

# TACTICAL<sup>2</sup> URBANISM

Short-Term Action || Long-Term Change

tac·ti·cal

adj: \tak-ti-kəl\

1. of or relating to small-scale actions serving a larger purpose
2. adroit in planning or maneuvering to accomplish a purpose

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MIAMI NEW YORK





# TACTICIANS

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***“The lack of resources is no longer an excuse not to act. The idea that action should only be taken after all the answers and the resources have been found is a sure recipe for paralysis. The planning of a city is a process that allows for corrections; it is supremely arrogant to believe that planning can be done only after every possible variable has been controlled.”***

***- Jaime Lerner***

*Architect, urbanist, former mayor of Curitiba, Brazil*

# A NOTE ON VOLUME 2

During the fall of 2010 I traveled to New Orleans to take part in a retreat with my friends and colleagues who sometimes self-identify as the Next Generation of New Urbanists. While staying there in the Marigny, I shared my notes on a number of seemingly unrelated, but similar small-scale initiatives happening in the streets of New York, San Francisco, Portland, and Dallas. Per usual, they challenged me to better articulate my ideas and offered to help.

*Tactical Urbanism: Short-term Action, Long-term Change, Volume 1* was then assembled during the spring of 2011 and uploaded from 38,000 feet while flying to Bangkok—as inspirational a city as any for the tactical urbanist. The intent of the publication was to place an umbrella over a growing number of short-term, often self-funded efforts that were demonstrably leading to long-term change.

The term “tactical urbanism” is inspired by a June 2010 *faslanyc* blog post that discusses the pedestrianization of Times Square. In the introduction the author describes the DOT’s efforts as “tactical interventions,” and “hacks.” It was my first exposure to such terms applied to the built environment and it seemed to perfectly describe not just the Greenlight for Broadway project, but a groundswell of other low-cost, un- semi- and fully-sanctioned interventions.

Volume 1 was uploaded to my company’s website and to the Pattern Cities blog. In less than two months the document was downloaded more than 10,000 times, the maximum number allowed with our free SCRIBD account. We knew that the publication struck a chord with a whole new generation of citymakers.

Sensing a need to further discuss and share tactical initiatives from across the country, we partnered with numerous organizations in the fall of 2011 to produce the first Tactical Urbanism Salon. Approximately 150 people from around the country (and Canada) discussed their projects, listened to others, and drank free beer. Prior to the Salon we promised attendees that we’d release Volume II. However, with several other projects in the works, that promise turned out to be a bit too ambitious. Nonetheless, from Weed Bombing and Depave, to Ad-Busting and Camps, Tactical Urbanism Volume 2 presents updated information, new insights, new photos, and 12 additional short-term actions inspiring long-term change. I hope you find the initiatives presented herein as inspirational as they are practical.

**MIKE LYDON**  
Editor / Author

The Street Plans Collaborative  
March 2, 2012





*PARK(ing) Day participants temporarily reclaim an on-street parking space for a more productive use.  
Credit: Parking Day flickr pool*

## THE CHALLENGE

Cities are in a constant state of flux, which may explain we planners are often preoccupied with control. Large-scale transformations, such as stadiums, museums, large waterfront parks, and convention centers are all big-ticket items with measurable curb appeal (for some). Yet, such projects require a substantial investment of time, as well as a deep reserve of political, social, and fiscal capital. Moreover, the long-term economic or social benefit cannot be guaranteed.

In the pursuit of equitable progress, citizens are typically invited to engage in a process that is fundamentally broken: rather than being asked to contribute to incremental change at the neighborhood or block level, residents are asked to react to proposals they often don't understand, and at a scale for which they have little control. For better or worse, this often results in NIMBYism of the worst kind. Surmounting the challenges inherent to these "public" processes continues to prove difficult. Fortunately, cities were not always made this way. We do have alternatives.

## TACTICAL URBANISM

Improving the livability of our towns and cities commonly starts at the street, block, or building scale. While larger scale efforts do have their place, incremental, small-scale improvements are increasingly seen as a way to stage more substantial investments. This approach allows a host of local actors to test new concepts before making substantial political and financial commitments. Sometimes sanctioned, sometimes not, these actions are commonly referred to as "guerilla urbanism," "pop-up urbanism," "city repair," or "D.I.Y. urbanism."

While exhibiting several overlapping characteristics, "tactical urbanism," is a deliberate approach to city-making that features the following five characteristics:

- A deliberate, phased approach to instigating change;
- An offering of local ideas for local planning challenges;
- Short-term commitment and realistic expectations;
- Low-risks, with a possibly a high reward; and
- The development of social capital between citizens, and the building of organizational capacity between

public/private institutions, non-profit/NGOs, and their constituents.

## EXPERIMENTATION INFORMS DESIGN

Case studies from across North America reveal the benefit of taking an incremental approach to the process of city building—long-term change often starts with trying something small. Upon implementation, results may be observed and measured in real time. In this way, tactical urbanism projects intentionally create a laboratory for experimentation. Or, to paraphrase professor Nabeel Hamdi, they allow for the making of plans without the preponderance of planning.

