



What makes a great space?

# PLACEMAKING ELEMENT

Mural, Rosery Road



# PLACEMAKING

Largo Comprehensive Plan Element

## INTRODUCTION

Traditional city planning has generally focused on the physical layout of a city and providing essential services, which are vital to a community, but that type of planning alone does not adequately address the intangible or hard to define aspects that truly make a city or community great. Placemaking is an approach to fill in those gaps. It combines the art and science of planning, designing, and managing public spaces to attract people, build community and create a local identity.

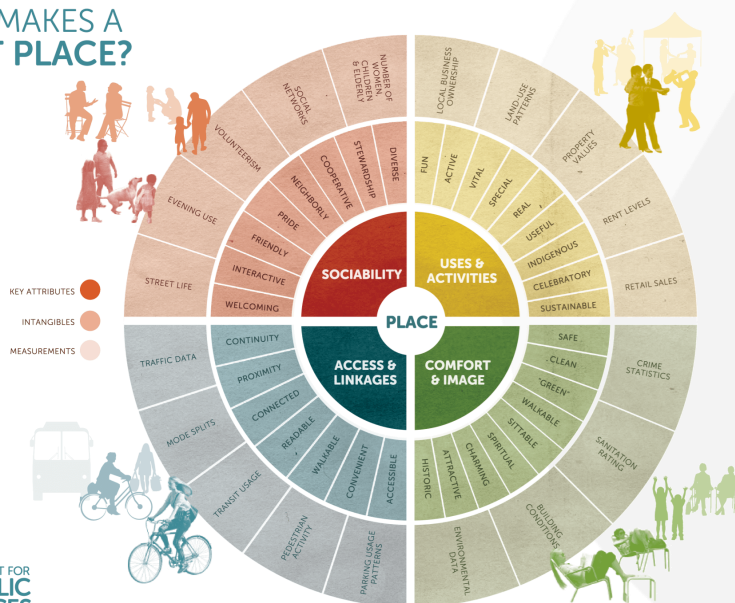
There is not one way to define a quality place, but generally it is a structure or space where people, businesses, and institutions want to be, has a unique identity, and a strong sense of place. These places are active, unique, interesting, visually attractive, and often incorporate public art. They are people-friendly, safe, walkable, and have a mix of uses and transportation options.

Good urban form and design is one aspect that can influence the creation of a quality place. Whether it is designing streets and sidewalks that encourage walking and biking or providing a mix of uses that offer a place to spend one's leisure time, the outcome of these elements are providing opportunities for interaction between people and foster healthier, more social, and economically viable communities.

**Placemaking is “creating a vision around the places that citizens view as important to community life and their daily experience based on a community needs and aspirations. Placemaking is both an overarching idea and a hands on tool for improving a neighborhood, city or region”.**

—Project for Public Spaces

### WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?



## KEY THEMES

- Parks/Public Spaces
- Connectivity & Accessibility
- Activities & Amenities
- Arts & Culture
- Social Interaction & Civic Engagement
- Age and Culturally Inclusive





## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IS THE HEART OF PLACEMAKING

A quality place cannot be created without involvement from the community. Form alone does not create a place, it is a community that makes it a place. Utilizing the Placemaking approach and through application of the associated principles, opportunities are provided that empower community members to

### PLACEMAKING FORMULA

Proper Physical Form  
+  
Proper Mix of Land Uses &  
Functions  
+  
Proper Mix of Social  
Opportunity  
=  
**Quality Places with a Strong  
Sense of Place**

## KEY ELEMENTS OF QUALITY PLACES

Mixed-Uses  
Housing Options  
Transportation Options  
Quality Public Spaces  
Preservation of Historic  
Structures  
Community Heritage  
Arts, Culture, and  
Creativity  
Recreation  
Green Spaces



## BENEFITS OF QUALITY PLACES

- ♦ **Accessibility** = more walkable, greater connections between uses, safe for pedestrian and bicyclist;
- ♦ **Local Economy** = local ownership, small scale entrepreneurship, higher real estate values, more desirable jobs, greater tax base;
- ♦ **Sense of Comfort** = sense of belonging, visually pleasing, greater security, better environmental quality;
- ♦ **Natures/Defines Community** = greater community organization, sense of pride/volunteerism, less need for municipal control;
- ♦ **Social Interaction** = improves sociability, more cultural exposure and interaction, draws a diverse crowd and encourages community creativity; and
- ♦ **Health** = increased physical activity, greater security and social inclusion.



take an active role in the creation of their community. This involvement helps increase a person's attachment to their community and their desire to make it a better place. When this desire is combined with a feeling of support, a community comes alive.





