

**Amy Buckler**

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**Subject:** FW: Chris VanD at OPC

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**From:** Chris van Daalen [mailto:cvan@theverdantgroup.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, June 05, 2015 10:21 AM  
**To:** Amy Buckler  
**Subject:** FW: Chris VanD at OPC

Here's a blurb for the staff report for June 15 Planning Commission discussion on Neighborhood Centers. Feel free to edit as you see fit.

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Chris van Daalen from the Northwest EcoBuilding Guild will be there to talk about the important role of **voluntary placemaking initiatives** in the development of Neighborhood Centers. The Guild and several partner organizations have formed the Olympia Village Builders, a coalition of people and groups sharing time, skills and resources to transform public and private spaces into friendly neighborhood places for meeting up, growing food, sharing skills and creating a more appealing, healthy and resilient community.

They have planned a 9-day series of events this summer from August 15-23 "**the Olympia Village Building Convergence**" – Each day there will be volunteer placemaking projects and workparties at sites around the City; and special evening events to bring volunteers and neighbors together from across the city to share food, music and celebrate their placemaking accomplishments. The Olympia Village Builders will be publishing a 32-page guide in late July describing all the projects and events, and they will update online information at [www.Village-Builders.org](http://www.Village-Builders.org).

The OlyVBC is modeled after an annual community-service festival in Portland which recently wrapped up their 16<sup>th</sup> year (May 29-June 7) – see [www.CityRepair.org](http://www.CityRepair.org) for details on the Village Building Convergence in Portland. They define placemaking as "a multi-layered process within which citizens foster active, engaged relationships to the spaces they inhabit to inspire communal stewardship and lived connection."

According to the Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council,

"Placemaking is turning a neighborhood, town or city from a place you can't wait to get through to one you never want to leave. Placemaking is an overarching idea and a hands-on tool for improving a Neighborhood, City or Region. It has the potential to be one of the most transformative ideas of this century."

Placemaking has already done a lot to create distinct neighborhood centers around Olympia and Thurston County, the results which can be seen at West Central Park, the Commons@Fertile Ground, San Francisco Street Bakery, the Olympia Farmers Market, and Eastside Urban Farm and Garden Center – to name a few. As this list suggests, placemaking takes many forms based on the needs and identity of their neighborhoods, ranging from private parks, intersection paintings, street corner benches, urban farms and gardens, and neighborhood bulletin boards. Several new and enhanced projects are planned in 2015, using funds under the

City's Neighborhood Matching Grant program in most cases leveraged 1:3 or more with neighborhood and community matching donations.

Placemaking has a wide range of benefits to our citizens, local businesses and to the City itself. These include

- Building community and social cohesion at the neighborhood scale
- Creating neighborhood-scale facilities for information sharing, education, event space, food production, stormwater management, pollination, public art and more
- Creating appealing destinations for walking and biking to
- Offering diverse opportunities for healthy outdoor (physical) activities
- Improved access to healthy fresh local food by empowering people to grow their own
- Increasing nearby property values
- Improving traffic safety in residential areas
- Reducing crime and helping moderate other undesirable behaviors such as illegal drug use, vandalism and tagging
- Leveraging volunteer energy, skills and resources of the community to achieve City's goals for Neighborhood development, sustainability

Recognizing the multi-faceted value of placemaking to the public and City, the Commissioners Parker and Brown have suggested that beyond the Neighborhood Centers project of City Staff, the Planning Commission consider sending a resolution to the City Council to acknowledge its importance and to encourage participation in this years Olympia Village Building Convergence.

[PLEASE NOTE: Commissioners need to confirm if they wish to be represented this way, and still feel this is the right course of action; I'm not presuming what they will say, but maybe better you ask them and defer to your edits]

Draft Resolution by Commissioner Parker

*Whereas the 2015 Olympia Village Building Convergence (August 15-23) emphasizes the importance of placemaking to the creation of healthy neighborhoods and a healthy city, and*

*Whereas the Olympia Village Building Convergence is the result of the ongoing collaboration of numerous organizations including community non-profits, recognized neighborhood associations and local businesses, and*

*Whereas the placemaking can be an important element in the creation of more walkable neighborhoods, in increasing community engagement, providing access to community gardens and healthy food for all, and in reducing sprawl, and*

*Whereas placemaking, neighborhood improvement, and walkability are emphasized as goals in the Olympia Comprehensive Plan,*

*Therefore, the Olympia City Council expresses its strong support for the Olympia Village Building Convergence and urges all Olympia residents and businesses to consider both supporting the Convergence and becoming directly involved in the design and construction of placemaking throughout the City.*



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EcoBuilding  
Guild™

Chris van Daalen, Education Coordinator  
Northwest EcoBuilding Guild  
911 Adams St. SE, Olympia, WA 98501  
(360) 789-9669

[cvan@theverdantgroup.com](mailto:cvan@theverdantgroup.com) (for most communications)

[olyecobuilders@gmail.com](mailto:olyecobuilders@gmail.com) (for Google Docs)

Making it Easier to Build Green!

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[www.CodeInnovations.org](http://www.CodeInnovations.org)

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