

Ken Dean - The Dean Group
Ed Bahler - The Aspen Group

How does “Third Place” relate to church ministry?

KD - Another concept that we wanted to introduce to you today is a concept called the Third Place. This is a very interesting idea. It stems from the concept that throughout history, throughout civilizations, and especially in great cities that there have been three primary places in peoples lives. The first place is their home. The second place is their work. And the third place is the place they go for community. Generally it was a walking destination. It was someplace close to their house and it was a place they could go to in the evenings for conversation, to hear the public voice.

EB - It could have been the barber shop, the soda fountain, the drug store, the café down at the corner...

KD - Exactly, in England some of the examples in a book by Ray Oldenburg called “The Great Good Place” was the English pubs in London and the other cities in England.

EB - ...the coffee shops in Italy, the cafes in France.

KD - Right, exactly. And the reason we bring it up is that we had those kinds of places in our culture right through World War II, but something happened when the automobile became affordable for most families and the suburban spread

started. And we actually planned and zoned these third places out of our residential areas. And what we found over time is that that was something that created a vacuum in people's lives. And so some churches are starting to embrace that as a strategic opportunity for them to actually use that multi-site strategy and instead of having the one big driving destination at one location, actually take multiple church sites and drop them in the middle of residential neighborhoods.