## PLACEMAKING PRINCIPLES

1. **The community is the expert.** The people living and working in a place are the folks who know what needs to be done and how best to do it.
2. **You are creating a place, not a design.** The blueprints for a neighborhood improvement effort are much less critical to its success than other factors, such as a management plan and the involvement of local citizens.
3. **You can't do it alone.** Finding the right partners will bring more resources, innovative ideas, and new sources of energy for your efforts.
4. **They'll always say, "It can't be done."** When government officials, business people and even some of your own neighbors say it won't work, what they really mean is "We've never done it like this before." It's a sign you're on the right track.
5. **You can see a lot by just observing.** The smartest way to turn a neighborhood around is to first take a close look at what goes on there, watching out for what works and what doesn't in that particular place.
6. **Develop a vision.** For a community vision to make sense and to make a difference, it needs to come from the people who live there, not from consultants or other outside professionals.
7. **Form supports function.** If you don't take into account how people use a particular place in the beginning, you will have to deal with the consequences later.
8. **Make the connections.** A great place in a neighborhood offers many things to do, all of which enhance each other and add up to more than the sum of the parts.
9. **Start with petunias.** Little things can set the stage for big changes, especially by proving to local skeptics that change is indeed possible.
10. **Money is not the issue.** If you have a spirited community working with you, you'll find creative ways around financial obstacles.
11. **You are never finished.** Eighty percent of the success of any good place is due to how well it is managed after the project is done.



## CURRENT CONDITIONS

Largo's quality parks, recreation and cultural facilities and programs are a large part of Largo's identity and adds to the livability of the City. There is over 786 acres of parkland within the Largo Planning Area, 426 acres are city-owned and 360 acres owned by Pinellas County. Combined total is the highest LOS (acres per 1000 residents) of any individual city within the County.

