

# COUNTY WICKLOW PLACEMAKING TRAINING

Wicklow County Council requested a proposal for placemaking training that will provide both practical information as well as inspiration to council members, council officials, local leaders, and community stakeholders, who want to improve the public environment in their city, town or region. This training will teach participants to look at their projects and spaces through the eyes of the user and the community.

Placemaking is a movement that reimagines public spaces as the heart of every community. Rooted in community-based participation, Placemaking involves the planning, design, management and programming of public spaces and capitalizes on a community’s assets and potential to create vibrant destinations. For the past 40 years, Placemaking has sparked social, economic, and environmental benefits to communities around the world.

## A. Concept of Placemaking

Placemaking is an approach to improve public spaces, including the interfaces between buildings and the public realm, that relies on harnessing local knowledge, creativity, and commitment to a shared vision, through a sequence of stages from place analysis (problem identification), to idea generation, to the implementation of a place vision. It is a practical, participative process where the ‘small steps’ (series of integrated ‘quick’ wins) and experimentation (testing of ideas) are valued in a continuous journey to match the physical qualities and the programming in such public places with the needs of local stakeholders.

The programme facilitators are Cynthia Nikitin, with over thirty years’ experience of training in Placemaking in the US and internationally and Wessel Badenhorst, who has been facilitating placemaking workshops in Europe over the past five years.

Each week will cover a specific theme with a process of building upon the previous theme which will create placemaking possibilities for consideration by Wicklow County Council Wicklow and partners.

Each online session will be divided between presentations by trainers and small Team breakouts to discuss questions related to content.

Participants will be divided into Action Learning Teams. The selection of teams will be undertaken by the project steering Team. Each team should have a fair mix of professional/vocational backgrounds and includes a diversity of stakeholders. In particular, individuals from the planning, architecture and other design professional cohorts should be ‘spread’ across the teams to serve as visualising resources for teams.

The project steering Team will appoint a leader for each team. Team leaders will be responsible for coordinating the on-site visits with their team members, and ensuring that the exercises are completed in time before the next training session. Team leaders will also be able to check in with the trainers if so desired.

It is critical that participants attend the entire five week programme from beginning to end. By signing up to the development programme, participants will commit their time to five online training sessions and the four team exercises as outlined. The time commitment will be approximately 4 hours per week.

## B. Training facilitators

**Cynthia Nikitin** led numerous large-scale multi-sectoral place-based community-led projects during her twenty eight years with Project for Public Spaces ([www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)). Cynthia’s technical expertise stretches from the development of downtown master plans and transit facility and station area enhancement projects, to the creation of corridor-wide transportation and land use strategies, to the development of creative placemaking initiatives, the coalescing of government buildings, libraries and cultural institutions into civic centres, using placemaking to create safer and



healthier cities and upgrade informal settlements in the developing world. From 2012-2018, she directed the Citizens' Institute on Rural Design™, a leadership initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts which focuses on providing technical design assistance to rural communities and small towns across the United States. Cynthia facilitated multi-day training with 19 communities to help them address a wide range of design challenges. [www.rural-design.org/where-we-work](http://www.rural-design.org/where-we-work).

Cynthia also managed the *Heart of the Community* program, a five year partnership with Southwest Airlines to create transformative public spaces. The program is committed to leveraging the power of Placemaking to strengthen connections between people and the places they share and to spark social, economic, and environmental benefits in communities across the US.

She has led over one hundred placemaking training workshops and seminars around the world, and continues to provide technical assistance to ThinkCity, an urban regeneration organization based in four cities in Malaysia. Cynthia is lead facilitator of the Georgia Placemaking Collaborative, a three year, 9 community placemaking training program supported by the Georgia Cities Foundation, Georgia Municipal Association, University of Georgia, and Georgia Power. Currently, she is the Resilient Places Strategist and a Senior Fellow with Sustainable Hudson Valley, advocating for a place-based people-centred approach to disaster recovery and mitigation.

In Ireland she has worked with Wessel Badenhorst on placemaking training for Cork City and Sandyford Business District.

