This thesis contributes to the growing planning effort to address negotiations between real estate developers and local residents. The study addresses the lack of communication that often exists between these two groups during the early stages of the real estate development process. As technology is often used to connect and improve communication between various parties, the researcher sought to understand how online platforms could be used to address this growing gap. Three case studies served as examples of real estate development firms who have recently used crowdsourcing and social-networking sites to reduce opposition and garner support for their projects. These are discussed and evaluated with respect to effective levels of community engagement.

The study found that although social-networking sites can be used to engage community members they result in mostly gathering support for a project and not effectively including the input of the community. It is determined that crowd-source placemaking platforms, that include feedback meetings, allow for a meaningful partnership between these two groups to be formed. By providing a space for local residents and real estate developers to negotiate outcomes the community is delegated the power to be a dominant decision maker in the real estate development process for their community.