

# Vertical Villages Toolkit

Vertical Villages: Community, Place  
and Urban Density Pilot

By Kate Cavanough, Emma Mitchell, Miriam Williams, Kristian Ruming,  
Amanda Wise, and Isaac Harrison

June 2021



**MACQUARIE**  
University





### Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which Macquarie University is situated, the Wattamattagal people of the Darug nation, whose cultures and customs have nurtured, and continue to nurture, this land, since the Dreamtime. We pay our respects to the Darug people and the Wattamattagal clan.

We also wish to acknowledge the Elders of the Darug nation, past, present and future, and pay our respects to them. We further wish to honour and pay our respects to the ancestors and spirits of this land. The University continues to develop respectful and reciprocal relationships with all Indigenous people in Australia and with other Indigenous people throughout the world.

### Toolkit Attributions

This Toolkit has been prepared for 'Vertical Villages: Community, Place and Urban Density Pilot' The project was funded through an Enterprise Partnership Scheme between Macquarie University, Churches Housing (supported by a grant from the Salvation Army) and Baptist Care.

### Suggested Citation:

Cavanough, K., Mitchell, E., Williams, M., Ruming, K., Wise, A. and Harrison, I. (2021) Vertical Villages: Community, Place and Urban Density Pilot Project, Toolkit, Macquarie University: North Ryde

MACQUARIE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING  
SOCIOLOGY  
Faculty of Arts



**MACQUARIE**  
University



# Contents

1

**So you want to do something in your neighbourhood?**

*p4*

2

**Where to begin?**

*p6*

3

**Listening to residents**

*p14*

4

**Best practice according to the experts**

*p20*

5

**Putting your group out there**

*p28*

6

**Resources and references**

*p30*

# 1

## So you want to do something in your neighbourhood?

This toolkit has been developed to assist residents and community organisations connect and engage with neighbours who live in high-density apartment buildings. This toolkit is an outcome of the Vertical Villages: Community, Density and Place pilot Project funded by Macquarie University, Churches Housing (supported by a grant from the Salvation Army) and Baptist Care. The purpose of the toolkit is to share some of the grounded learnings from our research which involved:

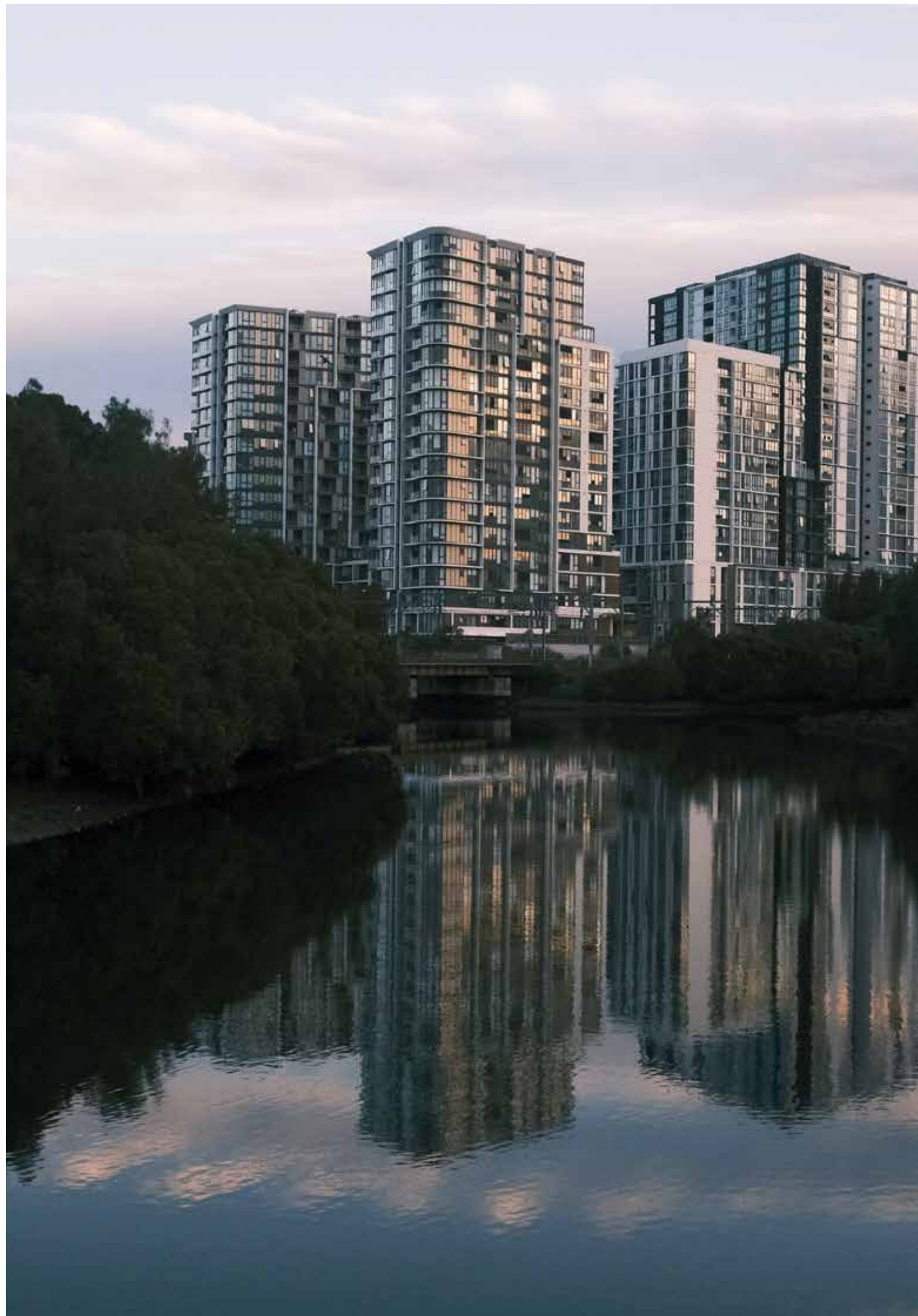
- A review of the academic literature on placemaking, community development, faith-based organisations, cultural diversity, urban design and social mix in high-rise neighbourhoods;
- Interviews and a questionnaire with residents of high-rise apartments; and
- Interviews with placemakers, urban designers, architects and community development practitioners.

The toolkit has been developed for Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) who are interested in engaging residents who live in high-density, multicultural environments in order to enhance their connections to each other and their neighbourhoods. This report focuses on a broadly 'Christian' experience within the sector, however, there are many findings that are relevant to other faith motivated organisations.