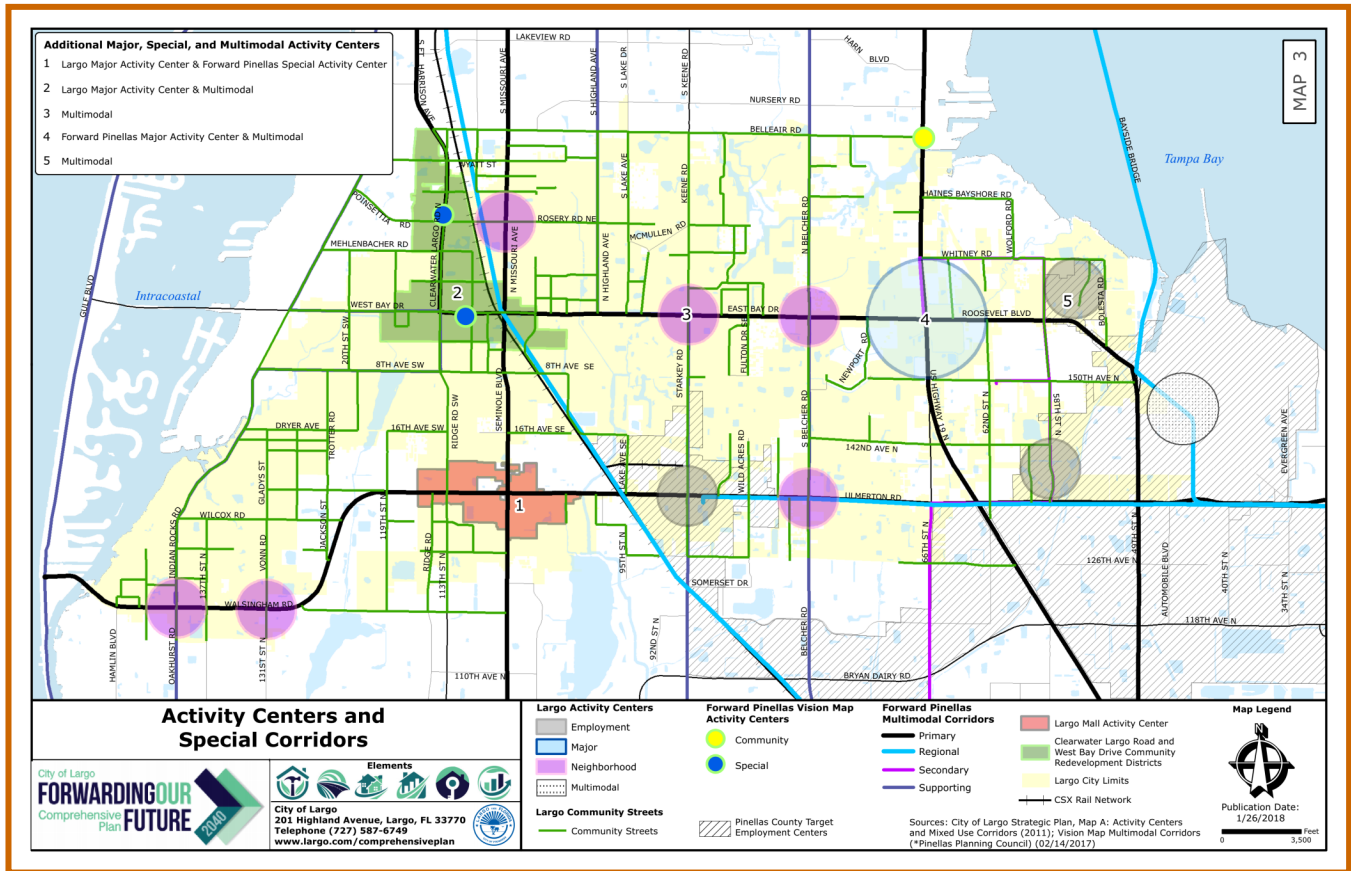
Central Park approximately 32 acres, is a key feature of the City and attracts local and regional visitors. The City hosts numerous events that draw large crowds. It's proximity to the Central Park Performing Arts Center, Library, Bayhead Action Park, Largo High and Largo Middle School, and Largo's Downtown make this a key asset to help further the Placemaking goals. The City has three major activity centers, three employment centers, six neighborhood centers and multimodal corridors that provide connections between them **(Map 3)**. This provides the framework to create walkable, vibrant mixed use areas which are key components of quality places.

After an in-depth analysis of 6 years of community engagement feedback, the content of the 2017 Strategic Plan was developed. It provides a shared vision that focuses on clear, collective goals that will be used to prioritize

Christmas Tree Lighting in Largo Central Park

resources to target the desired outcomes. The Plan recognizes that community pride is based on developing both a sense of community (human attributes) and a sense of place (physical attributes) and will help further the goals contained within the Placemaking Element.





## REFERENCE MAPS

**Map 1:** Future Land Use

**Map 3:** Activity Centers and Special Corridors

**Map 4:** Multimodal Corridors

**Map 11:** Existing Urban Trails and Parks Network

**Map 12:** Proposed Urban Trails and Parks Network

**Map 18:** Watersheds and Drainage Basins

## ASSETS AND COLLABORATIONS

### A. Initiatives and Programs

- City of Largo Comprehensive Development Code (CDC)
- Clearwater-Largo Road Community Redevelopment District Plan
- Heart of Largo

- MPO/Forward Pinellas Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan Facilities Element
- Special Area Plan for the Largo Mall Activity Center
- Urban Forest Master Plan
- West Bay Drive Community Redevelopment District Plan

### B. People and Organizations

- America for the Arts
- Central Pinellas Chamber of Commerce
- City of Largo Chamber of Commerce
- Creative Pinellas
- Florida Department of State
- National Endowment for the Arts
- Pinellas County
- Pinellas County Register of Historic Resources
- Pinellas County School Board (PCSB)



