

5 Easy Placemaking Ideas for Houses of Worship



Faith communities play an important role in helping neighborhoods thrive. They are dedicated to service and outreach, and they often occupy real estate at key intersections and throughout residential neighborhoods. Today, these properties are often underutilized. With a few small changes and modest investments, your church or temple grounds could become a welcoming community gathering space that benefits everyone and may even encourage newcomers to join your congregation. Here are five simple placemaking ideas to get you started:

01 Thresholds connect the inside and outside of a place. A thoughtful threshold extends the front door of your place of worship to the outside, offering a visible welcome to those encountering your property. They also provide a space for friendly “handshake” interactions without requiring people to step inside. Consider adding walkways, front gates, or arches/arbors, and think about the lighting you use in these spaces.

02 Activities add sociability to a place. Having things to do or ways to interact gives people a reason to be there and breaks the ice between people and places. Consider offering activities such as bird feeders, libraries, lawn games or prayer labyrinths.

03 Beauty contributes to the aesthetic value of a place and stimulates curiosity. Consider incorporating gardens and public art into your property as an easy way to enhance its character and invite others to experience the goodness of creation.

04 Wayfinding helps people orient themselves and directs their engagement with a place. Consider displaying clear signage to encourage people to explore your property and make them feel freer to interact with elements such as gardens or games.

05 Places to rest allow people to linger and enjoy a space. Consider adding pockets of seating (moveable is best!), a low sit wall or rest stops for those using other modes of transportation. You could also provide a shelter for bus riders or install a bike rack so that cyclists can stop and appreciate the area.

Key Considerations for Successful Placemaking at Your House of Worship

- Cultivate champions and connectors.
- Start with a small project to test ideas.
- Don't bite off more than you can chew.
- Invite participation (again and again!).
- Treat placemaking as an ongoing process.