The toolkit aims to support organisations interested in actions that will support community life and encourage "Vertical Villages." The research team have heard about the things residents from varied cultural backgrounds who live in Sydney would like to see change in their neighbourhood.

For the purpose of readability and brevity, the specific how-to's regarding placemaking, community development and urban design are not provided. However, there are several urban design guides and practical toolkits for placemaking that we recommend listed in the appendix. This toolkit focuses on examples and key consideration that are specific to FBOs, interested in working with communities living in high-density neighbourhoods.





# 2

## Where to begin?

*“It’s about really getting to grips with the demographics, of what has been happening, and the projections of where things are going, in order to really understand, ‘So, what are the needs of this particular community?’ And ours, it was for more accommodation, and particularly affordable housing” – Geoff Pound*

### 2.1 Where to begin?

Asking why you and your group want to engage with residents living in high-rise apartments is the first step in the journey.

Gather together the people in your group who are interested in engaging with others in their neighbourhood. Establish why they want to get involved and ask: what are their interests? What are their interests? What skills do they have that could be put to use?

- Make a list of interests, skills, networks and resources of the people in your group.
- Being motivated to ‘serve’ or ‘contribute’ to the community can be a good place to start. If people want to ‘fix’ or ‘convert’ you may wish to reconsider or re-frame the conversation.
- What might the needs of your community be and how do they fit with your motivations?
- Think carefully about what your group has energy for. Avoid taking on more than the group can handle and over-promising to the communities you want to engage with.

Understand who is part of your community and what is already happening there:

- Make a list of activities and places that people can meet and spend time outside home, work or shops.
- Who runs the activities on offer?
- Who manages the places people meet? For example council, or the strata manager for a large apartment complex?
- Are there any gaps in the activities offered? To answer this question, you will need input from the community you are hoping to work with. What gaps do they see?
- Match the gaps with the activities, skills, networks and resources of the people in your group.
- Look out for individuals in the community who are particularly outgoing or sociable and who may already act as informal ‘connectors’. They may be valuable partners or collaborators.

Understand who is part of your local area.

- A good place to look is at the Australian Census data to understand the basic community profile of your neighbourhood: <https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/communityprofiles>
- Consider, for example, age groups, household make-up, income levels, employment, languages spoken at home, religion and country of birth. Is the community home to many recently arrived migrants? What might the needs of the various sub-groups in your community be?

## 2.2 What is Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)?

### Introduction to ABCD

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a strengths-based approach to community development that uses skills or resources already present in a community as the basis for building community connections and opportunities. This is counter to a 'Deficit Approach,' where outsiders to the community identify needs or problems, aim to fix perceived deficiencies, and provide a 'service.'

An ABCD approach looks for and works with the diverse skills and capabilities of individuals, groups of people, or places. Central to this approach is an understanding that assets are available and can be nurtured in any individual, group of people or place. ABCD points to five categories from where assets are drawn (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

### Resources

There are many toolkits and resources for communities would like to explore ABCD further. A recommended resource list can be found in section six.



### Individuals

All residents of a community have their own unique set of gifts and skills.



### Associations

Informal groups or collectives of people, such as clubs or churches, working with a common purpose are called associations. They allow individual gifts to be assembled and shared.



### Institutions

Institutions comprise groups of employed professionals who are organised in a hierarchy. They can be a useful resource and include schools, churches government agencies and business.



### Connections

When community members share their skills, gifts and assets it creates connections. Individuals whose gift is to find and create new connections in the community are called connectors.



### Place-based Assets

Some assets centre on a location. Houses, community buildings, schools, public spaces and plazas and the activities and facilities within them are examples of assets for the community. Places where communities form have many of their own resources that belong to individuals or the broader community.



*“Our focus, because we’re looking at this obviously from a strengths, assets, and resilience based community development idea, was to discover what people were interested in, were passionate about, were good at and empower and equip and, I guess, give platform to those people while encouraging them, whatever their thing is, to make it about social connection for all people.” – Jono Ingram, founder of ‘Grassroots Placemakers’ and ‘We Love Aintree’*

### **2.3 Case Study: Aintree Sporting Clubs**

Jono Ingram is a ‘placemaker’ in the suburb of Aintree in Melbourne’s North Western fringe. Aintree is a new suburb that has recently seen significant population growth. Community members come from varied cultural backgrounds and have usually moved to the outer suburbs to purchase their first home. Jono’s role is to build a sustainable community from the bottom up with a population that is rapidly growing and among residents who are mostly new to the local area. Jono works in collaboration with local council, with the developer and with the Baptist Union of Victoria.

The local council approached Jono and asked him to set up some sporting activities and clubs to make use of the new sporting fields and bring the community together. Rather than taking a top-down approach and telling the local residents that they were going to have a new soccer club, Jono took a slower and more strategic asset-based approach. He worked with the local community to help them identify their preferred sports and coached other leaders to step up and take the reins. Jono began the process and acted as a facilitator and supporter in the early days, but he made sure the program could go on without him. The cricket team that formed was significantly more sustainable, as it does not rely on the continued involvement of Jono or any single leader. Asking the community what they wanted also meant that the programs meet the needs and desires of the local community.





## 2.4 Have you heard about placemaking?

*“Remembering that placemaking is enabling and empowering people to create places they love to contribute to their own local places, creating them to be more connected, vibrant, resilient, and sustainable.” (CoDesign Studio, 2019b, p. 10).*

### Overview

Placemaking involves improving the physical amenity and appeal of a place so that people desire to spend time there. It can involve improvements to the built form by governments, developers or community groups through bottom up and top down strategies. It can also involve creative activities such as public artwork and community-led events.

Getting residents involved in shaping placemaking activities can enhance community connection and bring places to life (CoDesign Studio, 2019b). This is known as ‘activating’ place. Such work has similarities with Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

Places have many different meanings. People relate to places differently based on who they are and their past experiences. Placemaking can change how people experience and relate to particular places by changing the physical built form of a place, or by changing how people feel about and the connections people have to a place.

### Tactical and community-led placemaking

Tactical and community-led placemaking include a range of bottom-up or low-cost projects that encourage people to use shared space more frequently and creatively. These forms of placemaking may be experimental and short-term, or more permanent. The goal is to transform how people experience and relate to place.

Community-led placemaking projects are often initiated or run by the community, but they can also be carried out by consultants with communities and funded through government grant programs. Tactical placemaking has been employed in areas that are

experiencing urban regeneration and redevelopment and is therefore a type of placemaking particularly relevant to the Vertical Villages project (CoDesign Studio, 2019b).