## OPPORTUNITIES

Placemaking is about public spaces and places that are inviting, safe and aesthetically appealing with opportunities for public art to inspire residents, entrepreneurs and visitors and create a unique identity that will instill a sense of community pride. Largo has an opportunity to develop formal and informal placemaking, driven by residents that connect together a sense of pride and belonging in neighborhoods. The following are key projects in the Downtown District that advance the placemaking initiative and will create new opportunities for defining Largo's Downtown:

- **West Bay Drive Reconstruction** – In 2017, a Complete Streets concept for the reconstruction of the County-owned portion of West Bay Drive, from Clearwater-Largo Road (Alternate U.S. 19) to the Belleair Causeway Bridge, was approved by Forward Pinellas. This portion of roadway is mostly 4 lane divided that transects Downtown. It experiences speeding and lacks bicycle accommodations, median refuges for pedestrians and has median designs that are unsafe for multiple modes of travel. The Complete Streets concept will connect the Downtown to the Pinellas Trail and Indian Rocks beach while making the roadway safer and more convenient for all modes of transportation.
- **Trail Head Improvements at West Bay Drive** – The objectives for the improvements to the West Bay Drive project are to enhance the overall aesthetics of the Trail and surrounding amenities, enhance connectivity and access at several locations between Washington Avenue and 4th Avenue NW, and leverage the proximity of the Downtown Largo with the Pinellas Trail overpass. This project includes multimodal transportation and aesthetic improvements such as monument signs and

way-finding amenities, as well as repair and rehabilitation of existing transportation infrastructure, such as mid-block crossings, sidewalks and curb ramps.



West Bay Trail Head — pedestrian gateway lighting concept.  
Photo Courtesy cph

- **Downtown Pocket Park** – Constructed in 2017 to create an urban park in coordination of the other improvements described here to align with the overall elements defining the West Bay Drive Corridor.
- **Downtown Plaza** – This project includes design and construction of plaza improvements on the triangular parcel at the Southwest corner of West Bay Drive and Missouri Avenue including a signature design element to further establish the identity of the Downtown by creating a sense of place and reflecting the overall brand elements of the City. The project scope involves landscape and hardscape improvements aligned with those planned for the gateway improvements at the Pinellas Trail, as well as the West Bay Drive Community Redevelopment District (WBD-CRD) gateway signage and landscaping treatments outlined in the WBD-CRD plan. The design is budgeted for 2018 with construction programmed for 2019.





Downtown Plaza Design

Over the next phase of plan implementation, the community and City government will use Forwarding Our Future 2040 to focus on innovative ways to integrate placemaking efforts. Placemaking seeks to connect places and communities through arts, culture, creative activation and even transportation. As Largo continues to grow, pressures to have landmarks, parks, public spaces, gathering spaces, and entertainment will progress and evolve. However, there must be a balance between growth and placemaking to maintain the attributes that make Largo neighborhoods unique. Additional opportunities may be found through:

- Improving parks and recreational and increasing community involvement opportunities;
- Creating a sense of culture by expanding public art and entertainment activities;

- Continuing with strategic plans and collaborations to redevelop community focal points;
- Supporting street improvement programs;
- Capitalizing on opportunities to locally partner with and cultivate the nonprofit arts and culture sector that was estimated to have generated \$241 million of economic impact in Pinellas County in 2015; and
- Funding Programs for Placemaking such as Forward Pinellas Planning and Placemaking Grant is intended to assist local governments in their work to maintain and/or strengthen the character of Pinellas County's many distinct communities by fostering connected, people-centric neighborhoods and destinations through planning activities that reinforce community identity, livability, and increases public wealth. The program can help local governments by funding activities and initiatives that help to establish or reinforce a sense of place and advance the Planning & Urban Design Principles of the *Countywide Plan*. Planning projects which seek to strengthen our districts, centers, and corridors through an approach that emphasizes a holistic planning process will make ideal candidates.







