing & Neighborhood Services Department. They can be:

- Neighborhood Associations
- Homeowners Associations (HOA)
- Neighborhood Coalitions including Community Development Corporations
- Resident Organizations in Tax Credit Funded Rental Communities
- Business Associations

Please note that letters of support may not be written or signed by any member of the Project Team. The content of the letter should acknowledge the organization's support and understanding of the proposed placemaking project.

How Do I Contact My Neighborhood Organization?

The City of Charlotte's Housing & Neighborhood Services Department maintains a list of neighborhood leaders and organizations. You can connect with your organization by consulting the [Neighborhood Organization Contact List](#).



2022 Placemaking Grant, Abel Jackson



LETTERS OF SUPPORT (CONTINUED)

STEP 2: DETERMINE WHERE YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT IS LOCATED

STEP 3: IF NECESSARY, OBTAIN ADDITIONAL LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Private Property



Please submit a letter of support from the business and/or property owner (if they are different) acknowledging their support and understanding of the proposed placemaking project. The letter will be required at the time of application submission for the project to be considered.

City of Charlotte Parcels

City of Charlotte Right-of-way



You do not need permission or a letter of support from other city departments at the time of application submission.

North Carolina Department of Transportation Right-of-way



You do not need permission or an expressed letter of support from NCDOT at the time of application submission.

Mecklenburg County Property



Please submit a letter of support from the county (most likely Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation) acknowledging their support and understanding of the proposed placemaking project.

I don't know how to tell



Charlotte Explorer and Mecklenburg County Polaris 3G are public free online mapping tools where you can enter the address of your proposed project and see if it is on public or private property. Reach out to UDC staff if you need assistance.



MATERIALS & COSTS

Include an estimated amount of funding from \$5,000 to \$25,000. Applicants are not required to submit a detailed budget, but please include a breakdown of projected basic costs like artists fees and materials.

EXAMPLE BUDGET:

- Artist Fees (2 Murals): \$4,000
- Mulch: \$200
- Native Pollinator Plants (Potted): \$2,000
- Large Planter Pots (Bus Stop): \$200
- Bird Feeder & Stakes: \$200
- Bird Baths: \$70
- Wildflower Seeds: \$70
- Native Pollinator Plant Bulbs: \$300
- Mosquito Dunks: \$60
- Small Garden Fencing: \$300
- NCWF Butterfly Highway Yard Signs & Posts: \$100
- **Total: \$7,500**

QUOTES

For high cost items over \$1,000, please provide a quote from a professional or screenshot from store website. See the examples below.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department		ESTIMATE		
601 E. Trade Street Charlotte, NC 28202		Estimate No:	65240	
Bill To: Food Truck Event		Estimate Date:	01/14/2025	
Attention: No Address, Charlotte, NC		Customer No:		
		Due Date:	06/09/2025	
		Reference:	Event	
		Amount Paid:	\$0.00	
		Amount Due:	\$415.50	
DESCRIPTION	QTY	RATE	TOTAL	
Unsigned Position	6.000	\$69.00	\$414.00	
	TOTAL:		6.000	\$414.00
	CMPD Admin Fee TOTAL:	8.000 \$0.25	\$1.50	
	TOTAL:		12.000	\$415.50
		Amount Paid:	\$0.00	
		Balance Due:	\$415.50	
Notes All invoices shall be paid in PowerDetails, using an ACH or credit card. Employers cannot mail a check in for payment. Employers shall not withhold payment or require officers to submit forms or sign contracts that were not submitted at the time of application.				

The screenshot shows a Lowe's online shopping cart with one item: Crestlive Products - 8-ft x 10-ft Steel Frame Brown Lean-to Roof. The item is priced at \$1,629.99, with a crossed-out price of \$2,264.99, indicating a savings of \$635.00. The item is ready for pickup by Tuesday, March 17, at the Central Charlotte Lowe's store. Delivery options are also available, with standard shipping by Tuesday, March 17, and standard shipping by Wednesday, March 18. A 'Save For Later' button is visible below the item.

For projects with a budget over \$25,000 and looking for partial funding, the applicant must provide a plan to acquire the remaining funds and specify what the Placemaking Grant will cover for the project.



COST ESTIMATES

Below are estimates for materials and project elements. It is always best to estimate more than less.