### Tactical or community-led placemaking activities are:

- Participatory
- Grassroots or community instigated
- Low cost or grant funded
- Often temporary or experimental
- Focused on improving place
- Focused on growing social connection

### The flip side

It is important to be mindful of potential unintended outcomes of placemaking. Placemaking can promote gentrification, whereby lower income groups can no longer afford to live in a neighbourhood due to increased rents. In addition, because placemaking is about shaping urban neighbourhoods, conflict can emerge due to people’s diverse expectations. Despite every good intention, conflict can emerge due to peoples’ diverse expectations. Providing opportunities for diverse groups of people to meaningfully engage in the project and involvement in leadership and decision making is important, giving every participant the agency to act in the interest of their neighbourhood.

### Best practice approaches

There are many different sources for guidance on best practice placemaking approaches that can provide tools and frameworks for community leaders. On the following pages there are some examples of placemaking projects and a list of recommended resources and toolkits in section six.



Parks and water play



Potluck meal



Community garden



Cultural celebration



Public art



Food relief



Giant chess





Cultural recognition



Neighbourhood working bee



On street dining



Street library



Interactive arts



Food trucks







## 2.5 Case Study: Starting a Community Garden

Nathan Moulds lived and worked in Macquarie Park. He noticed that some of the elderly Chinese residents were keen gardeners but had limited space on their own balconies or terrace gardens. Nathan told us about how he used a strengths-based approach to transform an underused part of the estate that would be perfect to start a community garden. Nathan and the Chinese residents worked to rehabilitate this space and built an incredible garden that went on to win awards from the local council.

*“[My initial posture was] just taking an interest in people and their life and things that they were interested in. You know I think about a group, particularly like an older Chinese group of neighbours mainly from Hong Kong and mainland China. And the way that I was able to connect with them like was because I noticed one of them was pottering in their garden and I took an interest in that. Because I also enjoy gardening.*

*I think one of the questions we always like to ask people is, you know, what are your dreams, what are your hopes, what would you love to see? It's kind of that strengths approach, [asking] ‘what's possible?’...But you know it really works ... often things bubble up.*

*And so for this person it was around their garden and they said ‘Oh actually there's a bunch of other neighbours who are also interested in gardening but they don't have any space to do it or they don't know how to do it.’*

*So anyway we went on a little journey of kind of creating the dream of a community garden that a bunch of the older residents ...could garden together. And so I remember when this lady, Selena, said ‘Oh come to my house. I've asked a bunch of the neighbours to come and we're going to talk about the garden.’ I walk in this room and I was the only young, white, male in the room and everyone else in the room was – there was about 12 of them – all older Chinese neighbours.*

*They introduced me to WeChat which I'd never heard of before and suddenly I was on WeChat with all the Asian neighbours. Which is great because you could translate things from English to Mandarin and I was able to talk to them through WeChat which is pretty cool.*

*And I felt really embraced by them and I think they also hopefully felt quite welcomed and cared for by me. It was interesting talking to some of them because some of them had been living in Australia for many years but again they'd never had an Australian born person inside their house.*

*But it was kind of through that common interest in gardening and then through relationship with Selena, who was a bit of a local leader, who then was able to kind of I guess give me a bit of relational credibility in front of the others, which is then what opened up all these other connections and then we ended up doing lots of fun things together.”*

*– Nathan Moulds*

# 3

## Listening to residents: hearing from diverse occupants of high-rise apartments

*“If you have got a vision of a diverse community, in terms of age, in terms of culture, gender, sexuality, orientation, and also in terms of socioeconomic stuff, you’ve got a tremendous wealth of resources. You’ve got so much capability. So, it makes for a really rich and diverse community.” – Geoff Pound.*

### 2.6 Engaging with Diverse Residents: what you need to know

Many different people live in high-rise apartments, with diverse interests and different desires for social interaction. Practicing genuine community development with no strings attached creates spaces where people from different backgrounds and walks of life feel safe and welcome.

Keeping in mind what you learnt from taking stock of who is in the community and what is already going on there, consider the following ways of engaging with diverse residents.

#### Invest in people who are already ‘connectors’ and become a ‘connector’ yourself:

- Seek out and support existing residents who already facilitate informal connections to grow and lead their community development activities.
- Act as a connector between council, developers, and community to help launch and sustain activities that residents want.
- As a resident of a high-rise apartment, you might establish and resource a central person or committee dedicated to facilitating the social life of the complex. Ensure these individuals are inclusive, sociable, and skilled at building bridges across cultural and linguistic differences.

#### Allow for language diversity:

- Disseminate information in languages other than English.
- Pay attention to identifying outgoing, inclusive people who are skilled at socialising and building community connections across linguistic and cultural differences.
- Acknowledge and capacity build with residents who act as informal translators.
- Hire multi-lingual individuals to act as mediators.

#### Show residents that your activities are inclusive and welcoming:

- Signal openness by incorporating diverse festivals, languages, and flags. Furnish church buildings to feel public and inviting.
- Be sensitive and welcoming to non-Christian religious traditions.
- Curate a space that is intergenerational, where children and elderly feel welcome in the same place.





### Make it easy and inviting to participate:

- Set up diverse, voluntary, and low-stakes activities to attract those who want more connection.
- Focus on holding 'doing' activities for mixed language groups, such as craft, cooking, 'bringing a dish', or facilitated children's games. These kinds of 'doing' activities can take the pressure off group members feeling they need to converse at length when there are real linguistic barriers.
- Ensure careful facilitation and watch for subtle forms of exclusion.

### Address structural inequalities by allocating resources:

- Make sure cost is not a barrier to participation in activities or places such as playgrounds and parks, which should be equitably accessible.
- Be aware of power imbalances between your group and its leadership and the people you wish to engage. Are the people you are reaching out to represented in your group structure and leadership?
- Avoid singling out non-paying participants to minimise stigma. For example, combining a food pantry with a food market may alleviate the stigma of accessing food relief. Or using tokens instead of money in exchange for products may avoid distinctions between paying and non-paying users.



### Setting the tone of mixed language groups

Careful facilitation is needed to ease awkward moments arising from language barriers and to spot and address any instances where a new group member looks to be feeling excluded early, or where dominant culture group members are 'closing out' those from other language backgrounds. With mixed groups it is important to positively, and non-confrontationally 'set the tone' and flag these issues among group members at the outset, as often people are simply unaware of the subtle forms of exclusion that can occur in such settings.

### 3.1 Resident views on activities

We can tell you what the residents we surveyed and spoke to want. This may be different depending on the profile and demographics of your area. For more detail about our research involving residents, see the Final Report (Williams et al. 2021).

