



Sunflower Foundation

*Paving the Way: From
Blazing Trails to Building
Community*

*Trail Stewards & Trail Towns
Learning Series*

A virtual series for assessing local trails, placemaking, branding, and developing actionable trail improvement plans. Completing the series and meeting certification benchmarks allows communities to become Certified Kansas Trail Towns.



Today's Agenda

- Welcome
- What is placemaking
- Placemaking in a trail community with Mike Scanlon
- Breakout rooms and group discussion: what could placemaking look like in your communities?
- Placemaking workshop: all about the benchmark



A few things to remember

- Find session recordings and resources in the Paving the Way Learning Library
- Please change your zoom name to include your community or organization name
- Please turn your camera on, but mute your audio
- Questions? Use the raise your hand feature, or use the chat



Joining us today



Michele Archie,
Harbinger
Consultancy



Kelli Mark,
Sunflower
Foundation

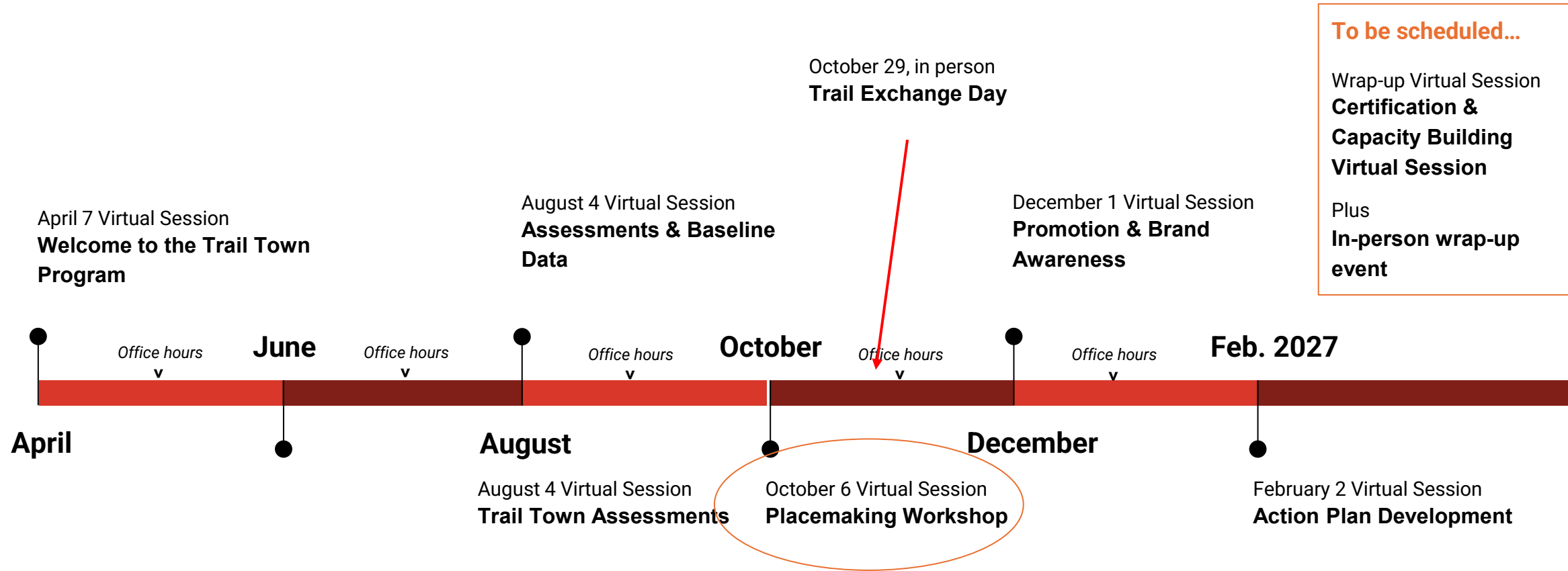


Mike
Scanlon,
Kansas
Trails Inc.



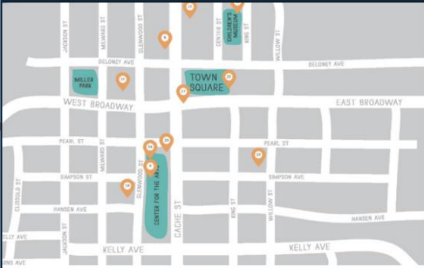
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You are here



What is placemaking?

