Friendly Fronts

Creating Community One Front Yard at a Time

ULI RCM + Advisory Board
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In an era of increasing divisiveness and isolation...

How can we build cohesion and social capital between neighbors?

How can we reweave the social and physical fabric of every corner of our communities?

How can we foster the agency within all people to shape their environments for the better?

How can we leverage the most underutilized space in America?
CREATING COMMUNITY ONE FRONT YARD AT A TIME

FRIENDLY FRONTS
6 Innovative Projects That Are Making Cities Better—That Other Cities Should Steal

The winners of the Knight Cities Challenge should be an inspiration for creative urban planners everywhere.
TRANSLATING WHAT WORKS

Business Districts and Shopping Centers
Downtown Improvement District (Minneapolis)
Experience SW Biz Assoc
Lake Street Council
Main Street Shakopee
Minnesota Main Street Alliance (Preservation Alliance of MN)
Wabasha Partners (St. Paul)

Cities and Public Agencies
City of Robbinsdale
City of Columbia Heights
City of Hopkins
City of Shakopee
City of St. Louis Park
City of St. Paul
City of Minneapolis
Hennepin County Community Works
Hennepin County Real Estate Division
Metro Transit
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)

Commercial Real Estate
The Cornerstone Group
CBRE Global Investor Group
CBRE, Minneapolis Office
Franklin Street Properties
Hyde Development
Marquette Plaza & Base Management
National Foundation for Affordable Housing Solutions, Inc.
Platinum Properties Group
Ryan Companies
Transwestern
United Properties

Institutions
Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN: Center for Prevention and Active Living
Bush Foundation
Concordia University of St. Paul
HealthEast
Knight Foundation
Minneapolis Convention Center
Trust for Public Land MN
University of Minnesota Foundation and McNamara Alumni Center

Community Groups and Nonprofits
612 Sauna Society
COMPASS
Corcoran Neighborhood Org
Fair State Brewing Cooperative
Loring Greenway Association
Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition
Northern.Lights.mn
Sexual Violence Center
St. Paul Smart Trips
Youth Coordinating Board (MPLS)

Faith Based Groups
Grace Trinity Community Church
Westminster Presbyterian Church
THE STRATEGY OF PLACE

- Positive & Useful Experience
- More Use
- Habits & Routines
- Relationship
- Value
A user-focused process and toolkit;
That guides people to;
Shape their environment;
So that it fosters the things they want to do and feel
It’s About Following the Desire Lines
It’s About the Relationships of Place

**Semi-Enclosure Feels Good**
Think of a good porch or a cozy booth at a restaurant. It allows you to choose whether to be social or private.

**Have Many Things To Do**
If there is nothing to do, you won't be there. Think about what you like to do and others in your neighborhood.

**Daylight and Sunshine**
Sun in the morning comes from the east. In late afternoon and evening it is from the west. The sunniest direction is the south. Consider how activity areas interact with the sunny and shady parts of your space.

**Add (Moveable) Seating**
If you can't sit down comfortably you won't want to stay in your front yard.

**Protect Your Back**
Having a structure behind you – like a house, ledge or hedge – so as not to be surprised, ideally with a view out to a larger space.

**Active Edges Make Active Interiors**
If you don't feel comfortable on the edge of a space, they won't venture into the middle.
It’s a Tried, Tested, and Proven Process
Single-family Pilot

22 Pilot Project Participants from Frogtown and Hamline-Midway in St. Paul

- Training
- Micro-grants
- One-on-one advising
- Mutual aid via social media platforms
- Friendly Front Yard Festival

Hundreds of downloads of Toolkit at www.friendlyfronts.com
Building Relationships
• *Met 5.4 new neighbors*

Changing Behaviors
• 43% bike and walk more often

Connection to Place
• 38% feel safer in their neighborhood (0% less so)
“Was I social before? No, not like this,” Giles says. “I just wasn’t really outside. Or if I was outside, I was in back. I always thought like, it’s so hard to meet your neighbors, how do you do that? Now, sitting in front, you just say ‘hi’ and that’s how it starts.”
- Andrea Giles, recent resident of Frogtown
Multifamily
Creating social cohesion in mixed-income communities

Partnership with:
• Whittier Alliance (Minneapolis)
• Blaisdell Housing (5 buildings)
• Common Bond (1 building)

Goals
• Create social bonds between neighbors of different incomes and cultures
• Increase the real and perceived safety of the neighborhood
• Increase the likelihood the renters will remain in the neighborhood
The Process Matters as Much as the Product

User Engagement
• Asking tenants what they want to do (not focusing on design elements)
• Creating systems that work for management

What tenants wanted to do
• Places to sit outside
  • Talk with neighbors
  • Wait for school bus
  • Watch their kids
  • Enjoy the outdoors
  • Have a meal
• Activities with and for children
Implementation: Delivering Experiences
Results: for tenants

77% were more interested in staying in their apartments long term

43% felt safer in their building

Tenant Testimonials
“Safety has been really good since having the tables, chairs and lights”

“My children use it, especially right after they come home from school. They do homework there.”
Results: for Landlords

Indicators of lower turnover, thus lower costs.

**Landlord Testimonials**

“Tenants loved having seating out by the playground!”
– Common Bond Property Manager

“Overall, it was nice to have designated places (for people) and I didn’t see any of the misuse that I feared would happen in the neighborhood.”
– Blaisdell Housing manager
Friendly Fronts: A Tool To

1. Foster relationships between socioeconomic and cultural groups

2. Increase resident retention (converting renters to homeowners)

3. Enhance safety and trust

4. Reduce social isolation (especially among seniors and new American communities)
Tools You Can Use

Free Resources
• Toolkit (free!): friendlyfronts.com
• Friendly Storefronts Toolkit (coming soon) – in collaboration with Hopkins and Hennepin County

To Expand the Impact We Offer
• Workshops and trainings
• Community organizing and implementation
• Event planning and execution
• Data collection and evaluation
THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A MORE IMPORTANT TIME…

For community and commercial actors to…

Reconnect with the people and places where we live…

To create a more humane, vibrant and inclusive world!

More info at: www.friendlyfronts.com
Let’s do this!

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