#### Residents told us they were interested in activities that:

- Are open about the intention and agenda
- Are open to dip in and out without pressure
- Accommodate language diversity

#### A range of interest based activities

We gave questionnaire respondents a choice of 10 activities and asked them which they would be interested in attending. They could choose more than one answer and as many as they liked. The most popular choices were a community garden and a community market day, with more than half of residents surveyed showing interest in each. A community café came in a close third.

When we spoke to residents to find out more, most were interested in attending interest-based activities. The ideas they came up with included dancing, painting, a walking group, a running club, an outdoor group workout, a movie night, yoga classes, a knitting group, a buffet breakfast, and lessons in local Aboriginal culture or history.

These kinds of activities offer opportunities to be around others and enjoy a group atmosphere without feeling pressured to talk or mingle. Physical or hands-on activities can minimise the need for fluent conversation, which is particularly important when there are real linguistic barriers.

Some residents highlighted the importance of opportunities to be outdoors for people living in high-rise apartments. They were interested in activities that would enable them to learn about and enjoy the green spaces in their local area.

#### The types of activities residents want:

- Community Markets
- Community Gardens
- Community Cafe Day
- Creative Activities
- Yoga Classes
- Exercise and Walking Groups

#### People told us they want to:

- Have a range of opportunities to connect, including low-stakes activities and opportunities to volunteer
- Feel welcomed and be supported to set up ways and spaces to get together
- Choose how and when they engage with activities
- Be included and respected
- Know what is happening and what is on in their communities
- Choose if they attend 'faith-based activities' with religious content such as a prayer or church service.

#### People told us they don't want to:

- Be pressured to attend or commit to activities
- Feel judged
- Be disrespected or patronised
- Find 'ulterior motives' behind community building activities
- Be surprised by an unexpected 'religious' component to activities e.g. prayer at a playgroup or English Class

*"I think the most important thing is to let us know because sometimes, they organise the activity and we just don't know"*

*– Bankstown resident*

*"Events they can organise and make the place more beautiful.*

*So I think the more voices, I think the more opinions, and that's how we would like to have more feedback.*

*And I think [activities] which is good and which is affordable, which is more required at the moment."*

*– Macquarie Park resident*



*“For example, trails for walking and setting up walking groups for people who live in the area to be able to go you know. So interest groups and getting out into the greenery, I think that’s very important for people living in high-rise apartments.”*  
– Macquarie Park resident



Community Garden



Art/Creative Activities



Community Markets



Yoga Classes



Community Cafe Day



Exercise and Walking Groups







## 3.2 Resident views on facilities

### Changes to buildings and facilities

The residents we surveyed were more satisfied than not with the shared spaces in their building or complex. Most indicated that the shared spaces in their apartment were safe and well-maintained. But residents were more likely to think the shared spaces were too small to gather in.

When we spoke to people, we asked what types of shared spaces they would like to have access to. Residents with no or low amenities in their apartment building most often mentioned green spaces and a shared library. Even residents who had access to a swimming pool, a spa, a gym, and barbeque facilities sometimes missed a green area.

*“If they had a garden inside, I would use the garden for walking and wandering and if they had a library because I still study so I need a quiet space to study and if they had somewhere so that people could have a picnic or barbecue, that would be good.” – Parramatta resident*

Some residents felt their expectations when buying into a development had not been met. They mentioned commercial spaces that remained empty or restrictions placed on the use of communal facilities that they had not anticipated.

*“To me you really can’t call it a common room if it’s something which is closed and you need to apply to use it and pay to use it. So, what’s so common about it, it’s not normal you can’t just walk in so that’s no good. I thought it was really good initially when I bought it off the plan. My understanding was [before moving in] that it was a common room that’s great but now I’m here it’s not.” – Macquarie Park resident*



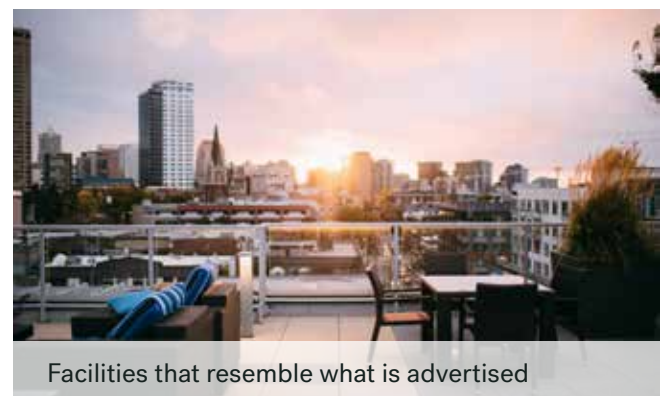
Larger spaces to gather with friends and family



Somewhere to garden



Green open spaces



Facilities that resemble what is advertised

# 4

## Best practice according to the experts

### 3.3 Shared and public spaces where the community meet

#### The value of shared and public spaces

People need to spend time in the local neighbourhood, outside their homes and place of work, for a strong sense of community to form. This may seem like common sense, but it is more difficult to achieve than it would first appear.

Consider your own life. Is it mostly spent in your house, your place of work, do you drive your car to drop off your kids at school and do the groceries several kilometres from your home? This lifestyle provides very little opportunity for you to encounter the people who live in your neighbourhood.

Casually encountering the same people on a regular basis can create a sense of familiarity and belonging even if we do not get to know others closely. Making eye contact, smiling at people, or having a brief conversation on the street or in shared spaces can foster 'casual social ties', which are cordial but non-committal relationships. These casual connections can also be the first step toward forming an acquaintance or taking a step further toward friendship.

When a space supports people lingering, such as 'people watching' or participating in an activity, the chances of being around and interacting with people becomes increasingly likely.

#### How can we encourage greater use of shared and public spaces?

Carefully consider where you want to provide opportunities for social interaction with your placemaking initiative or community building activity. Think about the types of spaces that exist in the fabric of your neighbourhood and be strategic about how and where you plan to intervene.

Public space, semi-public spaces and shared private space within a building can be broken up into two categories, 'destination' and 'circulation' spaces.

Destination spaces are the drawcard, while circulation spaces are the means of getting there. These are all examples of spaces where there is an opportunity for social interaction.

In the table on the next page there is a list of different shared and public spaces. People using these spaces creates vibrancy and increase the opportunity for people to see and speak to others. Adding a pinboard in the mail room of a building, a bench seat in the street, a community veggie patch in shared open space, a food truck next to the local plaza, or public art to a laneway are all ways of improving the quality of a shared environment, where local residents are more likely to linger and bump into their neighbours.