# SOLUTIONS

## Parks/Public Spaces

**GOAL 1:** Utilize Placemaking principles to develop, program and maintain a comprehensive system of parks, trails, recreational facilities and arts and cultural amenities offering quality, affordability and diversity in leisure experiences while preserving and protecting vital natural resources to enhance the community's quality of life now and into the future.

**OBJECTIVE 1.1:** Expand and enhance the City's parks, trails, open space and recreational and community facilities.

### Strategies:

- ♦ Purchase land for trail and trail connections;
- ♦ Increase land for public use through purchase, long term agreements or dedications of land to achieve desired levels of service; and
- ♦ Establish partnerships to provide recreation and cultural programs and/or facilities.

### POLICIES

**It shall be the policy of the City to:**

**1.1.1:** Provide an accurate inventory of parks and recreational facilities to ensure compliance with the level of service standards of seven and one-half (7.5) parkland acres per one thousand (1,000) residents for parks and one (1) recreation facility per thirty-five thousand (35,000) residents, which are necessary to meet the public's needs.

**1.1.2:** Continue to seek and utilize City funds, grants and other resources, when available, to take advantage of opportunities to acquire land appropriate for use as parkland, open space, or other recreational uses.

**1.1.3:** Acquire, maintain and expand shoreline access in publicly-owned parks and recreation facilities along Tampa Bay and the Intracoastal Waterway.

**1.1.4:** Promote the preservation of land for recreation and open space purposes through the use of the **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)** process, conservation easements, and/or deed restrictions.



"A voluntary, incentive-based program that allows landowners to sell development rights from their land to a developer or other interested party who then use these rights to increase the density of development at another designated location" (Planning Implementation Tools, 2005). Photo Credit Prince George's County, Maryland.

**1.1.5:** Evaluate the suitability of parkland for **active versus passive recreational use** prior to purchase and/or development based on factors to include, but not limited to: topography, geology, and potential impact on any natural resources and native species present. Environmentally sensitive parkland areas shall be protected by maintaining them as

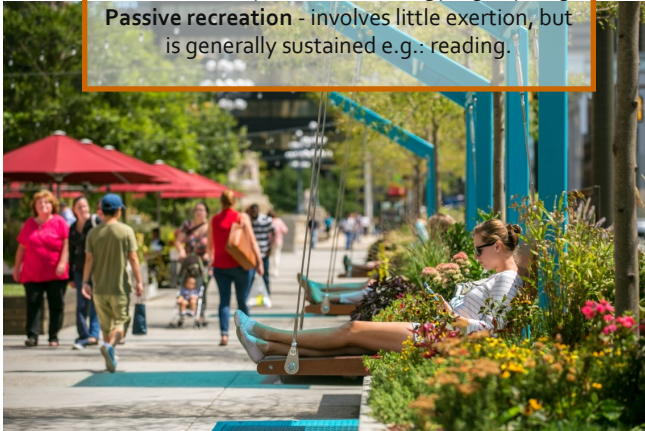


undeveloped, or through development with passive recreation/open space uses, that are compatible with the natural surroundings and minimize the disruption of natural systems.



**Active recreation** - an activity that requires a considerable expenditure of energy e.g.: cycling.

**Passive recreation** - involves little exertion, but is generally sustained e.g.: reading.



The Porch at 30th Street Station, a transformative urban open space. Once a congested parking lane and bland, barren sidewalk, The Porch has quickly become one of the most animated public spaces, within a short walk of over 16,000 jobs. It features custom swings, abundant seating, greenery, ongoing performances, community events and food and beverage options. Photo Credit University City District, Philadelphia.

**1.1.6:** Continue to identify and acquire land and/or develop public/private partnerships for property east of U.S. Highway 19 and along Tampa Bay for future development of a new park or facility for active recreational opportunities.

**1.1.7:** Incorporate easements, utility right-of-way, major drainage ways, and flood plains in the design and construction of parks, trails, open space, and/or recreation facilities.

**1.1.8:** Provide incentives for development of major activity

centers (including West Bay Drive/Clearwater-Largo Road Community redevelopment districts (CRDs), Largo Town Center area, and Largo Mall Activity Center) to incorporate on-site public open space and/or recreation facilities.

