



# FUTURE OF THIRD PLACES GAME



Created By Danielle Littman, PhD LCSW



# FUTURE OF THIRD PLACES GAME



## Background:

Welcome to the “Future of Third Places” game! This is an imaginative table-top game that gives young people a supportive space to envision their community 10-years into the future. Through a guided process, young people can dream up the ideal third place they think their community can benefit from. The game begins with a reflection about how young people currently feel in spaces in their community before jumping forward to the future and getting creative. This game was written by Dr. Danielle Littman, PhD, and has been adapted by the 2024-2025 UpRISE Youth Action Board to suit young people ages 14-22 from across Colorado.

**A third place** is a gathering spot that is separate from one’s home (known as the first place) and one’s place of work or school (the second place) where people can socialize, form connections, access resources, hangout and more. Some examples of third places are: libraries, parks, and community centers.

## MATERIALS & PREPARATION:

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of small maps of your community (size of a standard piece of printer paper) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Print copies out (1 per youth)</li></ul>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Deck of Stop Cards <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Print these out (1 per youth)</li></ul>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 large map of your community (ideally this is fairly large- think made up of 4 or 6 pieces of standard printer paper) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Print this out</li></ul>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Deck of Personal Expertise Cards <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Print these out (1 per youth)</li></ul> <p>Note: the intention is for these cards to be double sided. If you can’t print double-sided you can print separate pages for the front and back and tape or glue to an index card.</p> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colored sticky dots- you will need 5 different colors. In the script the colors used are: pink, blue, green, purple, and turquoise but the colors do not matter.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Deck of Worldbuilding Cards <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Print these out (1 per youth)</li></ul>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resources- art supplies <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This may look different based on the space/budget/needs of the youth you work with. Do whatever works best for you. Some suggestions include: markers/pens/crayons, paper, colored construction paper, pipe cleaners, air dry clay, popsicle sticks, and straws.</li></ul> | <input type="checkbox"/> Deck of Community Request Cards <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Print all of them out</li></ul> <p>Note: the intention is for these cards to be double sided. If you can’t print double-sided you can print separate pages for the front and back and tape or glue to an index card.</p>          |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Idea Log <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Print this out</li></ul>   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Small scissors & ribbon   |

## Pre-Game Warm up – Mapping our Present Third Places

*Pass out small maps of your community and 5 colors of sticky dots.*

**Explain:** “The game we are going to play is about places we spend time – and especially spaces that we feel welcome, and belong. Most of our time is going to take place in the future, but first we are going to do some grounding in the present, and our present relationship with different places here in [name of your community]. For some grounding, here is [space your group is in] and here is downtown (point to [landmark downtown location] on the map). Are there other landmarks on here that are important to point out so we have a good sense of the map?”

*Invite participants to share landmarks to orient themselves and one another.*

**Explain:** “To start us off, we are going to look at the small maps of [our community] in front of us. I am going to ask you some different questions about different feelings, and I’ll invite you to place different colored dots on the map in front of you in response to those questions. You’re welcome to skip any questions for any reason at all.”

**Ask:** “First, I want you to think about your favorite place in this area. Place a pink dot over your favorite place, and write down a few words next to that about what the place is and why it’s your favorite.”

**Ask:** “Now, think about the place you feel most calm/ comfortable/able to relax. Place a blue dot there, and write down a few words next to that place about what the place is and why you feel calm there.”

**Ask:** “Next, think about the place you feel most connected to other people. Place a green dot over

this place, and write down a few words next to it about what this place is and why you feel connected to others there.”

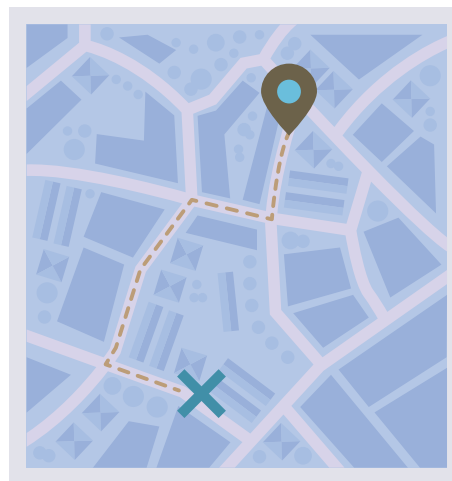
**Ask:** “Second to last – think about the place you feel most safe in this area. Place a purple dot there, and write down a few words next to that place about what the place is and why you feel safe there.”