#### The power of 10+

The power of 10+ is a concept developed by the Project for Public Spaces in New York. They believe that a truly active and engaging public space usually has ten or more reasons for people to be there. This could include food to eat, equipment for children's play, art to look at or spaces to sit. Revitalising urban places begins at a very small scale and can be led by a local community. Help local residents generate their own ideas for what is best suited to their neighbourhood. (PPS, 2021)



## Urban design opportunities for a new apartment building development

There are many means of supporting community through the design of an apartment building. High-rise apartments often neglect the design quality and ongoing management of communal spaces within the building. Ensuring that shared areas are attractive to residents, feel safe and are useful will bring people together and support regular casual encounters with one another.

The building design also plays a significant role in the vibrancy of the street. Creating active street frontages, street lighting, tree canopy and opportunities for on-street dining will add to the vibrancy, comfort and sense of safety within a neighbourhood. This is known as a walkable neighbourhood, as it encourages people to be out-and-about in the local community. Location and proximity to amenities also contributes to walkability of a neighbourhood, as well as quality of pavements and integrated modes of public transport.

### Find out how urban design influences community

There are a range of urban design toolkits that help you understand how the form of buildings can influence the life of its residents. Please find additional resources in section six.



	Circulation Examples	Destination Examples
<b><u>Private shared spaces</u></b> – shared and communal areas of an apartment building are the spaces within an apartment building that are shared with other residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby</li> <li>• Lift</li> <li>• Corridor</li> <li>• Breezeway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garage</li> <li>• Bike Store</li> <li>• Bike workshop</li> <li>• Communal room</li> <li>• Communal garden</li> <li>• Communal laundry</li> <li>• Mail room</li> </ul>
<b><u>Semi-public spaces</u></b> – Semi-public spaces are environments that are open to the public but privately operated. Some of these spaces also operate as “third spaces.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cloisters</li> <li>• Foyer/Lobby</li> <li>• Arcade</li> <li>• Shopping</li> <li>• Side walks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cafe</li> <li>• Shops</li> <li>• Other retail spaces</li> <li>• Churches</li> <li>• Cinema</li> <li>• Daycares</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Private gym/pool</li> </ul>
<b><u>Public spaces</u></b> – Public spaces are available to the entire community and often publicly owned community infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sidewalks</li> <li>• Laneways</li> <li>• Through-site links</li> <li>• Car park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stations</li> <li>• Bus stops</li> <li>• Library</li> <li>• Community centre</li> <li>• Park</li> <li>• Public pool</li> <li>• Neighbourhood house</li> </ul>

## 4.1 Opportunities and other things to consider when community building in high-rise apartments

### Get personal

Find opportunities for residents to personalise aspects of the building, such as a community notice board, a street library, a doormat, a welcome plaque on the door, and a pot plant. These little embellishments make often stark environments feel more homely and give high-rise residents a sense of who their neighbours are, even if they have not met them yet.

### Look for left-over or unloved spaces

Are there spaces in your local area that have unrealised potential? Maybe it is underused community room or centre, or a local park or plaza that is rarely used or unwelcoming. What could you do to transform this space into somewhere that the community can come together and feel proud of?

### Curate a program for the community room or garden

Community rooms and gardens are commonly under used and uninviting in high-density developments. Residents don't use the space, because they don't feel that they have the permission or don't have the time to organise something. Be the catalyst and run interest groups, pot luck dinners, or other activities.

### Involve kids and pets

Kids and pets are amazing catalysts for conversation. When you plan an activity, event or placemaking initiative, think about how you might involve or provide space for them. Intergenerational spaces and activities can have many benefits. Adults with children or pets are also more likely to appear trustworthy and more frequently out and about in the local neighbourhood. This has the 'pay off' of increasing feelings of safety and sense of belonging within the community.

### Smaller communities

Break up the building into smaller community areas. The scale of many developments means that it is impossible to know everyone or consistently bump into the same people at a gathering or in the shared spaces. Consider breaking up sections of the

building into smaller gatherings and forming smaller neighbourhoods within a Vertical Village. For example, you could invite just your neighbours on the same floor as you around for dinner.

### Provide space for privacy

Not everyone will be excited by your local community initiative. For people who value privacy, living in high-density environments can already prove challenging. Respecting that not everyone is interested in knowing their neighbour is essential. Balancing the individual need for privacy with your desire to build community will minimise the risk of future conflict.

### Use technology

Technology is a very useful tool for community building. It is a means to an end and part of the broader infrastructure that supports social interaction and not a substitute for human contact. It is important that online spaces have rules and that there is a designated moderator, as they can become unhealthy spaces where people air personal grievances. It is also important to be mindful of who may not have access to certain technology, such as the elderly, as it can become exclusionary.

Some examples of what you can do:

- Create a facebook group or group messaging thread for your building/street/neighbourhood/special interest group
- Organise committee members and project activities with specialised software, such as Trello or Microsoft Teams
- Create an online survey to get feedback from the community
- Use a specialised building management app for access to bookings for shared spaces
- Advertise your event on social media, eg. create a facebook event.
- Use other mediums, such as paper flyer drops, to reach people who do not have access to digital forms of communication.





## 4.2 Case Study: Taking ownership of communal spaces

### Placemaking in left over spaces

In his previous role as Housing Liaison Officer at City of Sydney, Dominic Grenot worked across a range of housing estates within the inner city of Sydney. He was looking for some 'quick wins' in the local community, so he focused his attention on refurbishing uninviting spaces to make residents feel welcome. The residents and Dominic used creative placemaking to create spaces that were attractive and safe.

*"I guess one of the things you do in these communities is you look at what the resources are that exist around you.*

*So within the grounds of the estate, there was a number of locations that had tables and chairs. We put chessboards into the table, for example. We made those spaces active. We amended the lighting... Trying to make the most of spaces where people would naturally connect; so all the letterboxes, for example, are in one spot at the front of the building, so we enhanced that area and created some seating both inside and outside, and it's a waiting bay for people that were going to be collected, so just to try to encourage connection.*

*Noticeboards were put up in a range of locations, and we ran events and small gatherings in a whole range of those spaces through the estate, so barbecues in particular spots. We put some tiles or some ceramic murals in some locations that tenants were involved with public art [projects].*



*I think the biggest thing for me was around tenants needing to occupy and own that space as theirs rather than it being a no-go zone or owned by the Department, so dead or empty or unused or dangerous spaces."*

*- Dominic Grenot, previously the Housing Liason Officer at the City of Sydney.*





### Supporting self-governed programs

Dominic Grenot also supported the formation of a committee of residents to program a community centre at the heart of the Northcott Estate in Surry Hills. Over the space of nearly 15 years, the community centre had various programs, such as exercise classes or language classes. Dominic was the catalyst and enabled the wider community to take on the leadership and management of the space.