Cynthia and her husband Eugene co-founded the Friends of Brunel Park, a non-profit organization that stewards, preserves, and interprets the Emile Brunel Studio and Sculpture Garden in Boiceville, NY: [www.brunelpark.org](http://www.brunelpark.org).



**Wessel Badenhorst** is the Director of Urban Mode Ltd, a platform and consultancy founded in 2015 to support strategies, plans and projects that enable place-oriented development ([www.urbanmode.eu](http://www.urbanmode.eu)). He has extensive experience in local economic development and urban regeneration having worked in a local authority as economic development officer (Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council) and with NGOs and social enterprises as a non-executive director (Development Action Team and the Kuyasa Trust in Cape Town; and O'Cualann Co-housing Alliance in Dublin). In Ireland he has worked with Cynthia Nikitin on placemaking training for Cork City and Sandyford Business District.

He is a lead expert in the URBACT Programme of the European Union that supports cities to work together on integrated urban development themes. From September 2015 to May 2018 he facilitated the collaboration between ten small cities in URBACT's City Centre Doctor Project to develop strategies to revitalise their city centres. Currently he is commissioned to work in a core Team of four lead experts investigating the vitality of small cities in Europe with the aim of proposing a comprehensive support framework drawing from programmes at European and member state level. He is also the lead expert with a new URBACT network of ten small cities in Europe, the iPlace Project, that will examine their local economic development strategies and place experiences with the aim to find niches for future development and to improve their local innovation ecosystems.

In 2011, he completed a training course in New York with Project for Public Spaces (PPS) on Placemaking. Since then he has organised a placemaking training course facilitated by PPS in Dun Laoghaire in 2012 and conducted training workshops in a number of cities including during the URBACT Festival in Lisbon in 2018 and the Merging the Split Conference in Zadar in 2019. Together with three other placemakers he started the Dublin Placemaking Network in 2018 which currently has a membership of over 50 people ranging from architects to Tidy Towns organisers.

Originally from Cape Town, South Africa, Wessel came to Ireland in 2000 and lives in Bray, Co. Wicklow. He holds a MBA degree from Dublin City University together with degrees in Law and Psychology from the University of Pretoria.

### C. Wicklow Placemaking Training Programme Schedule

The purpose of Module 1 is for participants to familiarise themselves with the basic concepts and principles of participatory placemaking and learn more about the approach and techniques used in place observation and analysis.

#### **Week 1: Thursday 14 January 2021 16.30 to 18.30**

16.30 Welcome and Overview of purpose of training workshops (Deirdre)  
16.35 Introduction of participants and trainers (Wessel)  
16.55 Presentation **Introduction to the Placemaking Approach** (Cynthia)  
17.15 Overview of participatory placemaking in Europe – from plazas to Tidy towns (Wessel)  
17.20 Breakout discussion: The value of public space for communities  
17.30 Feedback from Small Team Discussions (Wessel)  
17.35 Break  
17.40 Presentation **Qualities of Great Places and How to Select a Site** (Cynthia)  
18.00 Break out Discussion: The small things/cues that matter in public places – Examples from other places  
18.10 Feedback from Small Team Discussions (Wessel)  
18.15 Reflection on work of small Teams (Cynthia)  
18.20 Preparation for Team work task of making observations in assigned public space  
18.30 Adjourn

#### **Week 1: Team work**

- Fieldwork: Use the place observation sheet (guide to help find specific cues) to make observations in a place selected by each participant.
- Video and or photograph place elements and activities using smart phones for referencing purposes including audio/video interviews of place users and those just passing by.
- Identify aspects using the place diagram that will be strengths and weaknesses of the place.  
Use the Place Evaluation Form to summarize your analysis by completing the Rate the Place section of the form.
- Preparation of presentation for next plenary session. Suggestion: upload a few images of existing conditions with described by 3 to 5 bullet points of each one to a shared Google drive folder.

The purpose of Module 2 is to do a final selection of the places for the visioning exercises and to learn how to identify and engage stakeholders.

