“Third Places”: Sharing Our Stories
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Third Places: Sharing Our Stories
“The trouble is, neither work nor family can possibly fill our need for novelty, for playful conversation with people whose thoughts are not already well-known to us, for talk that gives birth to new ideas, for undirected flowing chat that is not directed toward solving work and family goals.”

This Session

- Healthy Place framework
- Third places:
  - the literature
  - the Spryfield project
- Small Group Activity: Sharing our stories
- The Spryfield experience:
  - what we’re hearing
  - community well-being
- Group Brainstorming: Your ideas on third places and community well-being
Third Places

Why do this research?

www.cira.ca/halifaxmarket.jpg
www3.sympatico.ca/taylormcgreal/streetparty.html

Third Places: Sharing Our Stories
Determinants of Health

- Physical environment
- Social supports in communities
- Social environments
- Culture
- Personal health practices and coping skills
- Education
- Employment and working conditions
- Income and social status
- Gender
- Healthy child development
- Biology and genetic endowment

Public Health Agency of Canada: http://www.phacaspc.gc.ca/phsp/phdd/determinants/index.html#determinants

Third Places: Sharing Our Stories
Determinants of Mental Health

- Social support
- Education
- Sex
- Childhood traumas
- Current stress
- Life events
- Age
- Physical health problems
- Restricted activity

Health and Neighbourhoods

Research areas specific to health and neighbourhood characteristics:

- Social characteristics
- Physical environment characteristics
- Access to services
- Transportation specific issues
- Socio-economic influences
Coffee shops:

“At the Third Place Coffeehouse in Raleigh, North Carolina, owners...set out to create, in their own words, “not only a successful business but also a successful community gathering place where neighbours, friends, and individuals can meet, relax and enjoy themselves...”

Barber Shop:

“There's no place like third place. I'm not talking about winning and losing here, or races or sports or politics, but something far more important: the simple art of living your life in the real world.”

Stephen Hunter.

“Shear Gladness.”
Washington Post.
September 13, 2002
Library:

“...by the very nature of what they do, libraries offer people a third place, a place different from home or work, a place where people can come to learn, think, explore, play, reflect and socialise.”

Dog Park:

“At ... Blue Dog Pond and other dog parks, people who know each other only as Spot’s Mom or Rover's Dad end up exchanging keys for dog sitting or sharing emotions they know won’t get back to home or work.”

Third Places. *The Seattle Times*, October 24, 2004
**Commuter Ferry:**

“Peals of laughter rise off the back deck of the Bremerton ferry… A half-dozen women, from 25 to 62, settle in for what is essentially their weekday social life.

‘I feel I could ask any of them to do anything for me,’ [says] Gladys Storm. ‘And we don't even see each other outside of here.’”

Third Places. *The Seattle Times*, October 24, 2004
Third Places: the literature

Topics explored: Third places; informal meeting places; hangouts; place and sociability; social capital and place…

- Key authors:
  - Oldenburg – *The Great Good Place*, the Third Place
  - Putnam – *Bowling Alone*

- Literature fields
Third Places: the literature

- Areas of study:
  - place identity and place meaning
  - social support
  - social networks, place and health
  - civic community/democracy
  - consequences of malls for society
  - social capital
  - virtual third places
  - alternative culture and discourse
  - group processes
  - pedestrian activity
  - built environment and mental health
  - youth and the elderly
Third Places: the literature

Emerging themes of relevance to third places and community well-being:

- contested spaces
- health inequalities: youth and elderly
- self-expression: social, emotional
- discourse, civic participation and democratic process
- buffers against stress and change
- identification with places
Third Places in Spryfield

Research question:
What is the role of the “third place” in community health and well-being?

Objectives:
- annotated bibliography on third places and social determinants and indicators of health and well-being
- catalogue of third places in the Spryfield community
- method for a larger study:
  - if and how third places may be used as an environmental diagnostic tool for community health.
  - how we can ensure third places are considered in policy related to community design
Third Places in Spryfield
Third Places in Spryfield

Method

- Review the literature on third places
- Assess the location, quantity and quality of third places in Spryfield through observation and focus groups with community members
  - 8 Focus Groups, 46 participants from pre-teens to senior adults
- Analyze data to operationalize definition of third places and to begin interpretation of its relevance to health and place
Sharing Your Stories

Small Group Activity – 25 minutes

We invite you to share your experience of third places in your personal life.
Third Places in Spryfield

Bowlarama, South Centre Mall

B. C. Silver School (set for demolition)
Community Places

Corner Store
It’s got a fairly big parking lot. It’s right at the end of the road by the high school. And it’s near a bus stop. Everybody from Greystone would go there if they needed something from the corner store so it’s really the only corner store close to that big neighbourhood.