*“So one of the things that we did was we created ... an incorporated tenant's body that would then manage the community space. So lots of work and discussions and meetings around what a tenant body should look like, who should be on it, elections, and then an agreement from the Department of Housing that the tenants will then manage that space by themselves and that worked mostly pretty well except for some ... there was a whole lot of moments of dysfunction and madness and problems.*

*But generally for about 15 years, the tenants managed that space and kept it open about 50 hours a week, completely with volunteers, who we did some training. They ran barbecues. They ran events. They managed that space ...for the last 15 years.*

*...the community centre became the hub, if you like, and we ran everything from there and very consciously tried to empower people to get to know each other and bring each other to the centre.”*

*- Dominic Grenot*

### 4.3 Professional Neighbouring: A model for community development

*“[Being a professional neighbour involves] holding that posture of being kind of loving, caring, supportive... is really interested in their life and their journey and taking that kind of holistic view of people’s life and believing in their capacity, believing that people can change, you know believing in what people are.” – Nathan Moulds*

#### What is Professional Neighbouring?

Professional Neighbouring is one term for a live-in community development model some FBOs have adopted. Professional Neighbours are people who choose to live in an apartment complex for the purposes of building community. Sometimes they receive reduced or free rent in apartment complexes run by a FBO as a way to support them in their work. Professional Neighbours can assist in building communities in their apartment complexes through coordinating events and activities such as pot-luck dinners, gardening groups, book clubs, craft groups, weekly ‘drinks’, sport activities, play groups or other targeted social activities.

#### Some tips for church groups wishing to support a “Professional Neighbourhood scheme”

- Have a committee to support and oversee their work: this is important to have appropriate oversight in their activities, and to provide support.
- Provide the Professional Neighbours with a set of achievable interest-based activities that are “opt in” for residents and respectful of desires for privacy.
- Encourage genuine, authentic, non-judgemental relationships.
- Set clear boundaries and expectations for what they need to achieve, e.g. a number of hours or days per week.
- Provide training and a clear Code of Conduct.
- Avoid overly religious content and instead focus on community-led interest-based activities where genuine relationships can form.

### 4.4 Case Study: Hawke and King - West Melbourne Baptist Church

#### A high-rise built for community life

Hawke and King is an apartment complex in the inner west of Melbourne. The development was spearheaded by the local Baptist congregation on church-owned land and completed in 2018. Hawke and King was designed by Six Degrees Architects with the principle that community life would be a primary focus of the apartment complex. They used urban design and architectural features to bring the residents together and provide opportunities for residents to get to know each other. In addition to that, the church have retained ownership of several apartments for the purpose of housing a minister and providing subsidised rent to community builders.

The development has a range of shared amenities and a community centre on the ground floor that interfaces with the street. The centre is run by the local church and it facilitates a variety of programs for the local community.

#### Hawke and King has a range of shared amenities, including:

- A bike workshop
- A library
- A church
- A community centre
- A shared laundry
- Shared terraces with a community kitchen

*“Don’t just do your washing in your own place, come up and hang it up on the fourth floor. Hang out your dirty washing up there. When that sort of things happens, that place becomes like a village well, where people gather and congregate.”*

*- Geoff Pound*



*“When the church decided that they would develop an apartment complex with 75 apartments, the idea was that it was sort of theologically motivated, with the idea that God is a god of community. He calls people into community.*

*So instead of saying, ‘I think we could get on this place 100 apartments, we’d make a lot more money,’ they went for a lesser number, and we have got community rooms where there’s kitchens, and there’s smaller community rooms, they’re courtyards where you can have barbecues. So it’s really designed with community in mind.*

*In addition to those community spaces where... you know, that are generously provided, there’s the idea that community just doesn’t happen automatically. There’s no button. The community needs to be built.*

*There’s [residents] in five apartments there, and they are what’s called community builders. We don’t give them orange t-shirts with a badge saying, “Community Builders”, and a lot of people probably wouldn’t know that they were appointed by the church. [They] do two or three hours a week of what’s called community building, where they are intentional about that.*

*So when new people come, the word gets around, and they go and knock on the door and say, “I’m Tim, welcome to Hawke and King. Is there any way in which we can help you to get adjusted?”*

*- Geoff Pound, pastor of West Melbourne Baptist Church and resident of Hawke and King*

*“Hawke & King is working really well and I think part of that’s to do with the fact that it’s open walkways and so you do bump into your neighbours. I think it’s much harder to make community work if it’s just dark corridors ...because you never really – you can’t see them.*

*They have a room which is a little library, it’s quite small but it’s a library and lending. They have a tool share room and they obviously have the bicycle store and a bicycle workshop. On the roof deck they’ve got a kitchen that you can use and then a flow-out onto the roof deck. They’ve got a community room. They’ve got rooms that you can rent out potentially to others in the community.*

*It’s quite funny actually – I’m not religious but every architect I know would want to do a church, it’s a great space, big dramatic and all sorts of stuff and iconography, it’d be a whole lot of fun and I was quite excited about the fact we were going to incorporate a church and they said, “But look, we’re not very churchy and it can’t have any kind of iconography and it can’t look like a church.” I thought, [bummer]!”*

*- James Legge, Architect of Hawke and King apartments and director of Six Degrees Architects*

# 5

## Putting your group out there

### Challenges for FBOs

There are some considerations that come with being a FBO that are important to keep in mind when initiating a community building initiative. Public opinion of FBOs has been damaged through past actions of the church. For this reason, the broader community can be hesitant to participate in church-run activities. Some people also still see faith-based activity in the wider community as ‘charity’ or ‘missionary’ work, and therefore find it hard to imagine themselves getting involved in FBO-led activities.

