



# Winter Placemaking GUIDE

880  
cities



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# Purpose of the Winter Placemaking Guide

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## GOALS OF THE GUIDE

The Winter Placemaking Guide seeks to address the distinct winter challenges that communities of all sizes experience, offering practical solutions to create more equitable, engaging and age-friendly public spaces during the winter season. Using an equity-based approach, this guide provides the inspiration and tools needed for community change makers to leverage existing public space assets and embrace winter placemaking.

The Winter Placemaking Guide is an addendum to the *Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages* publication that AARP, The Trust for Public Land and 880 Cities have published.

## WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

The Winter Placemaking Guide is dedicated to community leaders, policymakers and all types of community changemakers who seek to improve their surroundings during the winter season.

## HOW CAN IT BE USED TO ADVANCE AGE FRIENDLINESS?

By using this guide, community changemakers become better equipped to advance the livability of their communities during winter. Applying an all-age and -ability inclusive winter lens will help decision-makers and community champions establish equitable processes in design, programming and management of public spaces in winter. When people in communities of all sizes make their spaces inviting and accessible in the darkest and coldest months of the year for people of all ages and abilities, they create communities that work better for all.





SECTION ONE:

# Introduction to Winter Placemaking

## What Is Winter Placemaking?

Winter Placemaking Is...

**P**lacemaking at its core is about strengthening the connection between people and place. The practice of placemaking occurs when local communities have the power, capacity and resources to actively shape public spaces in a way that meet their needs and improves everyday quality of life.<sup>1</sup> Winter placemaking is a means to re-envision the ways that public spaces are created and used in winter in order to foster social connection, physical activity, and the many benefits of a vibrant public realm all year round. Equitable winter placemaking embodies an intersectional approach to reflect how aspects of our social identities such as race,

gender, socioeconomic status, age and ability overlap and create spatial barriers that shape our distinct experiences of winter in our communities.<sup>2</sup> Winter placemaking should be premised on the idea that **when people of all intersecting identities can access and enjoy a place, but also “play a key role in its identity, creation, and maintenance, that is when we see genuine placemaking in action.”**<sup>3</sup> Winter placemaking is a means to reinvent and re-envision the ways that public spaces are created and used in order to meet the evolving needs of communities amid the challenges of the winter season.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking#:~:text=For%20us%2C%20placemaking%20is%20both,their%20community%20as%20a%20whole>

<sup>2</sup> <https://canurb.org/wp-content/uploads/OpenLetter-ACallToCourage-Final-June2020.pdf> & <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039?seq=1>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>

# Rationale for Engaging in Winter Placemaking Now

## Introduction to Winter and Public Spaces

There is a strong logical basis for why communities should integrate winter placemaking initiatives into their planning strategies and processes. Winter placemaking provides a wide range of benefits that can be categorized into three main pillars:

### HEALTH

#### Combating Social Isolation and Supporting Social & Physical Activity

Winter weather can take a heavy toll on the mental and physical health of those living in winter climates. Winter brings shorter days, a change in environment, and colder temperatures, which can result in seasonal depression in all people of all ages, affecting moods, emotions, and sleep cycles. Colder outdoor temperatures also reduce physical activity and increase social isolation, increasing both physical and mental health risks.

Covid-19 has exacerbated social isolation among older adults. According to a University of Michigan study on loneliness among people over the age of 50, 27 percent felt isolated and lonely pre-Covid, as compared with 56 percent during Covid.<sup>4</sup> A study by the Bio-Medical Central research think tank did a review of interventions developed by senior citizen service providers to combat loneliness. The study concluded that subset populations like women, low-income individuals and marginalized communities are often excluded from programs and places that can address social isolation.<sup>5</sup> Public space, however, should never exclude and, in a perfect world, provides an equitable space to address social isolation, even in winter. Winter placemaking provides a solution to the challenges of winter by activating public spaces in order to provide more opportunities for recreation and social interaction, which can promote physical activity and restore social connections in our communities.

### ECONOMIC

#### Supporting Local

Foot traffic and vibrant public life are at the heart of what drives local business. When streets and public spaces are unwelcoming and inaccessible in winter, the local economy can suffer. Many businesses use this “off-season” to shut down until the following spring, based on the assumption that many flock to southern locations for the season and there is less desire for vibrant community life during winter. However, we know this not to be true and there is latent demand from all-season residents for an engaged and activated community all-year round.

Harnessing the unique beauty and magic of winter can be crucial to supporting and sustaining local businesses throughout the seasons. Winter placemaking is an often-untapped resource that can provide a range of economic benefits for the local community, including the creation of jobs, strengthening of neighborhood businesses, increased revenue and new opportunities for local growth.<sup>6</sup>

Rural and small-town economies are often dependent on summer tourism, and many have yet to embrace the outdoor, public winter life that placemaking can help foster. Rural communities may engage in several forms of placemaking that can transform the community for the betterment of its year-round residents and to attract winter visitors. The Town of Richmond, Vermont is home to just over 4,000 people and has found a way to prioritize local winter culture while attracting visitors from across the

<sup>4</sup> <https://labblog.uofmhealth.org/rounds/loneliness-doubled-for-older-adults-first-months-of-covid-19>

<sup>5</sup> <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-020-8251-6>

<sup>6</sup> <https://simonwhite.com.au/2020/07/22/placemaking-for-local-economic-development>

globe for world class ski hills. Richmond's Cochrane Ski Area is run by the nation's only non-profit ski organization that ensures skiing remains an affordable and low barrier activity for the local community. Also in Richmond, Vermont is the family-owned Bolton Valley Ski Resort that acts as a community hub for music concerts, day camps, walking clubs and for local employment. Richmond, Vermont is a special rural community where there is no traditional village center. In lieu of this, community run ski hills have become de facto places to gather and connect.

## SOCIAL

### Creating Opportunities for Community Connection, Cultural Celebration & Joy

Winter placemaking can help reinvigorate community cohesion and spark joy during a time of year that is often perceived as bleak. Winter placemaking strategies can ensure parks and public spaces are used more effectively throughout the year and can encourage healthy and active lifestyles for all people in all seasons. Parks and public spaces can continue to act as social spaces during the winter months if properly programmed, designed and managed with input from the community. Creating vibrant year-round spaces is key to creating livable, inclusive and healthy communities.

When residents of Marquette, Michigan (population 20,000), were asked how they viewed winter, an overwhelming 80 percent had a positive response, with the only downsides being slippery and snowed in roads. In building on the community desire to embrace winter, Marquette began a Winter Community Audit to document the challenges and opportunities of living in a snowy area. The audit asked residents what they envision for Marquette's parks and public spaces in winter. This survey will provide important data on local usage, community desire and can lead to better investments in these spaces.<sup>7</sup>

The first step to getting social during winter is building on community networks and listening to what the community wants. Placemaking is more than the physical activations of public space and should be seen as a means to create social connections and a sense of belonging in communities of all sizes as seen in Middleton, Wisconsin. Middleton is nicknamed the Good Neighbor City but for a few months each year the 20,000 residents are isolated from their neighbors due to a lack of winter programming. To correct this, and to build on the social connections that Middleton is known for, the town engaged in a community wide survey to determine how to make the downtown plaza programmable for everyone during winter.<sup>8</sup> The results from the survey focused on converting summer walking trails into winter skating tracks and is the acknowledgment that people want to be active and connected all-year round.



<sup>7</sup> <http://www.mml.org/resources/publications/mmr/pdf/jan-feb2010mag.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cityofmiddleton.us/DocumentCenter/View/4229/Downtown-Plaza-Recommendation>

# Engaging in Winter Placemaking in a Post-Covid Future

## Covid-19 Related Challenges and Opportunities for Winter Placemaking in Big and Small Communities Alike

Parks and public spaces have been called a “third place,” a destination that provides balance to the first and second places of work and home. Third places are important because they provide a means for community connection as well as physical and mental well-being. The third place has played an increasingly important role during the pandemic as a setting for socially distanced gatherings when indoor activities are prohibited. A study on the increased usage of parks and public spaces was conducted in New Jersey for a period of 3.5 weeks following the first Covid-19 lockdown that showed a 63.4% increase in the number of public park users as compared with the same time during the previous year.<sup>9</sup> Parks and public spaces in the pandemic have become synonymous with opportunities for safe social connection, but for low-income and high-density communities there is often a lack of access to safe and welcoming green third spaces despite the high demand.<sup>10</sup>

To meet this demand, the City of Buffalo pivoted its existing [Winter City Strategy](#) and adopted an equity lens in making parks and public spaces accessible and representative of the needs of its most marginalized residents during Covid. The strategy included the following placemaking initiatives:

### 1 Good Neighbour Network

Door hangers were distributed by block clubs and other community-based organizations to more than 150,000 homes. The hangers could be displayed to indicate whether the resident needed assistance getting groceries, taking out trash, shoveling and more.

### 2 Wintermission Micro-Grant Program

Block clubs and other community-based organizations were provided between \$250 to \$750 in funding to create intergenerational volunteer snow-clearing teams and to create a shed for storing communal snow shovels.

### 3 Winter Bash

A series of six outdoor events that offered winter activities, music, fire pits and hot chocolate to people of all ages and abilities was hosted in HUD-eligible neighborhoods by the Buffalo Winter City Strategy with support from community partners.

### 4 Discounted Permits for Outdoor Winter Activations of Parks and Public Spaces

The Department of Permit and Inspection Services have been active in supporting the Buffalo Winter City Strategy. The department has offered discounted permits on outdoor winter events and programs for non-profit and community-based organizations during winter.

### 5 Winter in a Bag

250 bags containing play and exercise equipment, materials for family bonding activities and wellness resources were delivered to community centers and dispersed to community members to encourage social and physical activity at home. Weatherization Kits were also distributed to help insulate homes to make home life warmer and safer amidst shelter in place policies.

### 6 Winter Porch Sports

Residents were encouraged to embrace the winter environment and exercise in nearby outdoor spaces without violating social distancing or stay-at-home regulations. Mobile LED trucks were placed in community parks broadcasting interactive fitness programs communities could follow along with at safe distances.

<sup>9</sup> <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0251799>

<sup>10</sup> Low, S., & Smart, A. (2020). Thoughts about Public Space During Covid-19 Pandemic. *City & Society*, 32(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/ciso.12260>





Buffalo has provided exemplary equitable winter placemaking during the pandemic for its residents. Rural towns and communities have also leveraged their community organizations, natural capital and charm to weather the pandemic storm. Research on rural communities has shown that those within a few hours' drive of a city are experiencing sustained economic growth due to the rise of remote work.<sup>11</sup> While other rural communities are at a crossroads over keeping their year-round inhabitants safe from the spread of Covid and allowing tourist hot spots to operate that account for up 80 percent of the local economy, as seen in northeastern Minnesota.<sup>12</sup> The pressure Covid has placed on rural winter communities is unprecedented, and some have made plans to harness this change.



The National Main Street Center surveyed small business owners in rural areas to understand their response to Covid-19. The resounding feedback was that rural businesses were leveraging their physical, social and community assets in ways that were similar to their urban counterparts. This leveraging was done through transformative placemaking along main streets by reclaiming public space for outdoor dining and socially distanced community events. Using public space in new ways through cost-effective placemaking can be accomplished in communities small and large and can be part of the social and economic recovery post-Covid.



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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.city-journal.org/americas-post-pandemic-geography>  
<sup>12</sup> <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/03/21/coronavirus-spread-in-minnesota-forces-north-shore-resort-owners-to-make-tough-decisions?fbclid=IwAR1Y8izZPG-WkVpXCeNOXBH6Th05il3jCSS66bR-x1l2AO3VHYDLvCnX-qQ>

# Why Engaging in Winter Placemaking Matters

## Inclusive Winter Placemaking

Equitable winter placemaking acknowledges that some communities face greater barriers than others in staying warm, feeling represented and accessing the joys of winter physically, financially and socially. For racialized communities, lower income residents and undocumented people, municipally run winter activities and those taking place in public space can feel entirely inaccessible.