Skating Rink
The Friday night skate is hugely popular. There is only one public skate a week for all the kids in Spryfield. One hour and twenty minutes of skating. Everybody’s there. People are coming and going from the ice to the bleachers and hanging out with friends, eating fries…

Third Places: Sharing Our Stories
Community Places – Events

C. And there’s suppers.
A. Oh, suppers!
C. And we meet a lot of people at those suppers. People I haven’t seen in years.
C. Yeah.
A. At the flea markets—the local flea markets and the yard sales.
C. Oh, yard sales! When I had a yard sale I met everybody under the sun.
B. Even though they’re not in the same place all the time—some of them are—they can be good. There’s things like Seedy Saturday and stuff like that that the Urban Farm puts on.
C. We have weeding parties. We go to weed and talk. Gossip.
Adult Places

“. . . Well, the bowling alley, I think is a really popular third place. Not for people our age but I think for older people it’s really popular.” [Teens commenting on adult places]

D. “There you go, Bowlarama, that’s a third place.”

Do you use it?

D. “I don’t.”

It’s not like a regular thing that you would do?

C. “I belong to a group and we did it once. It was fun.”

H. “I bowl there every Sunday.”
Kids Places

“People hang out in front of St. Pauls [church] and play hockey... There are parking lots that nobody uses and people play street hockey. It’s pretty flat.”

“...that building belongs to Family S.O.S. and they have a location called Healthy Kidz. That’s an afterschool program for about twenty kids but there are always kids hanging out there.”

“There are always people coming and going from Healthy Kidz but even when there’s no programming, kids kind of congregate there. Little ones playing in the dirt with dinky cars...”
They also hang out under the MacIntosh Run on Herring Cove Road. And in the woods there. There’s the paths. A lot of them have made a path across the water coming up through and they’ll hang out under the bridge.

（Senior teens on junior teens）

“They also wander a lot too. Like, they don’t stay in one place. They like to walk around with each other. It’s not like they just sit around outside places. I find they’re more wanderers.

“They also hang out under the MacIntosh Run on Herring Cove Road. And in the woods there. There’s the paths. A lot of them have made a path across the water coming up through and they’ll hang out under the bridge.”

（Junior Teens confirming）

“We stop to take pit stops. Like, sit there and hang for like half an hour.”

“There’s a playground at the Lions Rink. We play games. We swing. Grounders! Graffiti! And most of the time we just sit there and talk.”
Mobile Places

Buses

“. . . I, like, live on the bus. I’m on it, like, all the time.

Do you know anyone that hangs out on the bus just for fun?

“Oh yeah. Straight up.”

“. . . my mother used to get on the bus up to Leiblin all the time--they even celebrated each others’ birthdays on the buses. The same people would travel all the time on the buses and they would know all about each other … they didn’t visit each other in their homes or anything but they knew that on the bus they were friends. And there were dozens of them on that particular bus. I think that’s true of most things around people—that people are very friendly.”
Support Places

A. “... and Saint Paul’s is another. They’ve got their food bank up there and they have...in the garden they have a food bank area... That goes to the food bank and I know on food bank day people stand there and chit chat. That’s another kind of meeting place, you know.”

So the food bank?

A. “And I think they serve muffins and coffee while you wait for your food bank up there. It gives people a chance to chat and stuff like that. So that’s good.”
Natural Spaces

“Kidston Lake is a special places in Spryfield.”

“. . .I can’t think of very many places where they go specifically to relax and see people except in the summer when they go to the lake or in the winter when we went to the frog pond. And it was really fun because you see people you hadn’t seen in a while.’
Chance

“. . .Mostly people would bump into each other when they’re taking their kids to swimming lessons or they popping into the library or going to the grocery store or they’re sitting watching a hockey game—watching their kids play . . .”
“. . . For me, it was really big when I was not old enough to go out and hang out . . . Now that I have the kids . . ., through the winters especially, I spend five hours a day, bare minimum, on the computer.”