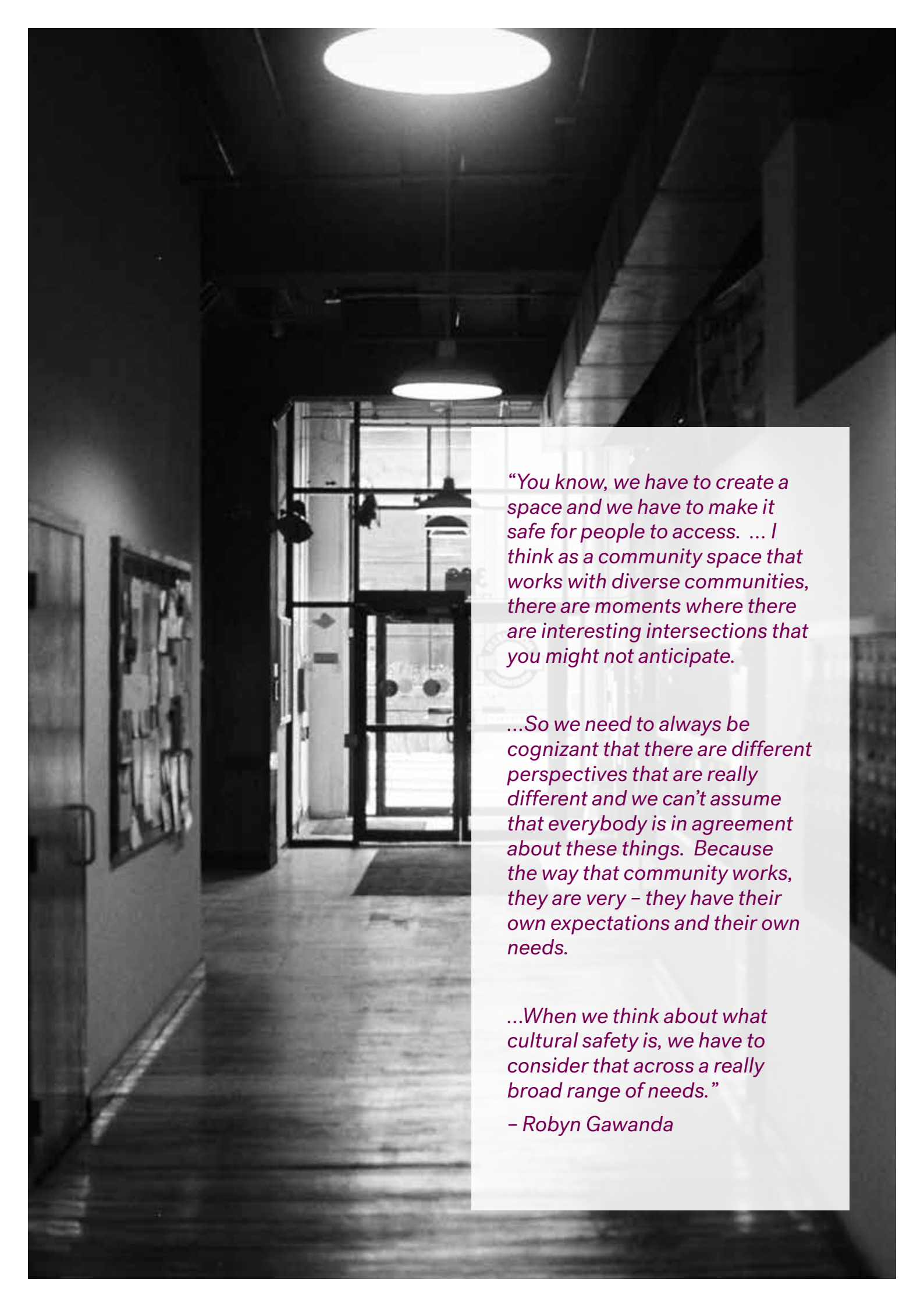
### Here are some suggested ways to change this image:

- Branch out from traditional faith-based activities and be creative.
- Establish desirable, interest-based, low-pressure community development activities.
- Be transparent about whether activities involve faith-based content to allow residents to opt-in or opt-out.
- Diversify your leadership. Make sure that leaders of programs and activities reflect the diversity of the community that you are trying to reach.
- Allow the community to lead. Form reciprocal relationships with members of the community and provide pathways into leadership. Also be open to being a participant yourself.
- Form partnerships with other faith-groups or secular organisations.

- Ask the community what they want to see in their neighbourhood, rather than assuming that you know what they need or want.
- Take a strengths-based (ABCD) approach to planning a new community activity. Think about how the local community can take the lead from the inception.
- Make the effort to be clear and far reaching when advertising. Be clear about what participants can expect, particularly those from a non-religious community.
- Ask for people to pay a small fee or make a donation, as this can reduce stigma and give people and opportunity to contribute.
- For hosting activities consider using a space that is neutral and not a church building. Better yet, go to where people already are or a place that you know the community feel safe. Ensure permission is always granted first.
- Be a long-term, non-threatening presence. Be willing to commit long-term to a place and build lasting relationships based on friendship and mutual trust.

Lastly, it is important to note that not every project will be a success. Take the time to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your initiative and be willing to try something different if you find that your activity or placemaking intervention is not yielding the desired impact.





*“You know, we have to create a space and we have to make it safe for people to access. ... I think as a community space that works with diverse communities, there are moments where there are interesting intersections that you might not anticipate.*

*...So we need to always be cognizant that there are different perspectives that are really different and we can't assume that everybody is in agreement about these things. Because the way that community works, they are very – they have their own expectations and their own needs.*

*...When we think about what cultural safety is, we have to consider that across a really broad range of needs.”*

*– Robyn Gawanda*

# 6

## Resources and References

### 5.1 Practical resources

#### Placemaking:

The Government Architects New South Wales (GANSW) have created a suite of documents to understand what underpins a good place. The suite is called Better Placed and includes a range of useful materials for strategic placemaking.

<https://www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/policies/better-placed>

CoDesign Studio is an Australian placemaking consultancy that empowers communities to lead their own projects. Their Neighbourhood Project resources include:

What makes for a successful place?

- The Placemaking Manifesto
- Community-led placemaking Guide 2019 and
- Locally-led neighbourhood: A Community-led placemaking manual

<https://www.codesignstudio.com.au/guides-and-resources-listing/free-guides>

CoDesign are also the authors of Play Streets Australia a resource for creating a neighbourhood event for childrens: <https://www.playstreetsaustralia.com/>

“How to do Creative Placemaking” was developed by the National Endowment for the Arts, one of the primary arts funding bodies in the USA:

<https://www.arts.gov/about/publications/how-do-creative-placemaking>

Project for Public Spaces is an organisation that aims to creates “community-powered public spaces around the world.” They include a range of resources:

- Eleven Principles for Creating Great Community Places.
- The Placemaking Process.
- A guide to Neighbourhood placemaking in Chicago. A toolkit by Project for Public Spaces and Metropolitan Planning Council.
- Project for Public Spaces Published Resources

<https://www.pps.org/>

#### Asset Based Community Development:

DePaul: Asset Based Community Development Institute was formed by John L. McKnight and John P. Kretzman, the two thought leaders behind the movement. They have a range of toolkits and resources for different types of initiatives and leaders.