## Connectivity/Access

**OBJECTIVE 1.2:** Improve and enhance, access to park, recreation, community, arts and cultural facilities and connectivity to activity centers and neighborhoods through development of the City trail system, sidewalks, and enhanced streetscapes.

### Strategies:

- ♦ Complete sidewalk connections that link recreation facilities to surrounding neighborhoods;
- ♦ Acquire rights to land through agreements with private and public partners to link park and recreation sites throughout the City; and
- ♦ Continue the annual street planting to expand the tree canopy along community streets

## POLICIES

**It shall be the policy of the City to:**

**1.2.1:** Ensure that parks, recreation, arts and cultural facilities are reasonably accessible to all users, including the disabled, older adults, economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse groups.

**1.2.2:** Support the Forward Pinellas current Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan Facilities Element, and the

development of connections to City parks and recreation facilities.

I.2.3: Utilize the Urban Forest Master Plan and Proposed Urban Trails and Park Network (Map 12) to identify opportunities to strengthen connections to parks and provide active recreation services.

I.2.4: Utilize easements and utility right-of-way for providing access to, and inter-connectivity between City and County parks and community, cultural, and recreation facilities.

I.2.5: Provide sidewalks, where physically feasible, to improve neighborhood access to City parks and community, cultural, and recreation facilities, and activity centers.

I.2.6: Develop standards for wayfinding signage.

I.2.7: Create and promote Central Park and the Central Park Performing Arts Center as an integral part of the development of Largo's downtown, brand the area as one district, and provide safe and convenient access throughout the entire West Bay Drive Community Redevelopment District.

I.2.8: Establish partnerships with Pinellas County, Pinellas County School Board, churches, civic organizations, and the private sector, in order to enhance the

variety, quality, and accessibility of recreation, wellness, arts and cultural programming/facilities available to Largo's residents.

**GOAL 2:** Utilize Placemaking principles to develop identifiable places that foster a sense of place and builds community.

## Activities/Social Offerings

**OBJECTIVE 2.1:** Building off local assets and community input, create a sense of place through good design and use of public spaces. These places will provide opportunities for social interactions, include a variety of amenities and activities, and include events that are inclusive to all groups of people.

### Strategies:

- ♦ Research and identify best management practices and case studies of successful public spaces;
- ♦ Involve the community to determine the types of events and amenities that are desired; and
- ♦ Utilize the "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" approach to transform public spaces.

## POLICIES

**It shall be the policy of the City to:**

- 2.1.1 Continue to identify and address the community's recreation, leisure, and cultural activity needs utilizing a variety of creative community outreach methods and funding sources and ensure they promote:
- ♦ Multi-generational understanding by bringing together users from all age groups;



- ♦ Cross cultural understanding by bringing together users from all cultural groups; and
- ♦ Understanding and acceptance of persons with disabilities.

2.1.2: Cooperate and coordinate with the **St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Central Pinellas Chamber of Commerce**, and other similar organizations to promote the City as a venue for leisure, sports, entertainment, arts and cultural events.



2.1.3: Diversify the events and activities that occur at Central Park and the Central Park Performing Arts Center to include more local musicians, artists, performers and other talents.

2.1.4: Expand the amenities offered in City parks and explore the feasibility/desirability of the addition of interactive items such as splash parks, **fountains**, large scale game boards, and other non-traditional amenities.



Children's Fountain, Kanas City. Photo Credit Jill Toyoshiba

2.1.5: Strategically place **outdoor seating** and lighting in a manner that minimizes environmental impacts, encourages social interaction, and increases the comfort and safety of a place.



The parklet consists of 4 "strips" providing built-in seating, tables, and native planting. Photo Credit INTERSTICE Architects, Sunset Parklet, San Francisco.

2.1.6: Coordinate with Pinellas County to develop both recreational and social events that can occur on or along the Pinellas Trail and the Duke Energy Trail, along with additional amenities in strategic locations such as, seating and wayfinding signage to identify key destinations off the trail to increase bike and pedestrian traffic to support economic development.

