

Placemaking 3:
The River, the Bench, and the Tree
Spring 2011
Orange, NJ
Presented by: The University of Orange



University of Orange's 3rd annual Placemaking event was all about public space: how do you create public spaces that are vibrant, people-friendly, and livable? How do you change the public spaces that already exist so that people actually want to use them?

The goal of Placemaking 3 was to show some examples of how this could be done. Using the Rahway River, Tony Galento Plaza (with Battle of the Benches), and a tree planting in Orange Park, Placemaking participants showed how public spaces can easily be transformed with some creativity and hard work. The following report is an account of Placemaking 3 and what we learned about how we can work together to improve our shared public spaces.

PUBLIC SPACE: What Goes Here?

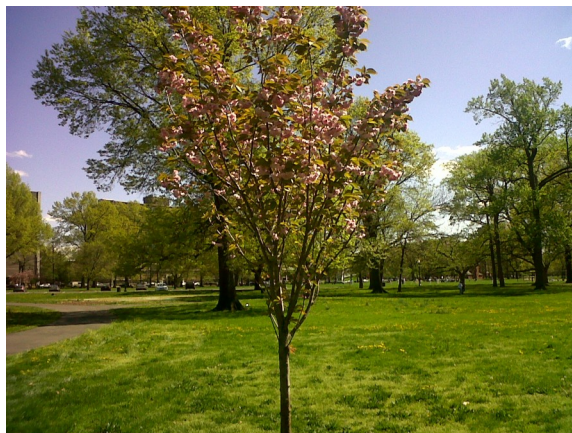


*Orange Train Station
and Tony Galento Plaza*

Friday April 8th

Tree planting

We began Placemaking 3: the River the Bench and the Tree with a tree planting in Orange Park. We planted a Kwanzan cherry tree in dedication to our beloved colleague and friend Kelli Copeland. Kelli passed away suddenly this winter and she is greatly missed. At the tree planting dedication many people spoke of how they cherished the time they had spent with her. We hope our cherry tree will bring beauty and grace to Orange Park as Kelli brought so much beauty and grace to our lives. The University of Orange pledges to continue to plant trees in honor of loved ones lost in the City of Orange.



Kelli's Tree

President's reception

The tree planting was followed by a reception at the Harmony Bar featuring classic tunes from the jukebox and wonderful West Indian barbecue from the neighboring restaurant The Pit. We were all happy to wish Diego a happy birthday as he began his quest for the hidden treasure. Diego's mother, Lourdes Hernandez-Cordero, is one of our 2011 University of Orange urbanists-in-residence. The intrepid pair traveled to Orange from the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City.

Dr. Hernandez-Cordero created a map to hidden treasure for Diego to follow during his adventures in Orange. The map included a river, a bench and the tree. The treasure was ultimately to be found underneath the winning bench.

Saturday April 9th

Placemaking workshops were held at the Family Success Center at 170 Scotland Road. As guests arrived they signed in and those who hadn't yet had a chance to sign the U of O pledge and get their passports. Mindy Fullilove, president of the board of uofO opened the morning by sharing some of the history of U of O. We were joined by many of her students from the Urbanism and the Built Environment Program at the Mailman School of public Health at Columbia University.



Harmony in the City

Urbanist-in-Residence Lourdes Hernandez-Cordero opened the morning with a presentation entitled "Harmony in the City." She explained that "harmony in the city" is not the same as a "City in Harmony." It is more likely to have instances of harmony throughout a city than to have a whole city in harmony all at once- this is actually very unlikely and not necessary. We discussed what the definition of "a situation" is: a complex interpersonal episode when there is more than one person involved. There can be disagreement, different opinions, compromise, different ideas, and this can lead to growth and building. The musical definition of Harmonization can help in resolving real life, non-musical "situations": "Harmonization occurs when there is a balance between tense and relaxed moments." The group discussed ways of managing tense moments and creating maximum benefits from relaxed ones. When you hear music, you hear everything at the same time because you listen, concentrate, actively question, and focus. "Placemaking" is one way to bring harmony to the city. When done right, it creates a shared vision. Lourdes asked, "How can Placemaking promote Harmony in the City?" One answer was that when done right, Placemaking creates a shared vision.