<https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/resources/Pages/tool-kit.aspx>

Nurture Development: Development Redefined are UK based organisation “support communities to reduce institutionalisation and increase interdependency in community life.” They have a clear set of frameworks and tools to support ABCD initiatives:

<https://www.nurturedevelopment.org/asset-based-community-development/>



### Creating Safe Spaces and Cultural Safety:

The Creative Equity Toolkit provides resources for cultural diversity in the creative sector. It collates resources and addresses a broad array of issues, such as:

- Unconscious bias
- Cultural appropriation
- Anti-racism

<https://creativeequitytoolkit.org/>

The National Safe Libraries institute has developed some an excellent toolkit for creating safe spaces that is applicable to different types of community facilities:

<https://www.nsla.org.au/resources/cslp-collections/case-studies/slnsw-toolkit>

### Urban Design Toolkits/Frameworks:

The Adelaide Design Manual is an excellent example of applied urban design principles. The high level principles are particularly transferable to any urban centre, while the technical specifications are a level of detail that is less useful in other contexts.

<http://www.adelaidedesignmanual.com.au/>

The Melbourne Design Guide is a multi-scalar approach to urban design that looks at the best practice approach at each level. Although this is working specifically in the context of Melbourne's existing urban form, it is a design process used on any masterplanning exercise.

[https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.com-participate.files/8415/2998/6449/The\\_Melbourne\\_Design\\_Guide.pdf](https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.com-participate.files/8415/2998/6449/The_Melbourne_Design_Guide.pdf)

Designing Child-Friendly High Density Neighbourhoods answers the questions; How can we provide children with opportunities to freely play outdoors, walk independently, and feel a sense of belonging and ownership within their neighbourhoods? The guide by Nadia Krysiak explores design interventions and planning policies from cities such as Tokyo, Singapore, London, Antwerp and Vancouver which aim to improve liveability for children by creating more playful urban environments.

<https://www.citiesforplay.com/child-friendly-neighbourhoods>

Jan Gehl has been a leader in the urban design profession for forty years through his work and publications. One of his best known books, Cities for People, explains how good public spaces are created with some very specific, measured design solutions.

<https://www.amazon.com.au/Cities-People-Jan-Gehl/dp/159726573X>

Walkable City Rules: 101 Steps to Making Better Places by Jeff Speck is a brilliant introduction to the multifaceted nature of a city and the 'key moves' that make urban environments more walkable.

<https://www.amazon.com/Walkable-City-Rules-Making-Better/dp/1610918983>

## 6.1 Image references

Page No.	Image ref.	Photographer	Image Description	Source
1	A	Schuyler Dugle	Apartment building	Unsplash
5	A	Jonathan Jato	Sydney Olympic Park	Unsplash
7	A	Robert Bye	Picnic in the Park	Unsplash
8	A	Sefton Marks	Cricket	Unsplash
10	A	Andrew Seaman	Waterplay	Unsplash
	B	Ashim De Silva	Potluck	Unsplash
	C	Kalle Lundin	Fete	Unsplash
	D	Mike Erskin	Public Art	Unsplash
	E	Sigmund	Market	Unsplash
	F	Zoe Holling	Giant Chess	Unsplash
	G	Priscilla Du Preez	Veggie Patch	Unsplash
11	A	Islander Images	Little Street Library	Unsplash
	B	Jorge Percival	Street Lantern	Unsplash
	C	Joris Visser	Cafe	Unsplash
	D	Neonbrand	Community Working Bee	Unsplash
	E	Pat Whelan	Public Art Display	Unsplash
	F	Revolt	Food Truck	Unsplash
12	A	Sincerely Media	Garden	Unsplash
15	A	Lennon Cheng	Melbourne Streets	Unsplash
17	A	Jordan Nix	Yoga Mats	Unsplash
	B	Jos Zwaan	Group Fitness	Unsplash
	C	Matthieu Joannon	Cefe	Unsplash
	D	Sigmund	Childrens Crafts	Unsplash
	E	Priscilla Du Preez	Community Garden	Unsplash
18	A	Chuttersnap	Rooftop Garden	Unsplash
19	A	Garrett Parker	Rooftop Terrace	Unsplash
	B	Igacio Brosa	Park	Unsplash
	C	Jade Seok	Community Garden	Unsplash
	D	Priscilla Du Preez	Community Dinner	Unsplash
21	A	Pat Whelan	Melbourne Roof Top Terrace	Unsplash
23	A	Pat Whelan	Melbourne Pop-up Court	Unsplash
24	A	Ezequiel Garrido	Swing	Unsplash
25	A	Zhuo Cheng You	Park Benches	Unsplash
29	A	Alex Simpson	Community Centre	Unsplash



## 6.2 References

CoDesign Studio. (2019a). Locally-Led Neighbourhoods. A community-led placemaking manual.

CoDesign Studio. (2019b). Neighbourhoods made by Neighbours. Guide to Community-led placemaking.

Hartley, L., Charley, E., Choudhury, S., & McKindlay, H. (2020). The Neighbourhood Project. In C. Courage, T. Borrup, M. R. Jackson, K. Legge, A. McKeown, L. Platt, & J. Schupbach (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Placemaking* (pp. 428-438). Abingdon: Routledge.

Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Evanston: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University.

Project for Public Spaces. (2018). Placemaking. What if we built our cities around places? Retrieved from [https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5810e16fbe876cec6bcbd86e/5b71f88ec6f4726edfe3857d\\_2018%20placemaking%20booklet.pdf](https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5810e16fbe876cec6bcbd86e/5b71f88ec6f4726edfe3857d_2018%20placemaking%20booklet.pdf)

Project for Public Spaces. (2021). What is Placemaking? Retrieved from <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>

Project for Public Spaces, & Council, M. P. (2008). *A Guide to Neighborhood Placemaking in Chicago*. Retrieved from [http://www.placemakingchicago.com/cmsfiles/placemaking\\_guide.pdf](http://www.placemakingchicago.com/cmsfiles/placemaking_guide.pdf)

Project for Public Spaces, & Metropolitan Planning Council. (2008). *A Guide to Neighborhood Placemaking in Chicago*. Retrieved from <http://www.placemakingchicago.com/>

Silberberg, S., & Lorah, K. (2013). *Places in the Making: How placemaking builds places and communities*. Retrieved from Boston:

Sweeney, J., Mee, K., McGuirk, P., & Ruming, K. (2018). Assembling placemaking: making and remaking place in a regenerating city. *Cultural Geographies*, 25(4), 571-587.

Williams, M., Mitchell, E., Cavanough, K., Ruming, K., Wise, A. and Harrison, I. (2021) *Vertical Villages: Community, Place and Urban Density Pilot Project, Final Report*, Macquarie University: North Ryde