Community trust can be fostered through the co-creation of winter placemaking pilot projects with members of racialized and marginalized communities. To build community trust, local partners must be involved in all stages of planning and implementation. In Wilmington, Delaware, creative placemaking became a means to build community trust that had been undermined through a history of disinvestment and discrimination. The Wilmington Alliance launched the Vacant to Vibrant Initiative to engage residents in a revitalization plan for vacant, publicly owned lots in the West Center City neighborhood. The Wilmington Alliance began engagement with local residents in bodegas, hair salons, community centers and street corners to understand their desires of public space all year round. Out of these conversations it was clear that residents of Wilmington wanted access to fresh fruit and vegetables, and in the winter wanted a place for safe and warm community gathering spaces. Through discussion with residents and the leveraging of local political support, the vacant lots were transformed into a communal garden, and a programmable space for concerts, drum circles and gatherings around the fire. The Wilmington Alliance ensured that the engagement with the community on these spaces would lead into ownership and capacity building for the local residents to continue to demand for the betterment of their community.

Inclusive winter placemaking should ensure that people of all ages and abilities are engaged and empowered. Engaging with older adults in the process of winter placemaking is imperative in communities committed to aging in place and livability. The term aging in place refers to the ability to grow old safely at home but should be extended to the capacity of surrounding parks and public spaces to provide active, inclusive and programmed places for older adults in all seasons. The fear of slips and falls during winter keep many older adults homebound out of necessity to remain safe amidst unplowed sidewalks and other mobility concerns. These age-specific concerns surrounding winter particularly impact older adults living in rural contexts where social isolation is compounded by unprogrammed, inaccessible or under provisioned parks, public spaces, and community gathering areas. Adults 50 years of age and older are the largest demographic in America's most rural counties across 33 states, of which 20 states experience lingering winter snow and icy conditions.<sup>13</sup> Winter placemaking in rural communities is imperative to improve the quality of life in older adults and can signal a commitment to livability in communities of all sizes.

Inclusive winter placemaking can be a means to building trust and empowering the community. See the Rules of Engagement section on page 19 for details on how to equitably engage with local institutions, community groups and individuals as to ensure equitable and inclusive placemaking for communities of small and large.

## Cultural Understandings of Winter & Place

For newcomers in winter communities where hockey, skating and skiing is part of the dominant culture, there is the assumption that to feel belonging is to embrace these sports and to forsake any prior

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/10/older-population-in-rural-america.html>

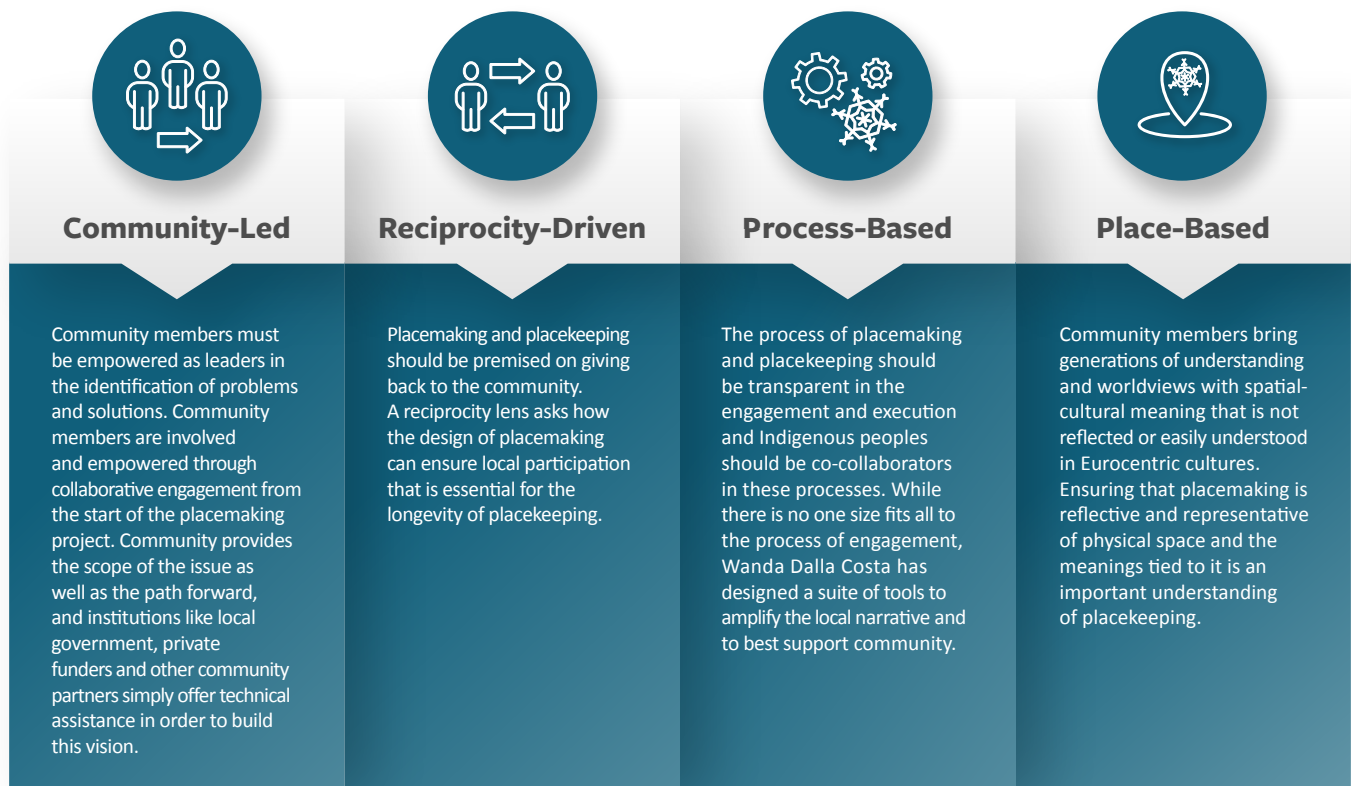
culturally relevant activities or hesitations about winter. In a winter community, to not participate in these activities is to not be a true citizen. The equation of belonging and assimilation should be decoupled in winter communities in order to embrace the diversity of winter culture. Perry, Iowa, proves that embracing diversity can be part of creating a warmer winter for all. Perry, a community of 7,500, embraced the Latinx population and the Los Posadas celebration by incorporating the event into an annual winter celebration in the town square every December. Previously, the event would take place on the outskirts of town. By recognizing and embracing culture, communities can engage in inclusive placemaking and build off existing cultural assets. Additionally, Toonik Tyme is a celebration of Inuit history and culture in Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada. Known as the “Premier Festival in Canada’s Arctic,” Toonik Tyme brings locals and tourists alike to participate in traditional Inuit activities, food and dance.<sup>14</sup> Toonik Tyme embraces an important and often under looked aspect to placemaking known as placekeeping.

## Placekeeping

Placekeeping is integral to placemaking. While placemaking is the remaking and repurposing of space, placekeeping refers to the active care and maintenance of community and culture. Indigenous placekeeping is a holistic practice that seeks to align with local value-systems and sees the community as experts who should be empowered in creating shared spaces that represent their needs and identities.

Wanda Dalla Costa, a practicing architect, professor and member of Saddle Lake Cree Nation has created an Indigenous placekeeping framework that re-operationalizes Indigenous ways of knowing, being through connections to contemporary urban design practices. Her framework centers Indigenous placekeeping as:

-  **Community led**
-  **Process-based**
-  **Requiring reciprocity**
-  **Place-based**



<sup>14</sup> <http://www.tooniktyme.ca/about>



## SECTION TWO: How to Do Winter Placemaking

### PHASE 1

## Take an Asset-Based Approach

### Asset-Based Community Development

An asset-based approach seeks to work with the existing infrastructure and resources in a community. Asset-based community development (ABCD) is an approach to community capacity building that is being increasingly adopted by community organizers across North America. An ABCD approach focuses on creating sustainable programs and partnerships premised on existing strengths to ensure that growth can be maintained by the community after the project's completion. The reliance on existing infrastructure and local capacity is the antithesis of the top-down approach, in which external, nonlocal organizations implement plans, projects and events

without regard for local context. The latter often features short-term investments that may include onetime events, imported infrastructure and external staffing. It can result in “placelessness,” in which local culture is not reflected in an event or celebration, thereby changing the intent to be less about actual community and more about consumption, profit and competitive city marketing.<sup>15</sup> Placemaking for the consumption of tourism can have a placelessness effect, with the event or infrastructure added as a layer on top of public space. It can be applied to communities of any size, scale or composition. ABCD is a break from placelessness in favor of amplifying local context, capacity and assets.

<sup>15</sup> <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/full/10.1111/gec3.12498>

## Identifying Community Assets

Assets are defined broadly as referring to anything existing in a community that serves that community. The Bonner Foundation found that community assets fall into five categories: individual, institutional, organizational, cultural and physical.<sup>16</sup> **Individual and cultural assets** include the local population, made up of rich dynamics and diverse community members. **Institutional and organizational assets** emanate from the established local government and other community groups with vested interests in the betterment of the local people and place. **Physical assets** include built form, infrastructure and open spaces in a community that can be elevated through a program or event that seeks to have people occupy spaces and use infrastructure in new ways. An ABCD approach seeks to activate this range of assets while acknowledging the local history and culture as well as individuals who are important players with unique perspectives and who promote community development. By leveraging community assets and community capacity, winter placemaking can be carried out in communities of different sizes and different levels of financial resources.

## Amplifying Winter's Assets

Winter cities, towns, and rural communities around the world have been successfully harnessing the assets that winter provides. In Broome County, New York State, the Office for Aging has partnered with local schools to allow local seniors to use the hallways as safe walking spaces before and after school hours during the winter months. In Ottawa, Ontario, the municipal library started a winter cultural access program in which museum passes were distributed for indoor fun and ski passes for outdoor fun. Rapid City, South Dakota converted a parking structure to provide year-round recreational use—an ice rink in the winter and a splash pad in the summer. Winter communities can amplify local assets and shift models of service to allow all residents to stay active during winter.

It may be hard to envision winter providing many assets when the snow on the sidewalk is towering and the bus stops are buried. Yet, the colder months create a sense of community born of the need to take care of the most vulnerable, including the elderly and differently abled. Community organizations like My Block, My Hood, My City (M3) have amplified the usual communal care in Chicago helping make the city more accessible for seniors, low-income schools, businesses and others through a volunteer-operated shoveling services. Meanwhile, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities found that residents need winterized transit stops. This identification led to the addition of shovels at transit stops for crowd-sourced shoveling, the very sort of communal care and neighborliness that should be at the forefront of any winter placemaking.

## Important Considerations for Rural Placemaking

In rural or geographically isolated communities, where institutional and organizational assets are typically limited, scattered and, often, unavailable, winter can create a particularly high barrier for folks to spend time outdoors safely and comfortably. Enjoying the season in such places requires individual transportation; equipment like skis, skates and warm clothing; as well as sufficient time and physical ability. In Tennessee, the towns of Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge have come together, combining their institutional and organizational assets to host several winter placemaking events for year-round residents and winter-loving visitors. In Gatlinburg, summer tourism reaches a fever pitch, while winter sees the flight of visitors and seasonal worker alike.<sup>17</sup> To remedy the flight and fear of the cold, the neighboring towns have joined forces to create Winterfest. The event features a Christmas parade through downtown Gatlinburg and the addition of 5 million lights to the streetscapes of Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge to tie various events together.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the Winter

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<sup>16</sup> <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/full/10.1111/gec3.12498>

in Motion Festival is staged in four rural mountain towns in British Columbia's Columbia Valley, that play host to concerts, light shows and other events. Rural communities should consider partnering with each other for collaboration and resource sharing in order to bring out the best winter has to offer.