“. . . Because you might be home but you’re not there. You’re not cleaning your house; you’re not doing your dishes. You’re talking with other people but you’re not out of your house. . . You might as well put a sign on the door. “Be back later.””

[Kids at the library]
C. “Go on the computers, read books.”
E. “Computers, books, magazines.”
[leader:] *What do you do on the computers?*
B. “Internet.”
A. “MSN.”
G. “MSN, Piczo, Facebook, MySpace, email!”
One person’s third place . . .

“. . . I think one place for me personally has been stores – grocery stores. I’ve met a lot of people that I’ve exchanged names and I’ve exchanged recipes with . . . and just great experiences just in shopping . . . You can meet interesting people and have really interesting conversations or experiences and that wasn’t your point for going. . .”

B. “. . . I don’t shop at the Superstore in Spryfield. I can’t stand it; it drives me nuts. It’s not organized.”

D. “Yeah, and you can’t get your stroller through.”

B. “I know! There’s poles in the middle of the aisle.”

D. “And then you get the stupid people that are standing in the aisles and just gossip. I hate that.”
“They’re seeking community and it’s the only place they can find it. It’s shrinking. . . .”

“... there used to be a food court in the mall and I was always amazed at how many people went there as part of their daily routine . . . I would always see people I knew, people getting together, people coming together and chatting. Then the Tim Horton’s closed and then people were still meeting there—there are benches—but they moved the benches to a smaller part of the mall. Sort of an allotment of benches, and people still go there. That’s a prime meeting spot in Spryfield. But there is no longer a sit-down coffee shop . . . . I mean people going there go over here [to the drive-through Tim Horton’s across the street] and buy their coffee and walk back and sit in the mall. It’s kind of sad.”
Losing Places

Coffee shops

[Closed HCR Tim’s] “It was big enough for people to go in. It was pretty big. Go in, sit down. . . . A lot of people hung out there at night. Go get your coffee, sit on the edge there.”

B. [About the drive-through] “. . . So finally they’re re-doing that . . . you can’t sit there. They’ve got two little tables . . .”

G. “You’re lucky to fit two people in there anyways to wait for your coffee.”

B. “You go to eat and the door is open with people lined up inside.”

A. “. . . it’s not really a walk-in.

B. “But even the new one up at Ultramar isn’t a sit-in.”
Grey Places

“. . . It’s a hangout for graffiti taggers, for anyone learning how to ride a bike. You know, it’s a gathering place . . .”

“BC Silver! Everybody hangs there!”

“. . . Isn’t that disgusting. That’s heart breaking for us because that was our high school.”

“They also hang out under the MacIntosh Run on Herring Cove Road . . . And in the woods there . . . There’s the paths . . . a lot of them have made a path across the water coming up through and they’ll hang out under the bridge.”
No Places

“. . . Spryfield is very limited. I tried to meet a friend just to touch base with for lunch and we wanted to sit outside . . . the only place I could think of is outside of Spryfield at Sir Sanford Fleming . . . there’s not even a coffee shop that you could go and sit down in so we couldn’t even go to a coffee shop and have a coffee . . .”

“I mean I know where people go but there aren’t very many nice places where you can go to say I’ll sit here for a while and see who shows up. I’m sure Spryfield probably had some places at one time . . .”

“Everybody goes downtown. . . .There’s not enough stuff to do up here. And I just find downtown more fun than it is to be here.”
Spryfield’s Third Places

Kids and younger teens – streets, sidewalks, parking lots, playgrounds, school yards, basketball courts, woods

Older teens – playgrounds, school yards, ball courts, but mostly too busy!

Moms, dads and kids – playgrounds, parent-tot groups, parent resource centre, library, wave pool

Adults – social clubs, service groups, the Mall

Everyone – Kidston Lake, library, Lion’s rink, Tim’s (in Cowie Hill, not Spryfield), corner stores, ball games, community events, or go downtown.
- Inside Places
- Outside Places
- Lost Places
Third Places in Spryfield

Preliminary categories

- interior
  - unstructured → very structured

- exterior
  - natural → constructed

- public → private

- permanent, ephemeral, seasonal

- intended/not intended for social activities
Third Places in Spryfield

Emerging themes:

- Control of space
- Community economic development
- Community social development
- Uses of space
  - Purpose – intended/unintended uses
  - Single vs multiple uses
- Users of space