Placemaking is the art of shaping the shared spaces of a community — a trailhead, a storefront block, a park, a gateway, an empty corner — into places where people want to linger. It's a collaborative, look-around-and-imagine way of asking: how could this spot be more welcoming, more useful, and more full of life?



TIPS

- The town/county capital improvement project schedule is a vital part of public art planning. Find out when it gets approved, project budgets, and key stakeholders
- Do some sleuthing on your community's documents that guide future development

AMPLIFY IT

Create a database (a spreadsheet will work) and use a physical map tool. Walk around and take pictures. Identify sites and places on a map where you could see public art and placemaking, keep in mind sites prime for permanent works versus temporary one. Use this information to help you plan future projects in conjunction with community development efforts.

PLACES OF POSSIBILITY

Map the places in your community that could benefit from a creative intervention.

Find opportunity everywhere. Your community is filled with spaces where temporary art and creative interventions will improve the use and feel of a place.

MAKE A LIST:

- Deteriorated spaces or neighborhoods
- Sites targeted for new development
- Underutilized spaces
- Areas slated for public or private capital projects
- Document existing artworks within your community

WIDEN YOUR VIEW:

- Add facilities like your library, healthcare areas, schools, and civic buildings
- Spaces such as parks, plazas, pathways, gateways (entrances to town and neighborhoods), alleyways, the sides of buildings, empty parking lots, and parking garages should also be on your map
- Does your Department of Transportation (DOT) have plans for road improvements? These plans are good places for public art interventions
- Call your local elected officials or community planners to find out if your community has plans to build a recreation center or new firehouse

Use the MAP Change Place Worksheet in Appendix

www.jhpublicart.org

Map It: Public Art Placemaking and Public Art Toolkit 9

Places of Possibility: Public Art & Placemaking Toolkit
for Rural Communities, Jackson Hole Public Art

Places of Possibility: Three questions to keep in mind

Where do people gather — or where could they? Notice the benches, plazas, trailheads, and porches. Where does the community naturally come together, and where's a spot that's just waiting for a reason to?

Which spaces feel overlooked? A blank wall, a tired gateway, an empty lot, a dull stretch between the trail and downtown — the kinds of places a little creativity could bring to life.

What makes this place feel like here? The local character, stories, and assets a first-time visitor should notice. Placemaking works best when it celebrates what's already yours.



Placemaking is a “with” activity

Funded Projects



Outdoor Cinema

Year: 2021

Applicant: Optimist Club of Lockwood

Location: Lockwood

[LEARN MORE](#)



Welcome Garden

Year: 2020

Applicant: Huntley Garden Club

Location: Huntley

[LEARN MORE](#)



Medicine Wheel

Year: 2020

Applicant: Billings Schools

Location: Medicine Crow Middle School

[LEARN MORE](#)



Alleyscape

Year: 2020

Applicant: DBA

Location: N 29th St at Heddon Building

[LEARN MORE](#)

Space2Place is a creative placemaking micro-grant competition for Yellowstone County. Big Sky Economic Development introduced this program in 2018 to activate and beautify our public spaces, one small project at a time.

Space is a void. Nothing happens there. We pass through without much thought.

Place is a destination. We want to go there. We want to be there.

Placemaking transforms empty or underutilized spaces into vibrant, attractive, inviting, and memorable places.



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How does Space2Place talk about placemaking?

Funded Projects

 Collaborative Art Alley Year: 2023 Applicant : Artist: Billings Community Location: Alley Behind Big Sky Economic Building LEARN MORE	 Lockwood Schools Welcome Planters Year: 2022 Applicant: Lockwood School District #26 Location: Lockwood Public School Buildings LEARN MORE
 Laurel Community Square Year: 2022 Applicant: Laurel Chamber of Commerce Location: Corner of 1st St and 1st Ave in Laurel LEARN MORE	 Low Ropes at Sahara Park Year: 2022 Applicant: Better Billings Foundation Location: Sahara Park LEARN MORE

Four fundamental elements of placemaking are:

Access—is it easy to get there?