### “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper”

Winter placemaking does not require extensive and expensive assets. It can be meaningful and asset based while being lighter, quicker and cheaper (LQC). According to Project for Public Spaces, the lighter, quicker and cheaper movement has been adopted by communities across the world and is “proof that expensive and labor-intensive initiatives are not the only, or even the most effective, ways to bring energy and life into a community’s public space.”<sup>19</sup> Beyond the physical intervention in public space, the LQC movement can be used to support cross-sector collaboration and to build community capacity, trust and to provide inspiration.

The LQC movement has been primarily practiced in warmer seasons and in southern climates but can be adopted in communities of all sizes a means to test placemaking initiatives before capital investment.

Rural communities are already well versed in the LQC movement. Rural communities are often rich in access to nature and its bounty and have been deepening these connections through placemaking. The connection smaller communities have to nature can be amplified through placemaking and the adoption of the LQC ideology. Ice fishing, nature walks and reliance on community supports are featured in the following LQC examples as seen in communities ranging in size:

<sup>17</sup> Amason, J. H. (2010). Seasonal lives: Tourism and the struggle for place in gatlinburg, tennessee (Order No. 3421024). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (750365363). Retrieved from <http://myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdissertations-theses%2Fseasonal-lives-tourism-struggle-place-gatlinburg%2Fdocview%2F750365363%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D14771>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.pigeonforge.com/event/winterfest-lights/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.pps.org/article/lighter-quicker-cheaper>



## WINTER EXAMPLES

# Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper

### ICE FISHING TOURNAMENT

Devil's Lake, North Dakota  
Population: 7,000

Devil's Lake, North Dakota is embarking on the 37<sup>th</sup> annual Ice Fishing Tournament. This event is supported by local sponsors and builds on the inherent skills and pastimes of residents.

### POP-UP WINTER FIRES & S'MORES

Ladysmith, Wisconsin  
Population: 3,000

S'more kits and pop-up fires bring warmth and public life to Ladysmith during winter. The addition of a heating element and an family-friendly activity creates a LQC way to engage in winter placemaking.

### SOLSTICE TREE TOUR

Anchorage, Alaska  
Population: 288,000

The Nordic Ski Association encourages local sponsors to decorate Christmas trees for public voting on the best tree. Voters are encouraged to walk through the community to visit all decorated trees, providing a LQC way to get people active and together during winter.

### ICE & SMELT

Bowdoinham, Maine  
Population: 800

Ice & Smelt features LQC events like Sidewalk Stories that promote scavenger hunts throughout town as well as educational tours hosted by the local library.

### YUKON RENDEZVOUS

Whitehorse, Yukon  
Population: 42,000

Yukon Rendezvous features a community-run yard sale and includes axe throwing, as sponsored by a local axe throwing business. In Whitehorse, the LQC movement has relied on the skill and dedication of the community.

### DIY WAYFINDING

Anywhere!

Customizable and printable signs can be added to any street post or affixed in any window showing locals and visitors alike where all the amazing shops, activities and attractions are in your community, all-season long.

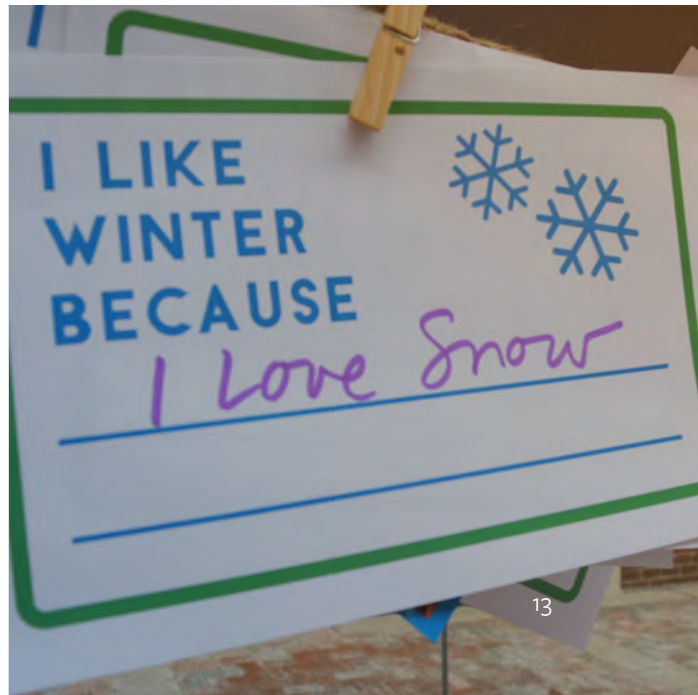
## PHASE 2

# Base Placemaking on the Need to Advance Equity in Winter Cities

## Asset-Based Community Development

An equity-based approach to winter placemaking deeply considers the spatial and social aspects of spaces to collaboratively design winter places, programming and policy in communities. Jay Pitter, a professional planner and equity-based placemaking practitioner in Toronto has developed a placemaking framework that can be adapted to the context of winter cities. Our equity-based winter placemaking checklist below aims to provoke tough yet crucial considerations for winter placemaking projects. Pitter has noted that her placemaking work is always ongoing and intended to provide a structure for learning; similarly, this checklist should be regularly evaluated and improved upon to reflect continuous growth in creating just communities.

In order to understand the impact and audience of placemaking, this checklist asks specific who, what, when, where, why and how questions to spark thoughtful reflections on the intentions of engaging in winter placemaking processes to ensure they are truly based on equity:





**Identify and address power imbalances at all stages of the placemaking process.**

**WHO** are the stakeholders involved and what power dynamics currently exist? Will community members be equal partners in the project from the start? Who is included and who is missing in the process? Are community members being compensated for their time?

**Address the winter place needs of people from all intersecting identities. WHO is the project being made for?**

Does it embody an intersectional approach to reflect how aspects of our identities such as race, gender, class, age, and ability overlap and create spatial barriers that shape how we distinctly experience a place?

**Address the systemic barriers that prevent certain groups from enjoying winter.**

**WHAT** issue is the project trying to address? Does it “develop strong social plans and programming that address competing interests among young families, elders, people experiencing homelessness, disabled people, sex workers and other groups that use public spaces”?

**Identify and consider the time needed to develop a project for a season at a particular time of the year.**

**WHEN** will the project be implemented? Is there enough time to properly engage the local community before winter comes around?

**Acknowledge complex histories and sociopolitical dynamics of public space.**

**WHERE** is the project site located? Which space is being considered for winter placemaking? Is the site situated on the historic land of Indigenous peoples and does it recognize the historical displacement of Indigenous peoples from this land? Does it attempt to understand the dimensions of place-based trauma?

**Value the storytelling and voices of local residents, their cultures and identities.**

**HOW** will the local community be involved in the project? Will the project help maintain the cultural memories of local residents? Will it value oral history and traditions from all cultures?

**Acknowledge each community’s experience with spatial injustices (past and present).**

**WHERE** is the project site located? What community is being considered for winter placemaking? Does the space choice take into consideration the domino effect of placemaking projects that aesthetically “add value” to neighborhoods and perhaps unintentionally harm the local community through the effects of gentrification, rising rents and other forms of housing unaffordability?

**Foster a healthy and shared sense of belonging in the winter months.**

**WHY** is the project important? Why will this distinct place become important to the local community, even in the winter months? Will the project help newcomers adapt to an unfamiliar winter climate? Will it bring people together?

**Acknowledge that urban design is not neutral and either perpetuates or reduces social inequities.**

**HOW** will the project contribute to reducing social inequities? Will it recognize the distinct ways space impacts people’s mobility, safety and joy differently? Is the design of the space intended for year-round use, including winter?

**Embrace community-based knowledge, co-creation and cultural stewardship that bring warmth to the community.**

**HOW** will the project affect the local community? Will it embrace multiple expressions of community power and assets? Will it expand placemaking expertise to community members themselves? Will it spur systemic social change and youth empowerment?

**Value existing community places and public spaces by integrating place-keeping.**

**HOW** will the project shape places that are already great? Are there existing places of importance that could benefit from active care and maintenance through a place-keeping process? Are there places that keep the local community’s cultural memories alive and support the community’s ability to maintain its way of life as it chooses?

<sup>21</sup> <https://canurb.org/wp-content/uploads/OpenLetter-ACallToCourage-Final-June2020.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://usdac.us/blogac/2017/12/11/creative-placemaking-placekeeping-and-cultural-strategies-to-resist-displacement>

## Test Out Community Ideas

### Moving Towards a Pilot Project as Informed by Local Context

For pilot projects in winter cities to have meaningful impact on winter life the planning, coordination, delivery and evaluation phases should be representative of the community's stated desires for parks and public spaces during winter. Trusting that the communities of focus are capable and willing is the first step to a winter placemaking pilot. Many external organizations that have engaged in placemaking have operated on a knowledge-deficit model, in which communities are seen as not sophisticated enough to address localized issues on their own. Through this model, change is only possible with the support of external organizations that inform communities how to identify and address local needs.

Approaching a community, especially a historically marginalized community, with an already formulated plan for addressing localized needs through placemaking will not lead to meaningful change and will undermine community trust. Top-down placemaking is a path to gentrification and the sort of urban regeneration and urban restructuring that has

led to the razing and redlining of communities across North America.<sup>23</sup> Questions to consider when first engaging in placemaking in historically underserved and racialized communities have been raised by authors Robyn Burns and Lisbeth A. Berbary:<sup>24</sup>

“ Who gets to define and give value to a space, (un)making it into a valuable place for community? How are these decisions embedded in larger neoliberal capitalist and settler colonial processes of gentrification? Who is to say that a location is simply an empty space, a clean slate, ready to be made into a place with new worth and meaning? And who is displaced in the process? Who was displaced before these questions even came to bear?

Approaches to meaningful placemaking should therefore begin in all climatological contexts as community partnerships. Winter placemaking that seeks to support and better amplify existing assets in communities should ensure that there is a co-creation process embedded into the scope creation, mobilization and execution of the project.



## Types of Winter Placemaking: Reproduceable Fun for All Context

Winter-based events and activities have been seen across North America and Europe in the form of light shows, ice sculpture events and winter markets. Yet, when European winter markets are reproduced in North American cities there is little opportunity to reflect local culture, which can result in an event or activation that seems placeless and does not build upon local assets. Local vendors, institutions and assets should be reflected in all placemaking ventures to amplify the winter culture that is inherent in all communities.

Placemaking that is reproduceable and popular, like warming huts, light installations and outdoor patios, can be tailored to address local needs and to be unique to the physical and cultural context as seen in Edmonton, Alberta:

### Warm Up Winter Pilot

Edmonton, Alberta, engaged in a [Warming Hut Pilot Project](#) to embrace the joys of winter. Warming huts were strategically placed along Edmonton's River Valley to allow for longer, more enjoyable outdoor excursions amid the elements of winter. The warming huts both gather and retain heat via passive solar principals for heating, alongside flooring and insulation that can retain heat. Each winter the warming huts are placed in different locations, based on community feedback, and are strategically placed around local and tourist attractions.