**Ask:** “Finally, with the turquoise dot, mark the place you feel like you can ‘just be’ -- in the sense that it’s a place where you go to spend time in exactly the way you want to. Write down a few words next to that place about what the place is and what makes it possible for you to ‘just be’ there.”

**Say:** “Now, I’d like to invite anyone to share – only if you want – about one of the places you marked, and why you marked it.”

*Listen to anyone who would like to share.*

**Explain:** “Okay, now we are going to set these maps aside for now – but keep in mind the places you marked down, and why they made you feel the feelings you feel while in those places while we are playing the game.”



## Part 1: Before we Begin & The Stop Card

**Say:** “Before we begin, I want to set up an important ground rule. One of the most important things about the future we’re creating here is that we all feel safe enough to be here. Especially when our whole goal here today is to create spaces where we feel safe, supported, and cared for. With that I am going to introduce our first playing card, the Stop Card. We each get one.”

*Pass out 1 Stop Card to each person playing the game.*

**Explain:** “If, at any moment, for any reason, you’d like us to stop, you can place this card on the table, no questions asked. At that point, we will leave our game world – come back to the present – and check in.

You can let us know if you’d like to take a break, stop altogether, get support from someone in this space, or someone outside of this space. And before we settle in, a quick time check: we should be “in the game” for about a half hour together. Eat snacks, take care of your body, and show up in a way that feels good. We have to have our needs met to be present.”

**Ask:** “Anyone need anything right now to be able to be present?”

*Let folks get what they need.*

**Ask:** “Are we ready to jump in?”

## Part 2: Welcome to the “Future of Third Places” Game

**Say:** “Welcome to the Future of Third Places Game. By which I mean, welcome to 10 years from now. In a moment, I’m going to ask each of you to tell me something you know about this world in 10 years. And something about you in 10 years. Because you each know a little something, and have a little something to offer.”

**Say:** “But before that, a bit of grounding. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. Think about 10 years ago. Things were pretty different, right? But some things were the same. Some things you dreamed of then are now realities. Some things you never dreamed of are now realities.

10 years ago feels a little out of reach, right? But just close enough to touch – just close enough. Now, still with your eyes closed, come back to the present moment. Feel your feet on the ground. And your brain stretching forward 10 years. 10 years from now feels a little out of reach, right? But just close

enough to touch – just close enough. Some things you’ve been dreaming of are now realities. Some things you’ve never dreamed of are now realities. When you’re almost there – almost in the future – open your eyes. Welcome. Welcome to the future. Welcome to the Future of Third Places Game.”

*Place the larger map of your community in the center of the table where all participants can see it.*



**Say:** “Together, we are going to learn a bit more about this world we’re in 10 years from now. And who we are in this world 10 years from now. This map might look familiar – it’s a map of where we are today. But in the future, it’s a little bit different, so we are going to have to update it together. And you each know a lot about this world and have something to offer us. In this world, I have convened a Third Place Design Committee and you are all on it because I need your expertise. We have been given resources to build a youth-centered third place in our community and each of you have been brought onto this committee to help make sure it’s designed to actually, meaningfully, meet the needs of young people in our community.”

**Explain:** “You may already know that third places are the places we go that aren’t home (first place), or work or school (second place), to be ourselves, and to feel connected to something or someone(s). Places like parks, libraries, community gathering spaces, or even that one spot that people hang out that doesn’t have a real name but everyone knows it as The Spot. And you see, in this world, each of you is an expert on what it means to build spaces that make young people feel safe, supported, and cared for. You each have a unique perspective and lived experience, and are an expert in something– big or small– that can help us create our ideal third place. So let’s get to know who’s in the room, and a little more about this world. First, I’m going to give you each a Personal Expertise Card.”

*Pass out Personal Expertise Cards– 1 per participant.*

**Explain:** “On the back of this Personal Expertise Card, you are going to finish the sentence, ‘Something I bring to this design team is...’ – and again, it can be big, small, or somewhere in between. Maybe this is your favorite thing about yourself, or something you’re good at or like to do. Something I bring to this design team is... [share something about yourself with your group if you are comfortable]. You’ll have a moment to write, and then you’ll share with us, so we know how to lean on your

expertise in our design process.”