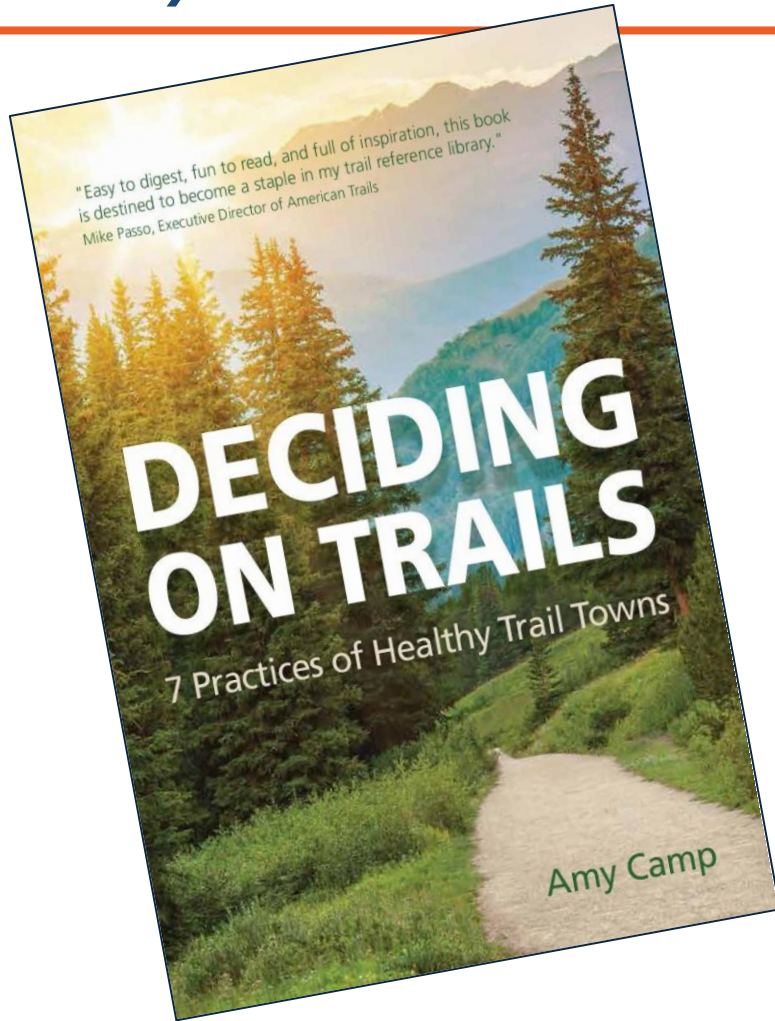
Comfort & Image—is it easy to be there?

Activities—is it fun to be there?

Sociability—does it promote interaction?

Placemaking is more than just public art. It creates welcoming and engaging places where people want to gather and connect. It enhances walkability, connects people, and activates our community by providing interesting and engaging places.

Why Do Placemaking?



- Can see communities & trails with fresh eyes...and fresh perspectives
- Brings together people who might not come to your trail town assessment (or your volunteer group). Can help broaden the support base for trails and a vibrant community.
- It's a benchmark for the new Kansas Trail Town designation!



Placemaking IR(K)L (In Real Kansas Life)

Mike Scanlon



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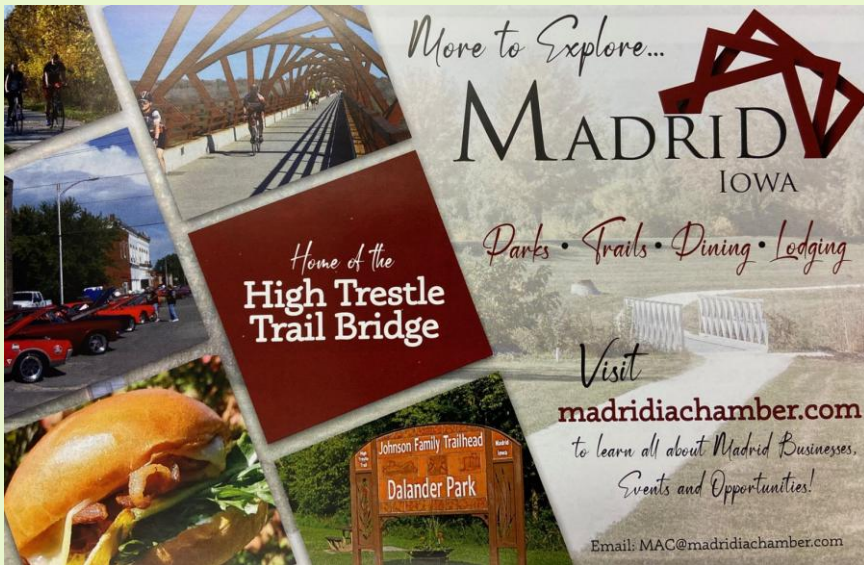
Symbolism, branding and belonging: High Trestle Trail