Winter placemaking can consist of more than adding lights to a public space. It can and should be about making public spaces accessible and safe for those most affected by winter's elements. Winter placemaking can include initiatives that focus on making winter more accessible for those with mobility constraints, as seen in Wells, British Columbia:

### Shoveling Pilots, Municipally and Volunteer-Run

The town of Wells, British Columbia (population 200), engaged with older adults in order to [prioritize snow clearing routes](#) based on their preferred streets and sidewalks. The engagement sought to prioritize equity in mobility and to ensure that communities remain connected despite the elements. The results not only helped the town develop a pilot project to clear streets and sidewalks but also helped identify local partners to support the project.

Pilot projects as seen in Wells take advantage of the individual and cultural assets that are inherent parts of small communities.



# Develop a strategy

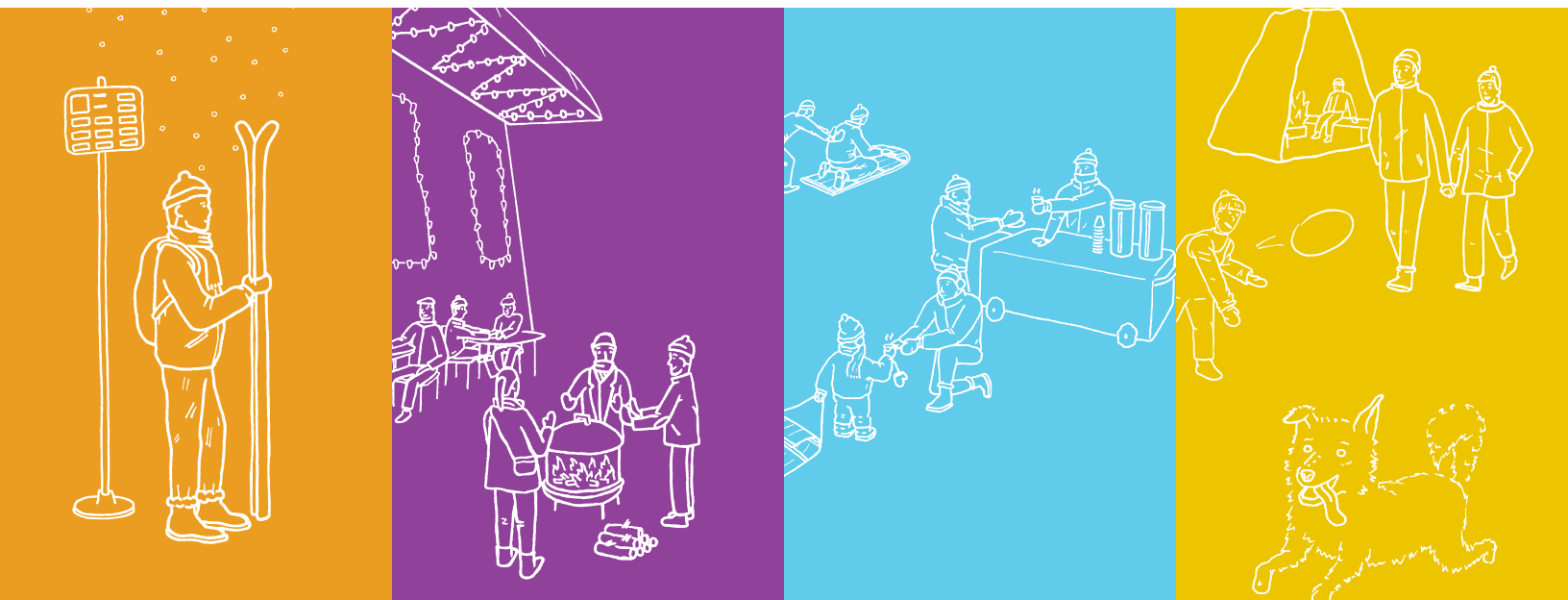
## Developing a Winter Strategy

A winter city strategy formally recognizes the unique challenges the season brings and pushes forth a community-led vision for placemaking, municipal investment, urban design and planning. Creating a winter city strategy is the legitimization and documentation of what is heard during the consultation, participation, research, pilot projects and evaluation phases. The lessons learned are pulled from this research and applied to a forward-looking document that can inform future iterations of winter placemaking and foster continued growth.

Edmonton, Alberta, and its city council endorsed the [For the Love of Winter strategy](#), is premised on four pillars as informed by an advisory council, public consultations and other municipal strategic plans and goals. The four pillars are: 1. Winter Life, 2. Winter Design, 3. Winter Economy and 4. Winter Story. These pillars guided the strategy document and included 64 planned actions items determined during consultations and participation events.

All winter strategies should begin with listening to the community through both formal and informal outreach like setting up a table in a busy transit hub, hosting listening events in community centers and embracing the local community and its networks. The creation of an advisory group led by motivated community leaders can ground a winter strategy in the reality of the local context and ensure that pilot projects and project scope are realistic and build on local assets of all kinds.

A winter city strategy must also be legitimized by local government and incorporated into community-wide strategic planning. Beyond road clearing strategies, winter is little acknowledged in planning or policy. To compound this, ordinances prohibiting full use of public spaces and a restrictive permitting process can inhibit the ability of winter placemaking to happen and make an impact. Communities can engage in an audit of their policies and practices to ensure that winter life is supported by parks and public spaces. To create a comprehensive winter community strategy, all planning and policy matters should have regard for the local winter context.



Source: *For the Love of Winter Strategy for transforming Edmonton into a World-Leading Winter City*

## Developing a Small Town, Rural Winter Strategy

Main Street America and AARP Livable Communities have partnered to create a design-centered guide for community development during Covid. [The Commercial District Design: COVID-19 Response & Management](#) guide provides the tools for community leaders to support economic recovery in communities of all sizes where placemaking is at the core. Where institutional and organizational assets are low in small and rural communities, placemaking can be a means to push forth a strategy for economic recovery in all seasons. While Covid has led to the reclamation of street space for curbside cafes and socially distanced events, in rural and small communities' streets and sidewalks are often under the purview of transportation engineers, who have historically prioritized automobile movement with little consideration for pedestrian safety and vibrancy.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, many main streets in smaller communities do not have the support of business improvement districts to be a voice for placemaking on public streets and sidewalks during the pandemic. This can lead to disconnected, one-off approaches to placemaking that put the onus on individual business owners to plan, build and promote their curbside patio and modified business models.

In larger communities, winter placemaking can be a coordinated approach as ratified in community improvement plans and partnerships can be created with local chambers of commerce to support these initiatives. In smaller communities, winter strategies for placemaking and post-Covid recovery can look a bit different but can be just as successful:

Increasingly, small and rural communities are recognizing their ability to harness assets for the betterment of locals and visitors. **PETITE-RIVIÈRE-SAINT-FRANÇOIS, A TOWN OF 814** in rural Quebec, has adopted an approach to placemaking that focuses investment inwardly to create active and attractive community space for residents. The town engaged in creating a [Master Plan](#) with a focus on placemaking interventions, including an ice-skating path along the river, a winter-lighting strategy, public fire pits in a local park and the introduction of winterized public washrooms in the town square. The Master Plan was put forth to ensure that external and internal investments benefit and prioritize livability for residents over the consumption of place by visitors. The Master Plan places emphasis on the need to protect the village core from temporary vacation rentals and has introduced participatory budgeting into their financial processes to allow all residents to have a say in local spending and placemaking interventions.

**CORDOVA, ALASKA (POPULATION 2,800)**, recognized the popularity of its Ice Worm Festival in its [Community Tourism Plan](#). The plan states that while the community is popular with tourists, the locals are not seeing this translate into investment in community spaces and local well-being. The plan identifies local stakeholders like cruise ship operators, tourism companies, community organizations and business representatives to engage with in order to create a community that works for all.

**HOUGHTON, MICHIGAN (POPULATION 7,800)**, has put forth a [Master Plan](#) that embraces its winter city status in all planning and policy matters. Details on how winter impacts mobility, events, service provision and community well-being is baked into the master plan, ensuring that Houghton recognizes and embraces all its assets all year long.

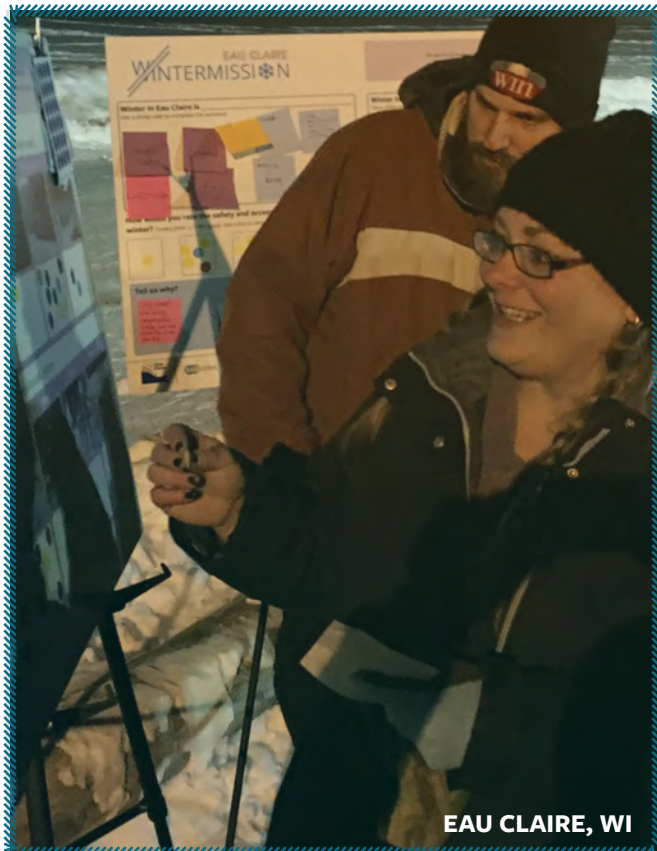
<sup>25</sup> [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eaa1b48c001020e903b2589/t/5f807a8fb5183d5330553534/1602255530152/BBMS-URBAN+DESIGN\\_Oct+7+rsz.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eaa1b48c001020e903b2589/t/5f807a8fb5183d5330553534/1602255530152/BBMS-URBAN+DESIGN_Oct+7+rsz.pdf)



Through the Wintermission project, **LEADVILLE, COLORADO, BUFFALO, NEW YORK AND EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN** collaborated with local partners to live-test new winter programs, events, policies and design interventions as informed by community engagement processes. The results and findings from the engagement and pilot projects led to the development of a Winter Strategy for each community that provided a roadmap to continue improving winter life for all residents. Creating a winter strategy for a community of any size begins with the 8 80 Rules of Engagement.



**BUFFALO, NY**



**EAU CLAIRE, WI**



**LEADVILLE, CO**

# The 8 80 Rules of Engagement

## TAKE IT TO THE STREETS



### Meeting people where they are is key to engagement

Community engagement should be premised on meeting people where they are. Whether that be in a local mall, at a transit terminal, a library, local bodega or outside a community center, the community knows best about their needs and how to address them. When starting a winter strategy, ask residents what they wish they could do in local parks and public spaces in winter. Ask their favorite things about winter in their community and provide the tools for people of all ages, abilities and languages to participate.

## BE INCLUSIVE



### Adopt an intergenerational and inclusive lens

People of all ages, abilities and backgrounds should be able to participate in the visioning of their community. An equity lens should be adopted to hear from historically underrepresented groups that are often excluded from traditional public consultation methods. Engagement should include, but is not limited to:

- Youth groups
- Older-adult groups
- Community hub representatives
- Racialized groups
- LGBTQ+ groups
- Disability groups

## PLAY WITH PURPOSE



### Put the engaging back in engagement

Community engagement can be fun and interactive through low-cost activations that can get people involved and informed.