Signal Cabinet Wrap	\$2,500 (including materials, installation & general artist fee)
Painted Wall or Street Mural	\$30-50 sq/ft (including materials, installation & general artist fee)
Vinyl Wrap Wall Mural	\$32 sq/ft (including materials, installation & general artist fee)
Parklet	\$8,000-\$20,000
Painted Crosswalk	\$30-50 sq/ft (including materials, installation & general artist fee)
Permanent Street Furniture	\$1,500-\$2,500 each
Temporary Street Furniture	\$20-\$1000 each
Community Garden Plot	\$200
Plaza Hardscape	\$75 sq/ft
Swing	\$7,000 - 10,000
Playscapes	\$15,000 - 30,000
Traffic Control	\$200-\$1,000 (varies depending on location and size)
One-Day Programming (for previously completed City of Charlotte placemaking projects)	\$1,500-\$10,000

EXPENDITURES

ELIGIBLE:

- Project materials and contracted labor costs, including artist fees
- Programming tied to activation of City of Charlotte public space(s)
- Refreshments and merchandise when incorporated into a project implementation event for the community (may not exceed 5% of total budget)

INELIGIBLE:

- Salaries or other personal fees
- Alcoholic beverages
- Costs incurred as part of the application process
- Expenditures before agreement signing
- Expenditures for organization meetings or personal use items or efforts solely benefiting one specific person
- Political/public policy campaigns (non-partisan voter registration is permitted)
- Non-grant related purchases
- Grants cannot discriminate on race, color, creed, origin, sex, age, and/or disability



MAINTENANCE AND PROGRAMMING COMMITMENT

Certain project types will require maintenance to ensure the longevity and lasting social impact. If your project type has an asterisk * on pages 12 and 13, please read the following.

MAINTENANCE:

Provide a document answering the following prompts. This document must be signed by the property owner.

- Who is responsible for repairing damages? Provide a point of contact to report maintenance needs.
- How often is the project checked for maintenance and quality?
- What is the life expectancy of your project? Who will be responsible for deconstruction?
- List potential maintenance and liabilities.
- What is the required budget for the upkeep of your project?

PROGRAMMING:

If your project includes the occupation of an organization, provide a document answering the following prompts.

- Who will be staffing, monitoring, and/or managing the site?
- Name a point of contact for reporting issues on the site.
- How accessible is the project to the public? What are the hours of operation?
- What are the ways this programming will engage and benefit the community?
- What is the lifespan of this program at this location? What happens when it leaves the site?
- What is the plan to keep this program viable and successful?





SCORING CRITERIA

Each application will be evaluated based on the following criteria. Award notifications will be sent out on or prior to June 15.

PROJECT BUDGET:

- Project budget is realistic
- Total costs are under \$25,000
- Project budget represents eligible expenditures within the Placemaking Grant Program

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND COLLABORATION:

- Application includes a letter of support from neighborhood association or equivalent organization
- Application includes a clear plan for community outreach for required public meeting(s)
- Project planning shows evidence of community support and buy-in from adjacent property owners

INNOVATION:

- Proposal is distinctive from existing approaches

VIABILITY AND VISIBILITY:

- Project is ready to be implemented
- Project can be completed by May 2027
- Project is visible and accessible to the public
- Project will enhance the public realm

IMPACT AND NEED:

- Proposed activities are in response to a recognized problem or opportunity in the community
- Project provides a measurable and lasting social benefit

BONUS!

Located on a Corridor of Opportunity



2026 PLACEMAKING GRANT APPLICATION TIMELINE

FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2026 - APPLICATION OPENS

Applications are open for the [2026 Placemaking Grant](#).

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 5:30 - 7:00 PM - INTERESTED APPLICANT Q&A MEETING - IN PERSON

The UDC will have drop-in hours for applicants to ask questions about the application process and placemaking projects. Attendance is recommended but not required. RSVP on the [UDC Events Page](#).

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, NOON - 1:30 PM - INTERESTED APPLICANT Q&A MEETING - VIRTUAL

The UDC will have an open virtual meeting for applicants to ask questions. Attendance is recommended but not required. RSVP on the [UDC Events Page](#).