Spans the Des Moines River Valley





High Trestle Trail



THE HARBINGER
CONSULTANCY
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Breakout rooms & discussion

20 minutes: Let's Brainstorm! Talk with your group about placemaking.

Come back with:

1. Any examples of placemaking in your community?
2. Where do you see opportunities for placemaking?
3. Bonus points if you see examples or opportunities that help integrate your town and trail.

Put ideas in the chat when we come back together, and bring your insights, ideas and questions to share in an open discussion.

We'll talk as a group afterward - 15 minutes?



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Thoughts about & support for placemaking in Kansas

National Endowment for the Arts OUR TOWN grants: supports creative placemaking arts projects in communities across the nation - grants from \$25,000 to \$200,000.

Kansas Department of Commerce PLACEMAKING website: KS Arts Commission, Ks Community Empowerment, Rural Murals, SEED Grants, SIGNS Grants, TAPS Grants, PLUS several other placemaking resources.

National Association of Realtors: Grants to create new outdoor public gathering spaces and destinations in a community on unused or underused sites. Level 1 grants: up to \$3,000; Level 2 grants up to \$7,500. Apps close for 2026 on October 15th, but will open again on January 08, 2027. Several placemaking resources



available on the site!
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Resources in the Learning Library

Placemaking resources including Places of Possibility and some placemaking guides and examples.

Placemaking Workshop report template



Let's talk about the benchmark...

Trail Stewards, feel free to stick around if this interests you.

Benchmark for Placemaking Workshops - the benchmark is to complete a placemaking workshop and a summary report. Please submit to Kelli by January 31, 2027. Along with your Trail Town Assessment, the Placemaking Workshop will help you build your action report.

What questions, concerns or strategies do you want to talk about?

- **Hosting a placemaking workshop**
- **Writing a summary report**



What could a placemaking workshop look like?

- 1) **The “classic” version:** Invite people, review the results from your Trail Town Assessment, and dive into some questions from Places of Possibility to identify opportunities and pick a small project to move forward.
- 2) **The social media version:** Put out a social media post asking people to take pictures of places of possibility and post them. Then your trail town committee or friends group gets together and talks about opportunities and projects.
- 3) **The interview model:** Send a few people out to do talk to the library, businesses, after-school programs, health workers, architects, the senior center, garden club, etc. — and ask about places of possibility and their ideas/visions for placemaking and for engaging people beyond the “usual suspects.”



Brainstorm

Who could you invite or include in your placemaking workshop, whatever form it takes?



Benchmark: Placemaking Workshop

Trail Town Assessment

Understand Current Conditions

- Inventory existing assets and amenities
- Identify gaps and barriers
- Analyze trail connectivity
- Gather community and user feedback

Placemaking Workshop

Turn Data into Action

- Prioritize community projects
- Develop and design ideas
- Build/expand partnerships



Action Plan

Your implementation roadmap



Questions, concerns, other ideas to share?

What's on your mind?

- Hosting a placemaking workshop
- Writing a summary report

What's next?

Next meeting: December Virtual Session: Promotion & Branding!

Open office hours: November 03, 2026 — Q&A and idea sharing

Contacts (details on next slide)

Kelli Mark, Sunflower Foundation (technical/grant questions)

Michele Archie, The Harbinger Consultancy (trail town ideas & advice)

Mike Scanlon & Mike Goodwin, Kansas Trails Inc. (all things trails)

Paving the Way Learning Library — recordings, slides, resources



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Thank you!



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Want help planning
your placemaking
workshop? Schedule
a 1-on-1 with
Michele.



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