## CREATE BUZZ



### Eye catching, informative and accessible

Community should be informed of the engagement through eye catching invitations and visuals that are posted in accessible spaces, both physical and virtual.

## VALUE PEOPLE'S TIME



### Ensure reciprocity

Ensure that the community engagement is meaningful. Treat the community as co-collaborators. When community can see their vision reflected and heard they are more willing to trust and participate in future planning processes.

## TAKE ACTION!



When hosting pilot projects, pop-ups and interactive community engagements, collect feedback and data that will inform future iterations of winter placemaking in your community. For example, Afton, Wyoming (population 2,000), with a \$450 grant from the Wyoming Business Council, converted a local park into a temporary ice-skating rink. What started as a one-off activation was soon recognized as a prized space by locals. The Afton Town Hall later adapted to the demand for a skating track every year and invested in the creation of a skate rental in the town hall. Afton's investment in winter placemaking has allowed for a public space to be used by its residents all year long.



## SECTION THREE: The Pillars of Winter Placemaking



### PILLAR 1 **Winter Mobility**

Mobility during winter can be a challenge, and cold weather can quickly create inaccessible, dangerous environments and barriers to movement. This section addresses one of four pillars in this tool kit. It will outline solutions that cities and towns can take to improve accessibility during winter.



### PILLAR 2 **Winter Fun & Programming**

This section on winter fun and programming addresses one of four pillars of this tool kit. It will outline solutions that cities and towns can take to improve existing assets and introduce winter programming and fun for people of all demographic types.



### PILLAR 3 **Winter Warmth**

Warmth in winter is normally found indoors but bringing the heat to the outdoors can be the key to getting folks to enjoy the elements. This segment on Winter Warmth is one of four pillars of this toolkit that will outline actionable solutions cities and towns can take to ensure that placemaking can be comfortable and safe all winter long.



### PILLAR 4 **Winter Health & Resources**

Maintaining physical and mental health during winter is imperative. This section on winter health and resources is one of four pillars in this tool kit that will provide steps to ensure community health is prioritized and needed resources are available to all.



PILLAR 1

## Winter Mobility

Mobility during winter can be a challenge, and hazardous weather can quickly create inaccessible, dangerous environments and barriers to movement. This section addresses one of four pillars in this tool kit. It will outline solutions that communities of all sizes can take to improve accessibility during winter.



1

## WEATHER CONDITIONS & MOBILITY HAZARDS

### COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO WINTER MOBILITY

#### SNOW COVERED ROADS

Hazardous road conditions present challenges to drivers, public transportation, walkers and cyclists alike in navigating streets and public spaces during winter. Those in mobility devices are significantly impacted by unmaintained spaces like roads and sidewalks during winter.

### WINTER PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### SNOWMELT SIDEWALK SYSTEM

Location: Holland, MI

Population: 32,402

The integrated-infrastructure, closed-loop heating system under Holland’s roads and sidewalks melts snow and ice during winter. Initially a couple blocks long, it has been expanded across the town’s downtown core, around key city buildings, and has extended into routes connecting senior living facilities to downtown.

#### CONVERTING MOWERS INTO SIDEWALK SNOWPLOWS

Location: Cloquet, MN

Population: 12,000

Cloquet has developed a network of priority sidewalks that it clears in the winter. The priority routes include about 13 of the city’s 40 miles of sidewalk. Parks department staff perform the work using tractors that are converted from grass mowers to snow clearing tractors with 5-foot-wide broom attachments. This helped the city launch its sidewalk clearing program with a small initial investment and no need for additional staff.

### GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### PRIORITIZING SNOW REMOVAL

There are many creative and adaptive solutions that address snow removal. With a range of new and emerging technologies on the market today, many options for snow clearing are now available commercially. For a cost effective way to engage in community-wide plowing, municipal assets can be retrofitted.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

- STEP 1:** Assess current inventory and gauge the staffing and equipment capacity for retrofitting mowers into plows.
- STEP 2:** Determine neighborhoods or streets that can be used to test out new or retrofitted equipment and host pilot snow clearings.
- STEP 3:** Analyze data gathered from project, including feedback on social media and resident satisfaction surveys, and assess key findings.
- STEP 4:** Incorporate updates and amendments from community feedback related to snow removal programs.

1

## WEATHER CONDITIONS & MOBILITY HAZARDS

COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO WINTER MOBILITY

### ACCESSIBLE TRANSIT

Fluctuating and freezing temperatures have the greatest effect on the most vulnerable. Those waiting for transit and those who need to use transit to stay warm should be able to do so with dignity.

WINTER PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

### ACCESS HUBS

Location: Toronto, ON

Population: 2,900,000

Sixteen access hubs were added to Toronto's transit stop network in 2020. The access hubs are equipped with heat sensors, lights and seating and are plowed within 24 hours of the start of a snow event. .

### OPEN TRANSIT ON COLD NIGHTS

Location: Edmonton, AB

Population: 980,000

Edmonton Transit centers and Light Rail Transit stations are open overnight when temperatures are -4 F (-20 C) or lower for those who need a warm place to spend the night.

### WINTER-PROOFING TRANSIT

Location: Grand Rapids, MI

Population: 198,401

Through AARP's Age-Friendly Communities initiative, listening sessions showed that people needed winterized transit stops. Shovels were then added to stops.

GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

### WINTER-MODIFIED SERVICES

Many public transportation services, transit facilities and transit-stop designs can be easily adapted to winter conditions with critical and strategic planning in place.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

**STEP 1:** Identify underserved areas and winter barriers in accessing transit.

**STEP 2:** Assess community groups in geographical locations that depend on public transportation. Establish community consultation with underrepresented voices to determine best solutions for equitable and barrier-free winter mobility.

**STEP 3:** Assess infrastructure and assets, estimate financial budget and determine timeline for implementation of pilot.

**STEP 4:** Establish pilot project locations based on community consultation.

**STEP 5:** Analyze results and reassess and adapt services to align with public critiques. Ensure that underrepresented people are heard when making amendments.

## POLICIES & PRACTICES

Policies and practices that focus on winter mobility must prioritize equity and ensure access for the community's most vulnerable residents.

### COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO WINTER MOBILITY

#### SNOW CLEARANCE

Obstructive snowbanks, partially plowed streets and sidewalks and snow windrows can create mobility barriers for those using wheelchairs, scooters or similar aids.

Responsibility for snow clearance is usually passed down to owners and residents of adjacent properties along with liability risks. This task can quickly become a major barrier for those who do not have the ability or strength to shovel. It is estimated that 11,500 Americans are injured annually while shoveling snow.

### WINTER PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### SNOW PLOWING FOR SENIORS

Location: Wells, BC

Population: 200

With support of the local paramedics, Wells engaged with older adults to identify priority snow clearing routes. Armed with information of priority routes and accessibility concerns, the Town re-worked the snow plowing route to prioritize the mobility needs of seniors.

#### AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER SNOW CLEARING PROGRAM

Location: Portland, ME

Population: 66,595

Portland's Age-Friendly Steering Committee seeks out volunteers every winter to shovel snow for their elderly neighbors. The work is primarily focused on clearing paths between houses and sidewalks for emergency access. Volunteers are reassigned to the same residence each snowfall of the season.

#### MINI SIDEWALK PLOWS

Location: Holland, MI

Population: 32,402

Holland has incorporated five mini plows into its snow clearing strategy. The plows can go onto sidewalks and into tight pathways and can clear up to 140 miles of sidewalk in eight hours.

### GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### DEVELOP AN EQUITY-BASED LENS FOR PRIORITIZING SNOW CLEARING

Having a robust snow clearing framework that addresses equity-related issues, ensures barrier-free mobility and prioritizes underserved and communities ensures better winter mobility for all.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

- STEP 1:** Identify local organizations engaged in sidewalk clearing and assess how to amplify their services.
- STEP 2:** Assess and categorize popular routes used by different demographic groups (i.e., disabilities/age/race/mode of travel) and routes that present barriers.
- STEP 3:** Propose snow clearing pilot project ideas based on specific routes and the unique needs of individual communities.
- STEP 4:** Reassess pilot projects intermittently through community feedback and address gaps or missed opportunities.

3

## ACCESSIBILITY & BARRIERS

Addressing the accessibility of winter mobility through an equity-based and intersectional lens can aid in creating livable, walkable, and age-friendly communities.

### COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO WINTER MOBILITY

#### REDUCED MODES OF MOBILITY

Winter weather tends to hamper the range of mobility options residents can use. Bike lanes and recreational walking paths are usually ignored by plows in favor of roads and sidewalks.

### WINTER PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### SNOW EMERGENCY PARKING RESTRICTIONS

Location: Troy, NY

Population: 49,458

Troy has initiated a snow emergency plan to assist in the clearing of streets after severe snowfalls. Snow emergencies are declared in advance and last 48 hours. When these declarations are issued, parking bans are enforced for 24 hours on the side of each street with odd-numbered buildings, the next 24 hours the opposite side of each street is affected. Residents are encouraged to use public parking lots during these events.

#### GREENWAY BIKE LANE CLEARING PRIORITIZATION

Location: Minneapolis, MN

Population: 420,324

The bike lanes in the Twin Cities are typically cleared within 24 hours of a snow event to ensure year-round bikeability.

#### SNOWMOBILE ORDINANCE

Location: Sault Ste. Marie, MI

Population: 13,500

Sault Ste. Marie hosts an international snowmobile race every winter, which brings 10,000 visitors to the city. A local ordinance allows snowmobilers to use downtown streets. Embracing snowmobiling through an ordinance reflects the importance of this event and mode of transportation to the community.

### GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### ADAPT MOBILITY TO WINTER

Winter presents challenges and opportunities for mobility in places where seasonal weather patterns can bring on sudden changes. Rural areas are especially vulnerable due to the lack of sidewalks, wide areas of open space and low population density, which make it hard to sustain snow clearing practices.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

**STEP 1:** Observe the challenges that snow creates for drivers, public transit and individuals.

**STEP 2:** Consider adapting parking requirements seasonally to allow for efficient plowing.

**STEP 3:** Consider multi-modal transportation as requiring the same snow clearing prioritization that cars and streets receive.

COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO WINTER MOBILITY

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Public alert systems can directly reach mobile phones to quickly provide large audiences with important and crucial information relating to weather events, poor road conditions and winter dangers.

WINTER PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

**WINTER EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM**

Location: Madison, WI

Population: 254,977

People can sign up to receive Madison Winter Alerts via text messaging. Participants are informed of snow emergency alerts and get reminders of when to clear the sidewalk in front of their home.

**SNOW PLOW TRACKER**

Location: Ann Arbor, MI

Population: 120, 735

The City of Ann Arbor provides residents with real-time information on the whereabouts of its city's snowplows and tracks roadways and sidewalks that have been cleared or are in the process of being cleared. The city uses Automatic Vehicle Location technology sensors to determine the exact location of its plows. This information can be accessed online or by a mobile phone app.

**SNOW GO**

Location: Dublin, OH

Population: 46,499

Dublin offers a mobile app that provides the status of snow and ice cleared pathways and trails in the city and places high-traffic and priority routes.

GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

**USE TECHNOLOGY TO SHARE INFORMATION**

Technology with GIS applications are great ways to collect, gauge, and share information relating to snow or rainfall amounts. They can quickly provide the public with up-to-date information on cleared routes, snow removal procedures or schedules of when their community will be plowed.

**STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:**

- STEP 1:** Assess different forms of snow clearing and snow removal alert systems that can be used by your municipality.
- STEP 2:** Determine budget for snow removal technology and review financing constraints.
- STEP 3:** Choose the form of snow-clearing technology that is best suited to the community, climate, and surrounding geographical environment.
- STEP 4:** Evaluate various neighborhoods and streets and get input from residents on trouble spots within their community.
- STEP 5:** Initiate snow technology pilot project in selected area(s) based on community feedback. Analyze data gathered from project and assess key findings.
- STEP 6:** Incorporate updates and amendments from community on the snow service technology.

COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO WINTER MOBILITY

**USING TECHNOLOGY TO BREAK DOWN WINTER MOBILITY BARRIERS**

In winter, wait times for public transit can be extended. The bus shelter and waiting area conditions is increasingly important during these waiting periods.

WINTER PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

**RIDESHARK APP**

Location: Renfrew County, ON      Population: 88,512

Renfrew County has launched a test pilot of a new ride-share service in partnership with RideShark. The service will use a mobile network to provide the community winterized, on-demand transit. The goal is to improve the safety of travel for residents in rural settings during the harsh winter season.

**ON-DEMAND TRANSIT PILOT**

Location: Belleville, ON      Population: 50,720

On 2018, Belleville worked with transit-software company Pantonium to create an on-demand service for its transit fleet. With a click of a button any hour of the day, transportation from any bus stop can be ordered and a bus is then autonomously rerouted to pick up passengers. These emerging services have the potential to break down mobility barriers and reduce the need to wait for transit during cold, freezing temperatures.

GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

**USE TECHNOLOGY TO SHARE INFORMATION & REMINDERS RELATED TO TRANSIT**

Technological advancements in mobility have made it easier to keep roadways and sidewalks clear of ice and snow and allow passengers to track transportation in real time and utilize on-demand service.

**STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:**

- STEP 1:** Identify current transit assets and analyze the types of transit sharing technologies that are available.
- STEP 2:** Determine budget for technological equipment and assess financing for implementation.
- STEP 3:** Determine target audiences that could benefit from such services. Engage with community members to gauge local interest in these services.
- STEP 4:** Assess specific routes for pilot implementation and connect with partners to provide services.
- STEP 5:** Analyze data gathered from project and assess key findings.



PILLAR 2

# Winter Fun & Programming

This section on winter fun and programming addresses one of four pillars of this tool kit. It will outline solutions that cities and towns can take to improve existing assets and introduce winter programming and fun for people of all demographic types.





1

## WEATHER CONDITIONS & WINTER HAZARDS

Age-friendly parks and public spaces should require that people of all generations, abilities and backgrounds can have access to winter fun and programming.

COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE

### COLD & FREEZING TEMPERATURES

People are often reluctant to join outdoor fun and programming for a prolonged duration of time. Ensuring a heat source is incorporated into an event or program can be key to its success. The activity itself, if based upon physical movement, can aid in combating the cold while participants enjoy winter's fun.

EXAMPLES OF WINTER PLACEMAKING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### KATAHDIN SNOWDOWN

Location: Millinocket, ME      Population: 4,269

Katahdin Snowdown was a Covid-19-safe event that sought to improve local trails with a story walk and transformed a pond into an ice-skating rink. The plan is to repeat the event every winter and turn the community into a four-season destination. The local library supplied snowshoes and skis that could be rented. Warming tents, hot cocoa, benches and an outdoor sound system were purchased with funds from the AARP Community Challenge that made this event a success.

#### CROKICURL AND WARM MEALS

Location: Altoona, WI      Population: 7,800

Crokicurl combines the Olympic ice sport of curling with crokinole, a Canadian board game in which players flick chips onto a board. Altoona recently became home to the first Crokicurl ice rink, where residents are encouraged to come out and try something new. There is a firepit, and hot meals are provided by local businesses.

#### LAKE CITY ICE WALL

Location: Lake City, CO      Population: 400

Farmed and managed by volunteers, the ice wall provides a distinctive winter activity for the hearty climbers. With the addition of warming huts, ice fishing tournaments and access to appealing retail outlets, Lake City provides winter fun for residents and visitors alike.

GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

### ENSURE SHELTER AND WARMTH

Winter fun and programming are premised upon being outdoors for long periods of time. To make it a more comfortable experience, placemaking can build upon local built assets to provide shelter and warmth.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

- STEP 1:** Take account of local assets like fire pits, nearby public washrooms and sheltered areas and centralize the program or event around this space.
- STEP 2:** Ensure fun and programming has a balance of movement, access to indoor/protected spaces, and heating elements.
- STEP 3:** Embrace existing attractions like ice rinks and ski trails to build placemaking on community assets.

2

## POLICIES & PRACTICES

Policies and practices in winter cities can often restrict year-round use of parks and public spaces. Concerted efforts should be made to evaluate these policies and practices using a winter lens to identify opportunities and barriers.

### COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE

#### RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF PUBLIC SPACE

Bylaws and policies can restrict programming and events in certain public spaces and should be reviewed prior to any placemaking activity. Sunsetting ordinances in parks that restrict nighttime use and restrictions of public fire pits can have impacts of winter placemaking. Standards in what is permitted in the public right of way have shifted as a result of Covid-19 and should be harnessed to benefit winter placemaking.

### EXAMPLES OF WINTER PLACEMAKING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### WINTER DINING PATIOS

Location: Cape Code, MA      Population: 212,990

Restaurants implemented various tactics to allow outdoor dining during the wintertime amid the Covid-19 pandemic, including igloos, pop-up tents, outdoor picnic tables with bonfires and heating lamps.

#### WINTER PICNICKING

Location: Edmonton, AB      Population: 981,280

Edmonton created bookable winter picnic sites, spaces that were previously restricted to summer uses only. The city also created a checklist for picnickers that details best practices for using municipal firepits and picnic areas during winter.

#### FREE LITTLE LIBRARIES

Location: Village of Golf Manor, OH      Population: 4,000

The closure of public libraries during Covid led Golf Manor, Ohio to partner with LittleFreeLibrary.org to install 10 mailbox-size libraries on posts in public spaces. These little libraries are year-round additions to public spaces in the village.

### GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### WINTER SOCIALS

Winter social events, whether held on a winterized patio space or around a firepit in a park, are important for combating the social isolation that accompanies the colder season.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

- STEP 1:** To create winter dining areas, seek out partnerships with local business improvement areas and chambers of commerce for a cohesive winter dining experience.
- STEP 2:** To create winter socials in public spaces, utilize local assets like parks that provide gathering amenities in summer, then simply winterize these assets.
- STEP 3:** Conduct audits of parks and public spaces as listed in the *Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages Guide* to evaluate how these spaces can be winterized for winter fun and programming.

3

## ACCESSIBILITY & BARRIERS

Winter fun and programming can be physically or financially out of reach for many people. Ensuring low-barrier activities have mechanisms in place to bring together people from all types of backgrounds can help facilitate more equitable and inclusive winter programming.

### COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE

#### ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Access to winter equipment like snowshoes, skis and even warm clothing can be a challenge for many.

### EXAMPLES OF WINTER PLACEMAKING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### GET A GRIP

**Location:** Lanark County, ON      **Population:** 869

Lanark Library has adopted a pay-it-forward model to provide free boot grippers for people aged 65 or older.

#### MAINELY OUTDOORS PROGRAM

**Location:** Town of New Vineyard, ME      **Population:** 750

A local author and outdoorsman partnered with New Vineyard’s public library to host the Mainely Outdoors Program that provide hiking and snowshoeing rentals. Guided walks through the snow end at the library where warm soup and drinks await participants.

### GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### TOOLS TO ENJOY WINTER

If the right tools are provided, winter fun and programming can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

- STEP 1:** Assess local assets including community groups, physical spaces and institutions like libraries.
- STEP 2:** Compile resource information, create a network of service providers, and produce a comprehensive resource guide.
- STEP 3:** Build upon the commitment of community groups and organizations to provide tools for winter through grants, partnerships and other forms of support.

ACCESSIBILITY & BARRIERS

COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE

**LOCATION AND CAPACITY**

Small and rural communities can repurpose their existing physical and organization assets to embrace winter placemaking.

EXAMPLES OF WINTER PLACEMAKING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

**WINTER IN MOTION FESTIVAL**

**Location:** Interior BC, Multiple Rural Communities in Columbia Valley, BC

This four-month festival travels across the Columbia Valley to four partnering resort towns. The festival features winter programming, events and concerts that are cost-shared and co-produced by these four communities.

**JIBBA JABBA RAIL JAM**

**Location:** Houghton, MI

**Population:** 7,800

Houghton realized that streets can be reclaimed for winter fun. Huron Street was closed to cars and opened to a competitive skiing competition as collaboratively hosted with the support of local businesses and volunteers who helped build the snowy slope.

**FROSTBITE FESTIVAL**

**Location:** Harrison, MI

**Population:** 1,973

From grass in the summer, to snow in the winter, the Frostbite Festival has made their local golf course available for all-season use. By using a local institution in all seasons, Harrison amplified and repurposed their existing physical assets for fun winter placemaking.

**DESTINATION GRAND RAPIDS**

**Location:** Grand Rapids, MI

**Population:** 198,401

Destination Grand Rapids transformed a parking lot into a rink in the winter and a splash pad in the summer. The parking lot's lights were rotated to provide rink users the option of skating in the evening.

GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

**CONSIDER NEW PARTNERSHIPS**

- STEP 1:** Take an audit of surrounding organizational assets and seek to amplify them to support placemaking.
- STEP 2:** Seek out new partnerships with neighboring communities, organizations and institutions to winterize spaces in creative ways.
- STEP 3:** Engage residents on the preferred spaces and uses to host a pilot winter placemaking project.
- STEP 4:** Collect data on pilot projects, resident feedback and potential partnerships.

ACCESSIBILITY & BARRIERS

COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE

**COST OF PARTICIPATION**

Events with an entrance fee or other cost to participate can be prohibitively expensive for people with low or fixed incomes or for large families.

EXAMPLES OF WINTER PLACEMAKING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

**SNOW MUCH FUN POP-UP PARKS**

Location: Niagara Falls, NY      Population: 48,252

With support of the Create a Healthier Niagara Falls Collaborative, the city of Niagara Falls created a park pop-up series in winter to engage with local residents of all ages and to foster community well-being.

**FUN BINS IN THE PARK**

Location: Middleton, WI      Population: 19,487

Fun winter toys and tools were added to select parks in Middleton, Wisconsin for free play for kids of all ages.

**LUMINARY SKI**

Location: Primrose, AK      Population: 100

Luminary Ski is part of the annual New Year's Eve tradition where the Divide Ski Trails are lit by candles and all are welcome to snowshoe, ski or walk the slopes. Campfires and free hot drinks are provided, and head lamps recommended!

**LOW BARRIER ACTIVATIONS**

Lower the cost barrier to events by pursuing partnerships and grants.

GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

**STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED**

- STEP 1:** Identify grant opportunities for local events. Grants may be available through a neighborhood agency or a state initiative.
- STEP 2:** Identify any partners or sponsors that may be willing to support and fund the event.
- STEP 3:** Identify community groups that might support the placemaking with tools and volunteer hours.

## ACCESSIBILITY & BARRIERS

### COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE

#### ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACE

Low-income and racialized communities have historically experienced inadequate investment and are often communities devoid of quality parks and public spaces. Systemic barriers such as this prevent lower-income and racialized individuals from enjoying winter.

### EXAMPLES OF WINTER PLACEMAKING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### SNOW LOOPS

Location: Toronto, ON

Population: 2,930,000

In response to the need for a low-barrier way to get out and about during winter, the City of Toronto has opened municipally run golf courses during winter to create Snow Loops, spaces designated for walking and snowshoeing. The loops range from 1 to 2.5 km and feature washrooms that remain open for winter walkers. All city golf courses are accessible by transit, or adjacent to subway stations to maintain the low-barrier aspect to enjoying winter.