- Ambiance
- Experience sought
- Evolution (change)
- Agenda (programming)
- Investment in the place
Spryfield
Third Places

- Great diversity of places: inside and outside, transient, mobile, linear, variation in scale
- People are resourceful in creating 3rd places
- Often socially segregated
- May not be “regulars” present
- Activities: play, conversation, gossip, “being”
- Trend is loss of 3rd places

Literature
Third Places

- Focus on parochial realm: “locally owned, independent, small scale establishments” (Oldenburg) – coffee shop, bar
- Almost exclusively inside
- Social “levelers”
- “regulars”
- Activities: play, conversation
- Trend toward planned 3rd places
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Used in Spryfield</th>
<th>Identified in Literature</th>
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<tr>
<td>Community centres and facilities</td>
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<td>some libraries, gyms, saunas</td>
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<td>Social clubs</td>
<td>Legion</td>
<td>clubs</td>
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<td>Businesses</td>
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<td>locally owned coffee shops, bars, fast</td>
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<td>food, convenience stores, bookstores,</td>
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<td>Frenchies</td>
<td>laundromats, barbershops</td>
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<td>Community service organizations</td>
<td>employment centre, food bank, community</td>
<td>post office</td>
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<td>garden, youth clubs, resource centre</td>
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<td></td>
<td>yard sales</td>
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<td>street hockey, skateboarding</td>
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<td>ferries</td>
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<td>church parking lots</td>
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<td>Trails</td>
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<td>Woods</td>
<td>behind buildings</td>
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<td>Grey places</td>
<td>smoking areas, under bridges (youth)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beyond community</td>
<td>downtown malls</td>
<td>malls</td>
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<td>Virtual 3rd places</td>
<td>CAP sites, Facebook</td>
<td>on-line games, chat rooms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lost 3rd places</td>
<td>coffee shops, restaurants, theatres, mall</td>
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<td>lobby</td>
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Third Places in Spryfield

Spryfield’s third places are not ‘Oldenburgesque’ third places.

Very few are businesses.

Most are free spaces, outdoor spaces, natural spaces, service or community facilities or community events.

Spryfield residents largely create their own third places in ways and spaces that are not identified in the literature.
Third Places in Spryfield

Participants uniformly reported dissatisfaction with the lack of amenities and general shabiness, and the practice of leaving Spryfield to find entertainment and amenity Services.

They don’t leave to find ‘community’ and neighbourliness.

Participants reported fellowship, friendliness, rootedness and natural places (but not parks), as positive attributes of Spryfield.

People in Spryfield know one another.
Third Places in Spryfield

- What do Spryfield’s third places and experiences tell us about community well-being?

- What are the lessons so far for planners and designers?
Third Places: Sharing Our Stories

- Place making
  - Project for Public Spaces – PPS

PPS’s training programs provide both practical skills and inspiration to people who want to improve the public environment in their city, town or neighborhood. Training includes building awareness of public space issues and opportunities, observation and data gathering techniques, understanding how people use public spaces, building internal capacity to implement place-based projects, and public space design and management skills.

PPS.org Home > Training

Training

- PPS’s Training Programs
- Training Project Experience
- “How to Turn a Place Around” Training
- “How to Create Successful Markets” Training
- “Streets as Places” Training
- Speakers
- Research
- Conferences

For more information on PPS’s Training program, contact:
Kathy Madden

http://www.pps.org/training/
Designer third places?

Cafés

Just Us! desires to build cafés that are a 'Third Place' - a place that is neither work, nor home, but a familiar and comfortable place that acts as an incubator for the human relationships within the community. The cafés are where you can meet friends, exchange the news of the day, gear up, unwind or simply enjoy living. The concept of the Third Place is a throwback to bygone days of mixed-use urban spaces and seems to be a foundation for a healthy community.

Our cafés feature highly trained staff who are committed to preparing espresso, coffee and tea beverages in a manner that showcases the quality and care involved in the production of all Just Us! products. Alongside our selection of Fair Trade Certified coffees, teas, sugar and chocolate from co-ops around the world, our cafés serve light lunches, muffins and sweets produced in our own bakery.

All of our cafés have wireless internet!
Designing third places?
Designing third places?

Urban Land August 2006

Third Places: Sharing Our Stories