2.1.7: Promote the use of downtown parks and community and arts facilities including Ulmer Park, Largo Central Park, Bayhead Action Park, Dog Bone Run Park, Largo Public Library and the Central Park Performing Arts

Center for holding special events that generate substantial pedestrian traffic to support and encourage the clustering of private-sector commercial recreation/entertainment uses in the West Bay Drive CRD.

- 2.1.8: Expand the utilization of food trucks in coordination with special events especially in areas that lack food options.
- 2.1.9: Provide a variety of recreation and arts programs and special events that foster the development of life-long skills/hobbies and contribute to the well-rounded and healthy development of residents of all ages.
- 2.1.10: Work with local schools and the Pinellas County School Board to develop programs that occur either during or after school that would allow students to be part of a community project and build community pride and empower our youth through increased involvement. Some project ideas include tree planting, community gardens, or painting of a mural.
- 2.1.11: Expand the community input methods and marketing to develop and promote events, activities, and programs that are offered by the City and its partners.

## Arts & Culture

**OBJECTIVE 2.2:** Support public art and local artists and organizations

through the development of partnerships, support and/or marketing of programs.

### Strategies:

- ♦ Build partnerships with art organizations, such as Creative Pinellas, as well as other art and community organizations to develop programs and identify funding opportunities that support artists and public art.
- ♦ Support local artists by providing opportunities for showcasing their talents.
- ♦ Encourage the integration of art into the fabric of public spaces, private developments, and neighborhoods.

## POLICIES

**It shall be the policy of the City to:**

- 2.2.1: Develop and build partnerships with local artists, organizations, neighborhoods, schools, colleges and universities to strengthen the creative capacity and develop public art that can be displayed to strengthen community identity and empower community through direct involvement.
- 2.2.2: Support the creation of **public art** programs that may include installations by local artists such as murals, outdoor seating and lighting, bike racks, and other creative displays to enhance public space.

Aiming to promote local talent and engage the community by turning empty city walls into public canvases has a lasting effect on local neighborhoods. Photo Credit VinieGraffiti.com, France.

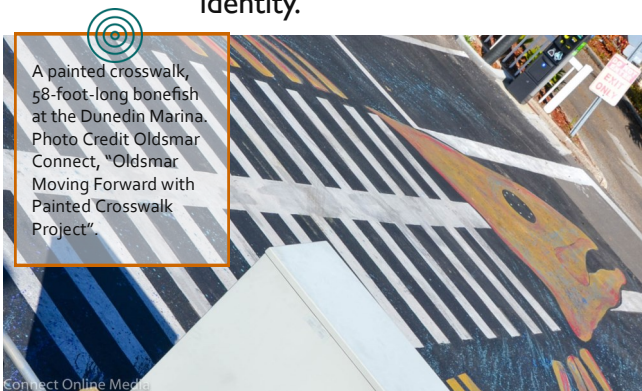




- 2.2.3: Expand the **hearts of Largo Program** and encourage a wider application for use through added involvement from residents, local artists and schools as a tool to increase the display of the Hearts and build community identity.



- 2.2.4: Explore the feasibility of **painted crosswalks** developed with community participation in key areas to slow traffic, increase visibility of pedestrians, as well as, build community pride and identity.



- 2.2.5: Encourage the use of **outdoor seating, lighting, art installations** and other features to create unique places that attract people.



- 2.2.6: Preserve individual properties or items that are significant for their historical, architectural, archaeological and/or cultural associations.
- 2.2.7: Encourage the integration of history and community culture in public art displays and activities.
- 2.2.8: Encourage public and private developers to integrate art into new developments through incentives.
- 2.2.9: Work to develop programs and partnerships that will help support the development of all types of artists and showcase their talents within City public spaces. This could include talents such as drama, dance, music, visual arts, as well as written art forms such as poetry.
- 2.2.10: Identify innovative funding mechanisms to implement art related projects and programs.
- 2.2.11: Research state and national art organizations, such as Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, America for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts for grant opportunities to strengthen the creative capacity in Largo.

In Boston, playgrounds are no longer just for kids. Twenty LED-lit circular swings installed outdoors as the first interactive sculpture installation. Photo Credit Arch Daily