Lourdes then posed the question: What is Orange? What do you see here? Answers ranged from needing better lunch spots-but not Montclair-ish ones; discussing what "Montclair-ish" means and how that is different from Orange; liking that the Dunkin Donuts is a community spot- moms gather, people pull tables together, etc In conclusion, "Harmony in the City" means preparing a long term shared vision, putting things in perspective, figuring out what the non-negotiables are, finding common ground, and not reacting out of anger.

Great Plaza: Vibrant City by Tim Delorm

Urbanist-in-Residence Tim Delorm gave a presentation entitled, "Great Plaza, Vibrant City." He explained why plazas are essential to cities. He showed slides of plazas from all over the world. Tim said plazas are both timeless and timely. In any city there will be a town square or a village green. Tim explained that Design *is* people- it will bring people together (if it is good design). He reviewed elements of successful plazas and told stories from his own experience design plazas as a landscape architect. Plazas are low cost but high impact, a place for people's enjoyment, the city's living room, a place for interaction, cultural events, and celebration, and they make downtowns livable and vibrant. Tim's presentation included the following flyer about successful plazas:

How to Tell a Plaza is Successful

1. People engage in different activities
2. There is cultural, age and gender balance
3. Groups & individuals enjoy the plaza
4. There are few unused areas
5. Enjoyed all day & year
6. People adopt, advocate for & love the place
7. People feel safe



A Plaza tiene exito si:

1. La gente se envuelve en actividades variadas
2. Hay equilibrio en cuanto a la edad, cultura y el genero de los usuarios
3. Tanto grupos como personas solas disfrutan de la plaza
4. Hay pocas areas que no se utilizan
5. Usada a toda hora del dia y a traves de todo el ano
6. La genta adopta, aboga por y ama el lugar
7. La gente se siente segura

Key Attributes of a Successful Plaza

1. Located at Heart of City
2. Stitched into the City
3. Unique Image & Identity
4. Attraction Filled
5. Public Amenities Provided
6. Supports Diverse Events
7. Year Round Events Calendar
8. Accessible to All
9. A Square within a Square
10. Well Managed
11. Diverse Funding Sources
12. Phased Implementation



El exito de la Plaza se debe a lo siguiente:

1. Situada en el corazon de la Ciudad
2. Parte integral de la Ciudad
3. Imagen e identidad unicas
4. Lleno de atracciones y cosas que hacer
5. Servicios publicos disponibles
6. Apropiado para diferentes tipos de eventos
7. Calendario de eventos a traves de todo el ano
8. Accessible de todos
9. Una plaza dentro de una plaza
10. Bien administrado
11. Fondos diversificados
12. Implementacion gradual

Breakout Workshops

1. Youth Urbanism and Tony Galento Plaza

Led by Tim Delorm, Khemani Gibson, and Nupur Chaudhury

First Khemani and Nupur explained the principles of Youth Urbanism and presented the University of Orange January Term poster. Then Tim Delrom asked the group a series of questions about what make a successful plaza at Tony Galento Plaza and what would make it a great space for youth. Some answers were:

- better signage
- food
- use the closed station building
- coffee and news
- trees, shade
- amenities
- benches
- downtown directory
- space to do other things
- Utilize Orange's unique image and identity to hold different types of festivals:
 - Orange is the birthplace of the record- a DJ festival?
 - Edison-invention-could we do something with this?
 - Orange could be the Halloween capitol
 - an Orange Festival

2. Rent Control

Led by Michele Racioppi and Zach Greco

We discussed if there is or is not currently a need for more rent control in the city of Orange. There is currently a rent leveling ordinance, but does it need to be changed? In what way? Donna, a current Orange resident and also a former Bloomfield resident, expressed her concern that there is definitely a need for it and a desire for it among residents of the city. We discussed the need for more education and organizing among tenants in Orange and of among ourselves of the current laws. We brainstormed about the best ways to both reach out to tenants and identify leaders. We believe finding people to lead and organize a tenant's association is a positive step and that the best way to start reaching out to people is through small group meetings that are short and concise, ideally about 15-20 minutes.

Before leaving for Battle of the Benches, we posed for pictures with Orange's own Tony Galento (or at least a life size replica!):



Battle of the Benches

As Placemaking participants walked over from Family Success Center where the workshops had been held, local artist Mike Malbrough was putting the finishing touches on colorful signs announcing Battle of the Benches. The benches were quickly set up, transforming the unassuming patch of grass that fills the space between the Chronicle building and the Orange Public Library.