FRIDAY, MAY 1, 5:00 PM - APPLICATIONS DUE

Please submit your application digitally following the instructions provided. Use the checklist on page 15 to confirm you have all the required materials.

MONDAY, JUNE 15, 2026 - PROJECT SELECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Placemaking Grant Committee will review all applications based on the deliverables and criteria listed on pages 15 through 21.

APPLY TODAY!
SCAN TO ACCESS THE
ONLINE APPLICATION:



[Grant Application](#)

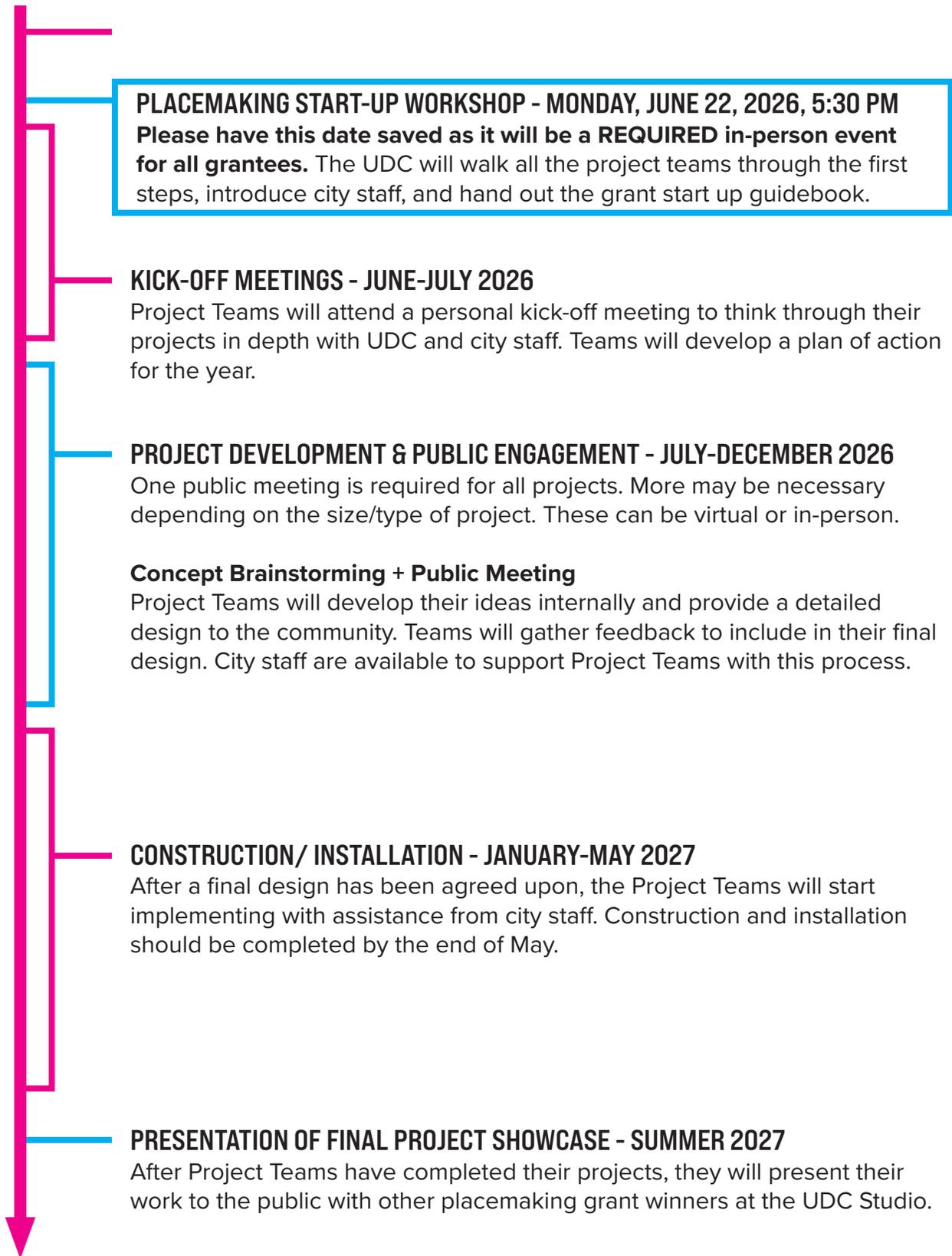


2025 Placemaking Grant, Elizabeth Palmisano



PLACEMAKING GRANT PROJECT TIMELINE

After you have been awarded your grant, you will have 1 year to complete your project. The following timeline breaks down the implementation process. Please reserve June 22 if you apply.





ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There is a lot of community-based work being done in Charlotte that innovative placemaking can support. Here are some examples to bolster your potential placemaking project. You are not required to add or quote these resources in your grant application, but you can take inspiration and look to them for demographic data, social context, potential partners, and reporting mechanisms.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Explorer

The Explorer features community variables that reflect the places people live and work.

Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization

Read how transportation impacts are measured as indicators of environmental justice.

Age Friendly Mecklenburg County

A research-based collective planning initiative and action plan aimed at improving the quality of life for older adults.

Charlotte Department of Transportation's Vision Zero Program

Consult the High Injury Network and see how CDOT emphasizes safe transportation systems.

Mecklenburg County Land Use & Environmental Services Agency

Find information on regional health-based air quality standards and regional pollution reduction efforts.

Mecklenburg County Community Health Assessment

A research-based collective planning initiative and action plan aimed at improving the quality of life for older adults.

Grant Opportunities Across Charlotte

This article highlights grant opportunities from organizations and the City that may align with your project goals.

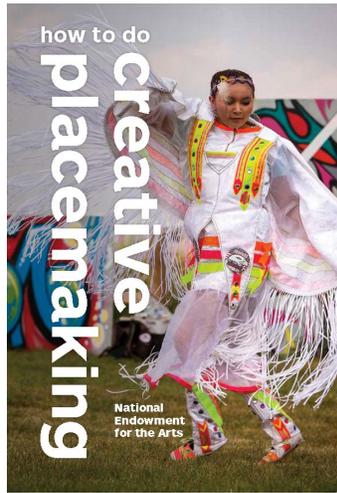


2023 Placemaking Grant, The Ritz at Washington Heights, Alvin Jacobs



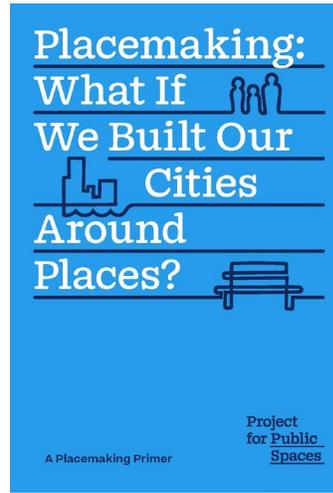
The Guide for Parks & Creative Placemaking

The Trust for Public Land & City Parks Alliance



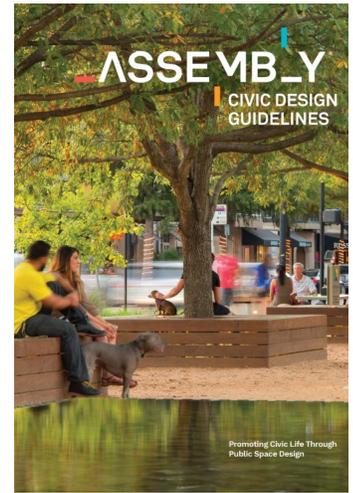
How to do Creative Placemaking

National Endowment for the Arts



Placemaking: What If We Built Our Cities Around Places?

Project for Public Spaces



Assembly Civic Design Guidelines

Center for Active Design

THE PLACEMAKING HUB

The Urban Design Center has compiled all placemaking forms, applications, and guides into one source: the Placemaking Hub! This site was created in collaboration with other City of Charlotte departments to aid residents in creating their own placemaking projects, with or without the Placemaking Grant.

Using the Placemaking Hub Guide found on the main page, you can learn more about the project types and the specific ordinances surrounding them:

Visit the [City of Charlotte Placemaking Hub](#) to learn more!

Please note that grant applicants do not need to fill out a Placemaking Permit Application as well.

CREATIVE POOL

Need an artist for your project? The Urban Design Center has a list of creatives with specialties ranging from the fine arts to performing arts. The 2026 Creative Pool is currently being updated. Upon award, the UDC can assist writing a request for qualifications or proposals to send to our local creatives.

Please note that all art in the right-of-way must meet the City of Charlotte’s design standards.



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