#### CITY-OPERATED SKI HILL

Location: Traverse City, MI

Population: 15,570

The Hickory Hills Recreation Area is a city-owned and operated recreational ski hill located within Traverse City with 13 runs. This municipally run ski hill offers winter recreational activities and programming for its residents at low-rate prices with further discounts for students and seniors.

### GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### REPURPOSING PUBLIC SPACES FOR WINTER

When snow covers the recreational trails, sports fields and town squares, municipalities and towns alike must adapt to make these spaces fun and active year-round.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED

**STEP 1:** Identify recreational spaces that are underutilized in winter.

**STEP 2:** Ask the surrounding community what they want the area of focus to look like by going to where the people are and adopting the 8 80 Rules of Engagement.

**STEP 3:** Condense community feedback to create pilot projects.

**STEP 4:** Gain feedback on pilot projects.

**STEP 5:** Identify key actors who can be responsible for the future successes of the program or future pilot project iterations.

## ACCESSIBILITY & BARRIERS

### COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE

#### LACK OF REPRESENTATION

Multi-generational and accessible design is often missing from outdoor sporting and recreational facilities. Access to sports and recreation in winter can also be limited for folks traditionally underrepresented in winter culture. Equitable placemaking seeks to make outdoor winter sports, recreation and access low-barrier and fun.

### EXAMPLES OF WINTER PLACEMAKING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### LOPPET FOUNDATION'S CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

Location: Minneapolis, MN      Population: 420,324

Culture was identified as a barrier to accessing winter fun and programming for black and brown youth in Minneapolis. Through the Loppet Foundation, these youth were brought to experience the fun winter has to offer and acknowledged that winter culture and sports is historically exclusive.

### GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### REPRESENTATION THROUGH CO-CREATION

Programs that can embrace community-based knowledge and co-creation are better positioned to provide meaningful and localized placemaking interventions.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED

- STEP 1:** Assess community need and gap in service provision.
- STEP 2:** Speak to the community on desires for accessing winter fun and programming.
- STEP 3:** Formulate pilot projects as informed by the community and thrown with the support of the community.
- STEP 4:** Evaluate pilot and feedback to inform the next iteration and pass these tools onto identified stakeholders.

## ACCESSIBILITY & BARRIERS

COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE

### LACK OF FAMILIARITY

Newcomers may not be familiar with the fun programs that can be held outdoors in winter and may therefore be reluctant to participate.

EXAMPLES OF WINTER PLACEMAKING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

### WINSPORT NEWCOMERS PROGRAM

Location: Calgary, AB

Population: 1,330,000

Winsport teamed up with Newcomers Center to offer a 5-week introductory course to winter sports. The course sought to educate new Canadians to the importance of layering to keep warm, and how to actively participate in fun winter recreation.

GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

### FOSTER A SHARED SENSE OF BELONGING

Winter sports can be a tool to foster a shared sense of belonging and ensure an equitable approach to winter fun and programming.

### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED

**STEP 1:** Create partnerships with a range of newcomers clubs, organizations and support systems.

**STEP 2:** Consult with these groups to understand barriers to participating in winter fun and programming.

**STEP 3:** Support newcomers clubs and organization through funding and logistics to create pilot fun and programming events.



PILLAR 3

## Winter Warmth

Warmth in winter is normally found indoors but bringing the heat to the outdoors can be the key to getting folks to enjoy the elements. This segment on Winter Warmth is one of four pillars of this toolkit that will outline actionable solutions communities can take to ensure that placemaking can be comfortable and safe all winter long.



1

## WEATHER CONDITIONS & HAZARDS

The fear of the cold can deter people from wanting to spend time outdoors during winter. At the heart of making parks and public spaces attractive places to be during the winter is the provision of warmth and shelter.

### COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO WINTER WARMTH

#### STAYING WARM & ENJOYING COMMUNITY

Making outdoor life attractive during winter is difficult to do. People need to be enticed to stay outdoors longer and there must be compelling options to do so.

### WINTER PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### DICKENS FESTIVAL

Location: Garrison, ND

Population: 1,500

Known as the Christmas Capitol, Garrison embraces the Victorian charm of its main street through a seven-day Charles Dickens themed celebration. Dickens Festival is a means to bring life back to an agricultural town and is run completely by local volunteers. The festival incorporates local arts and culture, commerce and fun for all ages with warming stations.

#### SOUP'R BOWL

Location: Traverse City, MI

Population: 15,000

As part of WonderFest in February, local businesses come out to show off their best soups in a friendly competition that can warm the belly.

#### WARMING HUT GRANT CHALLENGE

Location: Libby, MT

Population: 2,703

AARP Montana awarded Kootenai County Cross Country Ski Club a \$5,000 AARP Community Challenge Grant for new trail signage, lighting improvements to the parking lot area and amenities for a warming hut. The warming hut is also used as a gathering and staging area during the summer and fall months for walkers and bikers.

#### WINTER RECREATIONAL AREA

Location: Steven's Point, WI

Population: 26,229

Steven's Point has transformed the Iverson Winter Recreational Area into an outdoor space that is now host to many winter activities including sled and toboggan runs, snowshoeing routes, and cross-country skiing trails. The area also includes a warming lodge and restroom use that is staff-operated during Fridays to Sundays in the winter season.

### **PROVIDING TEMPORARY RELIEF**

Winter placemaking can provide temporary relief to folks enjoying winter's assets by adding warming huts, warmed seating and the opportunity for enjoyment.

#### **STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:**

- STEP 1:** In deciding the location and scope of a winter placemaking event or program, local assets should be mapped to support the provision of a place for visitors and residents to warm themselves.
- STEP 2:** Taking the asset map that includes location of electrical outlets, logistics of a creating and getting permits for a fire pit should inform the basis to provide temporary relief from the elements.
- STEP 3:** Coordinate assets with vendors and community groups to understand specific needs, locations and orientations of the warming structure.
- STEP 4:** Train staff and volunteers on proper uses of warming infrastructure.

1

## WEATHER CONDITIONS & HAZARDS

COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO WINTER WARMTH

### FOSTERING COMMUNITY WARMTH

Winter is unpredictable, and for those that are new to winter cities, snow, sleet, and hail create unanticipated factors that encourage many to stay indoors. To combat this, the feeling of warmth associated with social connections can be fostered through community building based on the strengths of multiculturalism. Creating a welcoming place during the most unwelcoming months can assist residents both new and old in feeling warm and welcome within their communities.

WINTER PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

### THE PERRY LATINO FESTIVAL & LOS POSADAS

Location: Perry, IA

Population: 7,599

Perry is a town with a strong Latinx community who find that winter is unfamiliar to many of its new residents. To make winter warm and inviting, the town has embraced Latinx cultural celebrations during the snowiest season: Los Posadas is a religious celebration in December where Perry's residents flock to the town square, bundled in their winter warmest to recreate traditional biblical scenes. Perry's Los Posadas once took place in the outskirts of town until the event was invited to take place in the heart of the community's square, thereby recognizing its importance to the area's residents.

### WESTMAN MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

Location: Brandon, MB

Population: 49,000

Brandon is experiencing declining birth rates, and a loss of their youth population to bigger cities. However, Brandon is experiencing increasing immigration growth. In promoting multicultural community-building, the Westman Multicultural Festival hopes to create a sense of welcome to all in the winter months. Enjoy Jamaican food in January, or snack on El-Salvadoran treats as the snow falls and feel the warmth of community.

### CARIBOU CARNIVAL

Location: Yellowknife, NT

Population: 20,000

Since 1955, Caribou Carnival celebrated local Dene culture through musical performances, hand games, log sawing and tea boiling competitions. The carnival featured dogsled derbies and an assortment of food and activities for the family.

### LUTEFISK DRIVE-THRU DINNER

Location: Minneapolis, MN

Population: 420,324

Annual community dinners at the American Swedish Institute have pivoted during Covid to offer a drive through takeout rendition on a Minnesotan classic, Lutefish! Guests are encouraged to eat their Lutefish meals in their cars in the ASI parking lot in lieu of being together, indoors. It's a community tradition that the pandemic could not stop.

WINTER  
PLACEMAKING  
OPPORTUNITIES  
TO ADDRESS  
CHALLENGES

(CONTINUED)

GOOD PRACTICES  
AND STEPS TO  
IMPLEMENTATION

**FOR THE LOVE OF LOCAL**

Location: Valley City, ND

Population: 6,800

To support local business, the Valley City Area Chamber of Commerce introduced Chamber Bucks as a way to support the pandemic recovery at the local scale. The initiative begins in February as a means to attract shoppers during the winter months.

**PROVIDING CONNECTION**

In recognizing the culture of a community's residents there is opportunity to make a place inviting simply by amplifying the cultural resources already available. Communities of all sizes can recognize the desire for culturally relevant programs and practices during winter to make a place representative of its residents.

**STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:**

- STEP 1:** Catalogue existing community groups, multicultural organizations, programming and events to understand the existing organizational assets.
- STEP 2:** Recognize and amplify local culture through winterized event and programming.
- STEP 3:** Seek to include and embrace catalogued community groups in the planning and implementation of events and programming. This inclusion will lead to more active participation during the placemaking activation.

2

## POLICIES & PRACTICES

Many policies, practices and planning methods can have negative impacts on creating winter warmth during a placemaking activity or event.

### COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO WINTER WARMTH

#### A LACK OF SUN LIGHT

When the sun sets early during winter, and street life retreats indoors, city streets can feel unwelcoming.

### WINTER PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### GLOW GARDENS

Location: Halifax, NS

Population: 431,479

This festival of lights program prioritizes age-friendly activities, accessible heated spaces and interactive installations that encourage the appreciation of winter nights outdoors.

#### DOWNTOWN STROLLING LIGHT PARADE

Location: Traverse City, MI

Population: 15,570

Traverse City offers its annual Downtown Strolling Light Parade in line with its seasonal tree lighting ceremony. This annual light parade is dedicated to showcasing off local businesses and talent which helps to reinvigorate and boost downtown businesses and the local economy.

#### ART BY THE RIVER

Location: Lander, WY

Population: 7,500

The importance of placemaking has been observed by Wyoming's Economic Development Agency through rural development grants. Through this grant, Lander was able to activate its riverside walking path during winter with murals speaking to the history of the community and watershed. The mural unveiling was held on a snowy winter day, reinforcing that arts and culture can be embraced all year round.

### GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### ILLUMINATING WINTER

Winter cities across the world play on the whimsical nature of winter by adding playful lights and art installations to public spaces that encourage movement and enjoyment.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

- STEP 1:** Identify attractive architecture, pathways, and public spaces that lighting and art could be used to illuminate.
- STEP 2:** Tie in lighting with a larger placemaking strategy or reoccurring event.
- STEP 3:** Work with local partners like business improvement areas or chambers of commerce to support, fund, and organize the illuminations with support of local businesses and organizations.

COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO WINTER WARMTH

**POLICIES THAT PREVENT WARMING**

Closed washrooms in winter and ordinances against public fire pits can have negative impacts for accessing winter warmth in parks and public spaces.

WINTER PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

**CAFETO**

Location: Toronto, ON

Population: 2,930,000

CafeTO began in the summer of 2020 as a way for restaurants and bars to move their seating outdoors into formerly curbside parking spaces. As the seasons changed, the city modified local by-laws to allow portable heaters in the public right of way.

**HEAT IN THE STREET**

Location: Northville, MI

Population: 6,007

In response to Covid-19, the Northville Downtown Development Authority closed roads to traffic during the summer to allow restaurants and other businesses to expand cafe style seating outdoors. This program was continued into the winter with outdoor warming pods for customers to sit and enjoy the season.

GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

**ADAPTING TO NEW USES**

Winter cities across the world play on the whimsical nature of winter by adding playful lights to public spaces to encourage movement and enjoyment.

**STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:**

- STEP 1:** Conduct an evaluation of policy and programs that might inhibit local businesses and institutions from embracing winterized seating and activities.
- STEP 2:** Partner with local businesses and institutions to encourage new forms of socialization in public spaces in winter.
- STEP 3:** Work with policy makers to embrace new uses of public space in winter.

3

## ACCESSIBILITY & BARRIERS

Accessible and barrier-free access to winter warmth is needed to make parks and public spaces available year round.

### COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO WINTER WARMTH

#### EXISTING ASSETS

Placemaking should aid in creating access to multifunctional institutions for all ages. Existing physical assets can be repurposed, and institutions can be reprogrammed to support local in all seasons.

### WINTER PLACEMAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### INDOOR WINTER WALKING PROGRAM FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Location: Broome County, NY      Population: 190,488

The Broome County Office for Aging has teamed up with the local school district to offer after hour indoor walking in school halls to those age 60 or older during the winter months.

### GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### STAYING WARM INDOORS

Placemaking can focus on outdoor public spaces as well as indoor private spaces. Staying warm indoors can lead to the creation of creative placemaking that relies on local assets and partnerships.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED

- STEP 1:** Evaluate existing local spaces and community organizations that can provide potential partnerships in making multifunctional spaces.
- STEP 2:** Spread the word about partnerships and opportunities for indoor warm activities with a target audience.
- STEP 3:** Create and strengthen partnerships every year by reviewing usage data and look for ways to improve the relationship for both parties.





PILLAR 4

## Winter Health & Resources

Maintaining physical and mental health during winter is imperative. This section on winter health and resources is one of four pillars in this tool kit that will provide steps to improving health outcomes for all residents through placemaking.



1

## WEATHER CONDITIONS & WINTER HAZARDS

Special attention is needed in winter when navigating parks and public spaces. Many of these spaces are unmaintained during winter, a policy that creates additional barriers to enjoying the outdoors safely in winter for many.

### COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE

#### SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

Winter can create hazardous outdoor environments and caution is required to prevent falls and injury.

### EXAMPLES OF WINTER PLACEMAKING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### ICE GRIPPERS IN BRRRLINGTON

Location: Burlington, VT

Population: 42,545

To help visitors navigate the slippery slope in Arthur Park, boxes with free ice grippers have been provided, making it easier to reach to the lake and trails below. Boxes of ice grippers have been provided at the top and bottom of the slope.

### GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### MODIFYING UNMAINTAINED SPACES

Parks and pathways are often unmaintained spaces during the winter months. Interventions to introduce accessibility modifications can help some better access and enjoy winter's elements.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

- STEP 1:** Embrace the Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper movement to make unmaintained winter spaces more accessible.
- STEP 2:** To encourage year-round use, consider exploring ways to introduce parks maintenance in the winter.

2

## POLICIES & PRACTICES

Seasonal washroom closure is driven by the idea that people do not use public washrooms as frequently in winter because there is less reason to be outside for long periods of time. This rationale has created hostile parks and public spaces in the winter that is the antithesis of placemaking.

COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO HEALTH & RESOURCES

### CLOSURES

Maintenance costs during colder temperatures and fears that people experiencing homelessness will use washrooms for habitation also motivate the seasonal closures. The closures can create problems for older adults, children, those with disabilities, nursing mothers and other affected groups.

EXAMPLES OF WINTER PLACEMAKING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

### OTTAWA'S OFFICIAL PLAN

Location: Ottawa, ON

Population: 994,000

Ottawa is undergoing an Official Plan review that acknowledges the demand to have more public washrooms in parks and transit stations open year-round.

### DOUBLING WASHROOMS IN WINTER

Location: Toronto, ON

Population: 2,930,000

As part of the ongoing pandemic and acknowledgement that people are spending more time than ever in parks, even in winter, Toronto has committed to doubling its public washroom openings. Out of 143 public washrooms available in summer, 64 will now be available in winter.

GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

### A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH

Washroom access is key in creating a public space where people will want to spend time.

### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

- STEP 1:** Evaluate existing public spaces with washrooms that are seasonally restricted.
- STEP 2:** Assess the feasibility of expanding winter washroom accessibility and provide both temporary and permanent solutions.

3

## ACCESSIBILITY & BARRIERS

Winter can exacerbate and perpetuate barriers that already exist in urban spaces for those facing health or disability-related challenges.

### COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO HEALTH & RESOURCES

#### DIGITAL RESOURCES

Some winter resources or guidebooks that are provided by municipalities or organizations only come in digital form. Those who face challenges in using technological devices may therefore be shut out from accessing this information. Offering alternative paper-based resources can ensure a more accessible and barrier-free environment.

### EXAMPLES OF WINTER PLACEMAKING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

#### HEALTH AND WELLNESS WINTER TOOLKIT

**Location:** State of Maine

**Population:** 1,340,000

Maine published a booklet offering resources and advice for living through the winter season. It addresses a variety of subjects, including mental health in winter, exercise and movement, healthy eating practices, financial well-being and more. It can be obtained online or in print format.

#### WINTER ACTIVITIES INTERACTIVE MAP

**Location:** Oakland County, MI

**Population:** 1,258,000

Oakland County created an interactive, web-based platform to showcase winter activities that can be accessed within the county in both urban and rural settings. The GIS map-based website allows for a visualization of all things winter and helps direct residents to other websites pertaining to each activity.

### GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

#### PROVIDING RESOURCES IN A VARIETY OF FORMATS

Digital resources are a great way to reach diverse audiences over large geographic areas. However, it is also important to complement these resources with hard copies for those who do not have access to technology or internet service. Providing handouts, door delivery drop-offs and central pickup locations for winter resources in addition to online formats allows for equitable access and engagement.

#### STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:

- STEP 1:** Establish geographic boundaries and a targeted network for resource distribution.
- STEP 2:** Curate resource content for distribution in both online and hard copy formats.
- STEP 3:** Compile residential lists and collect information on how to access resource preferences.
- STEP 4:** Establish central locations for hard-copy pickups and ensure PDF resources are accessible for download and printing online.
- STEP 5:** Provide alternative options for delivering resources, such as postal mail, door delivery and handouts.

COMMON WINTER CHALLENGE TO HEALTH & RESOURCES

**SHARING KNOWLEDGE**

Accessing and distributing knowledge on events and winter resources should be available in both online and physical formats.

EXAMPLES OF WINTER PLACEMAKING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

**MULTI-LINGUISTIC FACT SHEETS**

**Location:** State of Vermont      **Population:** 624,000

Vermont’s Department of Health shared information through a series of health releases that are accessible to various groups. Health-related information is available in print and digital formats that incorporate a range of languages spoken in the region. Video and audio resources have also been provided for those with visual or audio impairments.

**TRANSLATED WINTER GUIDEBOOKS**

**Location:** Bellevue, WA      **Population:** 144,400

Bellevue’s Winterized Weather-Preparedness Guide and the Winter Cautions Guide is offered in online and downloadable formats in various languages.

**WINTER WEATHER RESPONSES - WEBSITE TRANSLATIONS**

**Location:** Seattle, WA      **Population:** 724,300

Seattle’s website features language translation options for the city’s winter weather responses. This allows information to be shared in an accessible format for those not fluent in English.

GOOD PRACTICES AND STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

**INCLUSIVE KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND COMMUNICATION**

Sharing winter knowledge in an inclusive manner allows all residents of a locality to have access to the same resources. Dispersed rural communities, people with disabilities, new immigrants, and non-English speakers may not have the same access to information as those in urban centers or the dominant demographic group.

**STEPS FOR GETTING STARTED:**

- STEP 1:** Assess local population and target underrepresented audiences that face barriers to knowledge (i.e., language, ability, cognitive, visual).
- STEP 2:** Establish a main framework for knowledge sharing (i.e., website, pamphlet)
- STEP 3:** Provide alternative versions of knowledge sharing based on main framework and targeted underrepresented groups within the community (i.e., multilingual pamphlets, audio for the visually impaired, braille, video graphics)
- STEP 4:** Meet people where they are at to distribute information.



SECTION FOUR:

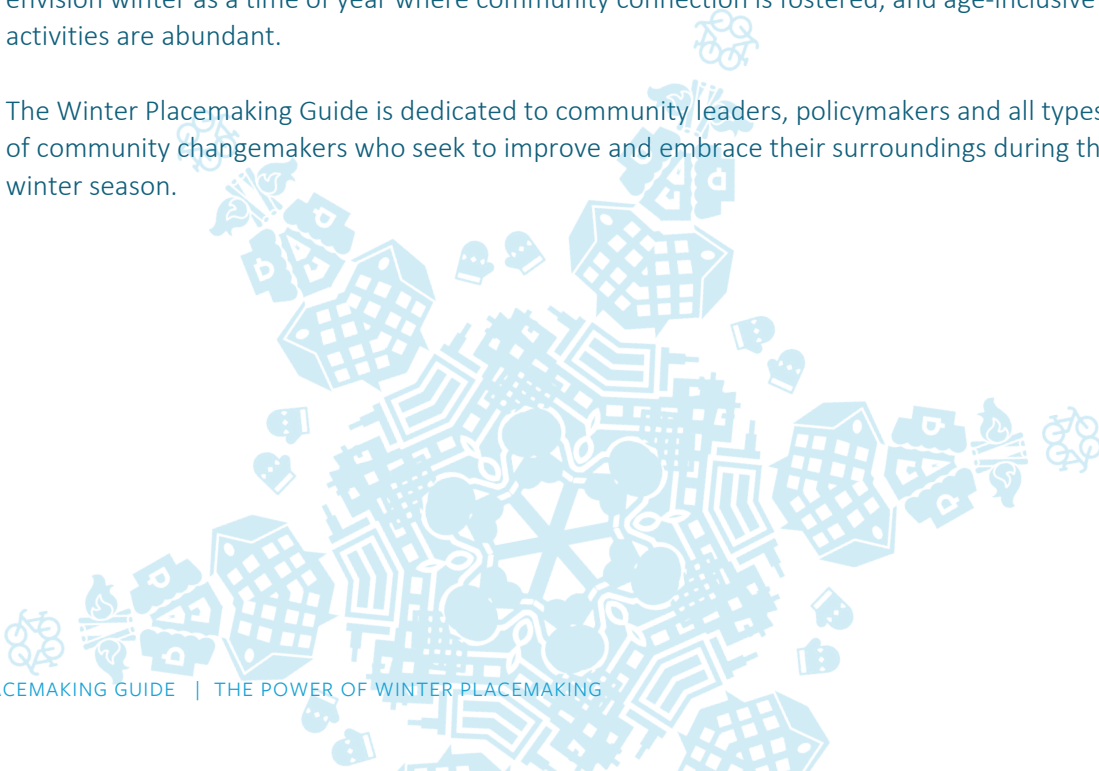
# The Power of Winter Placemaking

For communities of all sizes

**T**his guide has sought to compile the ways in which communities of all sizes embrace winter while enhancing a sense of place. The examples provided in this guide are meant to inspire communities to create winter strategies, test-out pilot projects and invest in livability all year round.

Winter placemaking is about giving communities the power, capacity and resources to re-envision winter as a time of year where community connection is fostered, and age-inclusive activities are abundant.

The Winter Placemaking Guide is dedicated to community leaders, policymakers and all types of community changemakers who seek to improve and embrace their surroundings during the winter season.





**GOT ICE?**

📍 #ICECASTLES