In total 12 benches were entered. The benches and artists who entered them were a diverse, eclectic, and exciting group.



The Storyteller Bench by John Sabatieri



Lil Bench Made of Wood from the Hood
By Karen Wells



Public Input
By Jonathan Foster



Clementine by Peter Grof





The Stix by Zach Greco and Christian Wells



We're Glad You're Here by Brooke Hansson and Katrina Spiratos



City Fitted by the Panasci Brothers

Teens from the Youthbuild Organization and their leaders, Oswald Fombrun and Bryan Lee, made two benches:



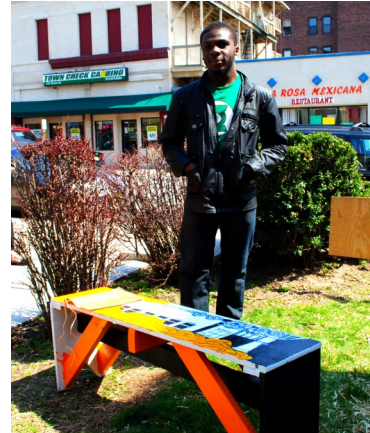
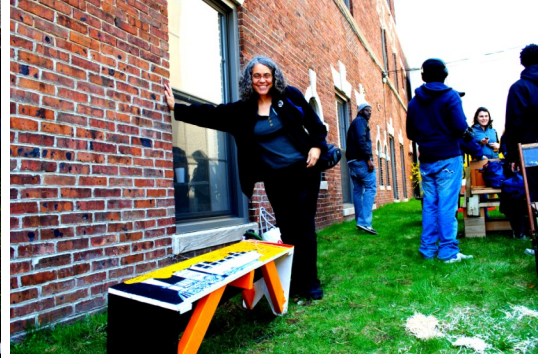
Marble Madness



and Orange 1872



A Clockwork Orange by
Iana Dikidjeva



Orange on the Move
By Mindy Fullilove and Vladimir Jean

The crowd quickly spread out across the space examining and testing out the creative benches. The appointed judges were given clipboards with their judging criteria and all other Placemaking attendees were given slips of paper to vote for their favorite bench. For the next two hours, people were able to enjoy the benches at their leisure, including eating lunch from Chronicle Burger while sitting out in the sun on their bench of choice. At the end of the day, winners were announced in multiple categories. The top winners were:

Benchmark (Best in Show): City Fitted
People's Choice: Marble Madness
Orange Pride: Orange on the Move
Urban Re-use-al: We're Glad You're Here
Bio Bench: The Storyteller Bench



A thirteenth bench was made by students in an after school art club at Rosa Parks School, but was not completed in time for Battle of the Benches. They did finish in time for their own art show, and the bench is currently on display in the school.

Saturday May 7th

Earth Day River Clean-up

The main goal of the river cleanup was to raise awareness among residents in Orange that the Rahway River runs through the Valley and to bring people together to help clean up a messy lot in their neighborhood. We met at the corner of Central Ave and Valley Rd on a bright Saturday morning. We walked over to the Harvard Printing Site where we were going to be doing the cleanup. To our small but mighty group of about ten people the large lot that had not been attended in years seemed like both an overwhelming task but also a welcome challenge. We laid out some safety ground rules, handed out gloves and garbage bags, and got started. The main part of the cleanup focused on the area close to the fence along Mitchell St, which is where most of the trash had gathered and was also most visible to people walking by. The cleanup volunteers were able to pick up enough trash and pull up enough weeds to open a gate that probably hadn't been opened in years. That was a good feeling. Other volunteers set to work clearing the overgrowth that was covering the river. They made a good dent, although our work there is not complete.

The biggest task that needed everyone's help was moving an old trailer along with pieces of a car (hood, door, etc) out of the lot to the sidewalk to be picked up. All participants agreed we had accomplished a lot in the small amount of time and would be willing to come back to do more and possibly do some type of community garden in the lot.



**Thank you to all the local businesses that helped
make Placemaking 3 possible:**

Chronicle Burger

Golden Krust Bakery

Harmony Bar

Hat City Kitchen

Home Depot

John's Market

Just Like Nonna's

La Rosa Mexicana

Luna Stage Co.

Odabro Restaurant & Lounge

Orange Garden Supply

Orange Valley Hardware

The Pit

Serrani's Sanitary Bakery

Supreme Bakery

Whole Foods West Orange