#### **Week 2: Thursday 21 January: 16.30 to 18.30**

16.30 Introduction and review of inputs in Module 1 (Wessel)  
16.35 Presentations by participants on their place observation and analysis work  
17.05 Reflection on participant's work (Cynthia)  
17.10 Discussion on which sites to pursue in each locale  
17.30 Break  
17.35 Presentation **Engaging with Stakeholders in Wicklow** (Cynthia)  
17.55 Breakout Small Team Discussion: Who are key stakeholders and what are their stakeholder interests and assets?  
18.15 Feedback from Small Team Discussions (Wessel)  
18:20 Preparation for task of mapping of Place Stakeholders (Cynthia/Wessel)  
18.30 Adjourn

## Week 2: Team work

- Online whiteboard session to identify key place stakeholders
- Smart phone interviews with stakeholders
- Online whiteboard session to analyse stakeholder interests, conflicts and supports
- Preparation of presentation for next plenary session

The purpose of Module 3 is to learn more about ways and means to gather place ideas and to shape a shared vision.

## Week 3: Thursday 28 January: 16.30 to 18.30

16.30 Introduction and review of inputs in Module 2 (Wessel)  
16.35 Presentations by small Teams on their Team work on stakeholder engagement  
17.05 Reflection on work of small Teams (Cynthia)  
17.10 Presentation **Idea Generation** (Cynthia)  
17.30 Break  
17.35 Presentation **Capturing a vision - why, for whom, by whom** (Cynthia)  
17.55 Breakout Discussion: Testing with small actions in public spaces – “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper”  
18.10 Feedback from Small Team Discussions (Wessel)  
18.20 Reflection on work of small Teams (Cynthia)  
18.25 Preparation for Team work on the task of brainstorming ideas and capturing a vision  
18.30 Adjourn

## Week 3: Team work

- Online whiteboard session to brainstorm ideas for placemaking in pre-defined space
- Formulating a vision for the development and use of the selected spaces
- Come up with at least 5 but not more than 10 ideas for short-term improvements to your study site under the four place categories – accessibility, uses and activities, comfort and image, and sociability. Use the challenges and issues from your Place Observation Forms to help you come up with ideas that address a need or solve a problem you’ve identified.
- Using your map, create a sketch of your ideas or a bubble diagram showing the layout of uses, activities, amenities, and linkages. What goes next to what and where should they be located?
- Preparation of presentation for next plenary session

The purpose of Module 4 is to learn more about the ongoing responsibilities to manage places and to nurture public stewardship.

## Week 4: Thursday 11 February: 16.30 to 18.30

16.30 Introduction and review of inputs in Module 3 (Wessel)  
16.35 Presentations by small Teams on their Team work on place ideas and vision  
17.05 Reflection on work of small Teams (Cynthia)  
17.10 Presentation **Place management and stewardship** (Cynthia)  
17.35 Break  
17.40 Presentation **The principles of the commons** (Wessel)  
17.55 Breakout Discussion: How to encourage people to take care of public spaces.  
18.10 Feedback from Small Team Discussions (Wessel)  
18.15 Reflection on work of small Teams (Cynthia)  
18.20 Preparation for Team work on the task to prepare place management initiatives and an action plan  
18.30 Adjourn

#### Week 4: Team work

- Re-imagine the place exercise with the actions that were conceptualised in the homework after Week 3.
- Online whiteboard session to prepare place management initiatives and an action plan
- Preparation of presentation for next plenary session. Complete the action plan spread sheet.

The purpose of Module 5 is to integrate the learning from the previous modules and to reflect on placemaking impacts on specific societal and environmental issues.

#### Week 5: Thursday 18 February 16.30 to 18.00

16.30 Introduction and review of inputs in Module 4 (Wessel)

16.35 Presentations by Teams on their Team work on place management initiatives

17.05 Reflection on work of small Teams (Cynthia)

17.10 General Discussion: The impact of COVID19 on public spaces and how placemaking can be a positive response

17.25 Presentation **Sustaining Placemaking Processes: Caring for Public Spaces** (Cynthia)

17.45 General Discussion (Chatbox): Reflection on key learning (Cynthia)

17.55 General Discussion (Chatbox): Reflection on Where to now?

18.00 Adjourn