



A PLACE for Sustainable Living, Oakland, California

What happens when people show up?

Welcoming people is the first step in how they get involved. Consider these cases:

→ Your space gets plenty of visitors, but without organisers showing the work behind the scenes, only a few offer to help, and fewer get involved. Sooner or later, the space fails.

→ Your group barely keeps the space open. Once in awhile, someone “gets it” and takes initiative. But without defined roles, participation is unpredictable and the space struggles.

→ Your space sees a critical mass of volunteers show up to help. After a positive experience, many come back, some taking on defined roles. The space thrives.



In all three cases, different practices lead to better outcomes. What makes the difference?

How to make a community space work

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Two principles for welcoming people

Organisers can lift up the vision and values of their space, without shutting down volunteers who bring new perspectives and capacity. Here are two principles to follow:

Find alignment. Work together by integrating opinions instead of rejecting them. When people are in alignment, anyone can support a decision – even if they have concerns.



Offer affirmation. Encourage everyone to try new things and take initiative, even if they fail at first, by sharing positive stories and recognising effort.

How can you apply these principles?



Practices for Welcoming, in Three Steps

The bridge for one-time visitors becoming long-term organisers happens in three steps:

Visiting, and getting curious

→ Goal: help people to experience the vision of the space

→ Practice: allow people to get curious and explore, instead of explaining things



Trying, and seeing connections

→ Goal: help everyone imagine being part of the community

→ Practice: create ways to connect opportunities instead of matching skills to tasks



Joining, and making a commitment

→ Goal: grow participation in a healthy way and minimise growing pains

→ Practice: make it easy for new people to commit and come back

Apps/tools like Teem can make this easier

Try this out by hosting an action day with new and familiar members.