*Give young people a moment to write and then invite them to share.*

**Say:** “Now, I am giving each of you a Worldbuilding Card. You each know something about the future world we’re in, and it’s important that we learn from each other about this world before we start creating a third place within it.”

*Pass out Worldbuilding Cards– 1 per participant.*

**Explain:** “On the back of the Worldbuilding Card, you are going to respond to the prompt, ‘This is a world in which...’ Your answer could be something that’s the same about the world today, different, or something you know about this world that might seem totally off-the-wall. [Consider sharing an example such as: ‘This is a world in which people matter to each other’ or ‘This is a world in which people bike more than drive’]. Make a little drawing in the box to represent something we need to know about this world. And in just a moment, you are going to share with us what you know and place your card next to our map, so we can update the map to accurately reflect the world we are in now.”

*Give participants a moment to draw. Take turns sharing and placing the cards where they belong on the map.*

**Say:** “So, now we know who’s in the room, and we know about the world we’re in together. Now we get to do the work – we get to design a third place together for our community.”



**Say:** “Let’s get designing! As a reminder, third places are community places where people hang out. They can have indoor spaces, outdoor spaces, or both. They often have spaces where you can socialize, and spaces to spend time alone. They are often public – meaning that anyone can spend time there. Our goal here is to create spaces where everyone – and especially young people – will feel like they belong.”

**Explain:** “As with most design and planning processes, we have bounds to work within. We have a certain set of resources to build the space, and we have needs and requests from community members to respond to in our design.”

*Set the resources in the middle of the space. These are the art supplies you have gathered for this game.*

*Set the deck of Community Request Cards in the middle of the space.*

**Explain:** “Together we are going to respond to these requests that young people from across Colorado shared with us. When it’s your turn to be the card reader, you will read the Community Request Card out loud. All of the other players will have 3 minutes to create a design element that responds to this community request (the card reader does not create a design element). This could be a physical design element like a place to sit or a social design element like a rule of norm. You can use the 3D art supplies to craft your design element, draw it, describe it in writing, or write down a rule or norm on a piece of paper. As the card reader, you get to choose which design element best responds to the community member’s request, and then you will place it on our map. The player whose design element is chosen will get to keep that Community Request Card. We will rotate to the next committee member to be the next card reader. If, once we’ve gone through all the community requests, you collect the most cards, you get to be the one to cut the ribbon at the opening of our third place.”

If at any point you’re feeling lost or want inspiration, you can check out the Idea Log.

*Place the Idea Log on the table.*

**Ask:** “Any questions before we begin responding to the Community Request Cards?”

*Pause to answer any questions before jumping into the first round.*

*In between the community request card rounds, the facilitator states what has been added to the map that round (e.g., “This is a world in which there are community fridges with endless snacks at every corner so nobody goes hungry”).*

*Take turns responding to community request cards – the card reader role rotates each round. Players have 3 minutes to respond, and then they share their designs and the card reader picks their favorite to add to the map.*

*The game ends when all Community Request Cards are responded to, or when the group has responded to as many as they would like to.*

*The person with the most community request cards gets to cut the ribbon in front of the third place the group created!*

*Take a picture of the board, and of the winning member cutting the ribbon.*



**Say:** “Finally, we are about to travel back to the present, and back to our world.

Sometimes it can feel hard to go from dreaming about a future where things are better, back to a present where some things may feel really hard – and really different from the world we created together. So, before we travel back to [current year], I invite you to take one thing from the world we created – it can be one of the cards, or a piece of our third place – and bring it back to the present with you. Maybe it’s something you’d like a bit more of in your real world. Maybe it can serve as a reminder of the kind of future you are working towards. Go ahead and pick out something now, if you’d like, and put it in your pocket for safekeeping.”

*Players pick something from the game board to take with them.*

**Say:** “Now, let’s go around the circle and share why we chose what we chose to take back to the present with us from the world we created for anyone who would like to share.”

*Players take turns sharing why they chose what they chose to bring back to our present world.*

**Say:** “Thank you again for being a part of this process of making more welcoming, affirming futures together.”

*Notes:*

