

THIRD PLACES

Hartsville needs more **Third Places** downtown. Third Places are critical components to diversifying and sustaining a strong local economy and a college town culture. As defined by Ray Oldenburg in his seminal book, *The Great Good Place*, "Third Places are important for civil society, democracy, civic engagement, and establishing feelings of a sense of place."

Oldenburg calls one's "first place" the home and those with whom one lives. The "second place" is the workplace — where people may actually spend most of their time. Third places, then, are "anchors" of community life and facilitate and foster broader, more creative interaction. In modern times, people intentionally seek out these informal meeting places. Oldenburg suggests the hallmarks of a true Third Place are: free or inexpensive; food and drink (not essential, but important); highly accessible (within walking distance for most); involve regulars who habitually congregate there; welcoming and comfortable; both new friends and old.

Historically, downtown was the essence of a Third Place - where people shopped, met friends for coffee or ice cream, ran into friends on the sidewalk and enjoyed conversations. This is the spirit that is desired in Hartsville's downtown: an environment that encourages people to congregate and interact with others outside of the home or workplace. The Midnight Rooster, the Y and Vintage Craft Beer and Wine Boutique are examples of current, popular Third Places. Amenities that will attract people to use downtown as a Third Place include free WiFi, shaded seating, sidewalks that are buffered from passing vehicles allowing patrons to converse and watch the world go by, coffee shops, art studios, and ale houses and wine bars that are open past 5:00 in the evening.

Residents would like to have more Third Places such as pubs, billiards hall, bowling, pocket parks and more coffee shops, restaurants and ice cream and frozen yogurt shops.

William Hollingsworth (Holly) Whyte (1917 - 1999) was an American urbanist, organizational analyst, journalist and people-watcher who did extensive research throughout his life on streets and public places. One of the profound, yet very simple things he documented is that people are drawn to and use public places where they are encouraged to make it their own: sitting alone or with a group, moving chairs to sit alone or with others or to move in the sun or out of the sun, the ability to change views. Public gathering places, such as Burry Park, Pride Park and the Y as well as cafes and coffee shops can become these vibrant places - true Third Places that welcome people to sit for a while and are intentionally designed places for people to be together.

Hartsville will truly benefit from supporting more Third Places, which are typically locally-owned businesses as well as thoughtfully-designed and appropriately placed outdoor spaces. Third Places (a variety of indoor and outdoor gathering places) will provide the critical mass to support existing and additional businesses in town, invite more people to be on the streets and sidewalks, all of which elevate the perception of safety, encourage positive experiences and memories for residents and visitors, and build a stronger sense of community for all residents, particularly with young professionals, students, and faculty.

Examples of Successful Third Places



The High Line, New York City



Central Park, New York City



Audubon Zoo, New Orleans



Washington Square, New York City