When such experiments are done inexpensively, and with flexibility, adjustments may be made before moving forward with large capital expenditures. Indeed, there is real merit in a municipality or developer spending \$30,000 on temporary plaza before investing \$3,000,000 in changes that are permanent. If the project doesn't work as planned, the entire budget is not exhausted and future designs may be calibrated to absorb the lessons learned from what is surely a particular and dynamic context. If done well, such small-scale changes may be conceived as the first step in realizing lasting change. Thus, tactical urbanism is most effective when used in conjunction with long-term planning efforts that marry the urgency of now with the wisdom of patient capital.

If included as part of a public planning process, tactical urbanism may more quickly build trust amongst disparate interest groups and community leaders. Indeed, if the public is able to physically participate in the improvement of the city, no matter how small the effort, there is an increased likelihood of gaining increased public support for more permanent change later. Involving the public in the physical testing of ideas may also yield unique insights into the expectations of future users and the types of design features for which they yearn; truly participatory planning must go beyond drawing on flip charts and maps.

Finally, using tactical urbanism to activate those plans already sitting on the shelf may recover the momentum gained during the actual planning process and move some of the most realistic or exciting ideas closer to fruition.

Tactical urbanism can be used to simply build public awareness, to identify a small but pressing issue. Recently in Baltimore, Maryland a “guerilla crosswalk” was painted across a busy street with inexpensive white paint and rollers. Although the city typically removes unauthorized signs and pavement markings in short or-



Temporary experiments can test physical improvements prior to implementation. Credit: Edward Erfurt IV

der, the temporary improvement directly communicated the need, and a real desire from the public for better pedestrian infrastructure. The crosswalk has since become permanent.

Similarly, the Toronto-based Urban Repair Squad maintains a website that gathers images of D.I.Y. urban repairs in the city's public spaces. They recently featured images of bicycle symbols painted on streets indicating the need for future extensions of the city's bicycle network.

In an increasing number of instances, municipalities follow the lead of their citizens by more permanently implementing the short-term, low-budget livability improvements initiated by citizen-activists. In other cases, those working within city hall are taking the lead.

## WHY NOW?

While many of the tactics profiled herein are new, the city- and place-making process we now call tactical urbanism is not (see pgs. 4-5). Indeed, the development of human settlements has always included, if not required incremental and self-directed action aimed towards increasing social capital, commercial opportunity, and urban livability. In many developing cities and countries, this remains the only way forward.

It is only recently that the triumvirate of cheap oil, easy financing, and government regulations, like Euclidean zoning, has dulled the spirit of the North American tactical urbanist. We attribute the new wave of tactical projects, which run along a continuum of unsanctioned to sanctioned efforts (see pgs. 7), to three recent and overlapping trends:

1. The Great Recession
2. Shifting demographics

### 3. The Internet as a tool for building the civic economy

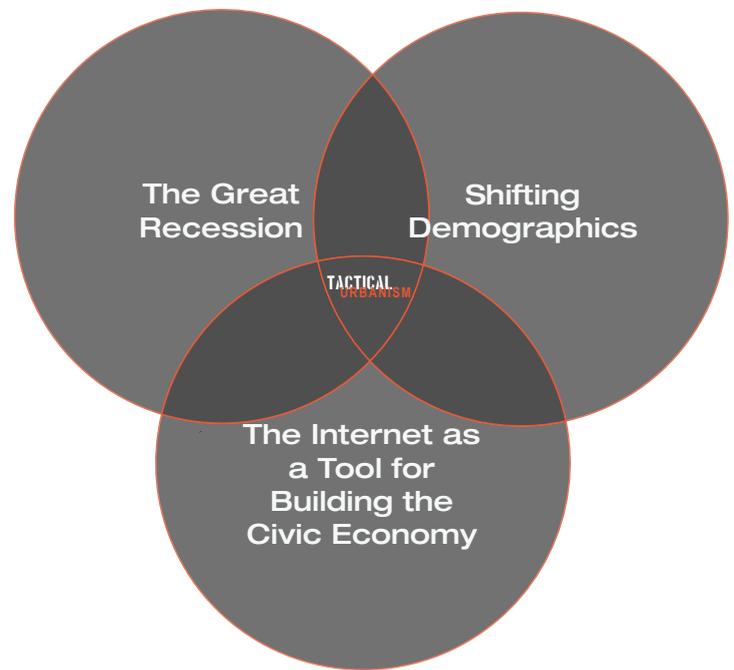
First, a benefit of the recession is that it slowed the North American growth machine. This effectively forced citizens, city departments, and developers to take matters into their own hands, get creative with project funding, and concentrate on smaller, more incremental efforts.

This has occurred while more and more people—especially the young and well educated—have continued to move into once forlorn walkable neighborhoods. This cohort includes retirees, who are also interested in re-making their chosen neighborhoods. Interestingly, some of these young people are also moving into government leadership positions as the baby boomers retire.

Finally, the culture of sharing tactics online has grown tremendously and is becoming more sophisticated. Thanks to web-based tools, a blogger can share something tactical in Dallas and have it re-blogged, tweeted, facebooked etc. in dozens of cities within minutes. The most industrious tactical urbanists, such as Team Better Block, Rebar, and Depave, are using the web as a platform for sharing free how-to manuals aimed at helping you bring their tactics to your town. Such a trend is an example of what Britain's National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) calls the 'civic economy' — the spirit of entrepreneurship combined with the aspiration of civic renewal.

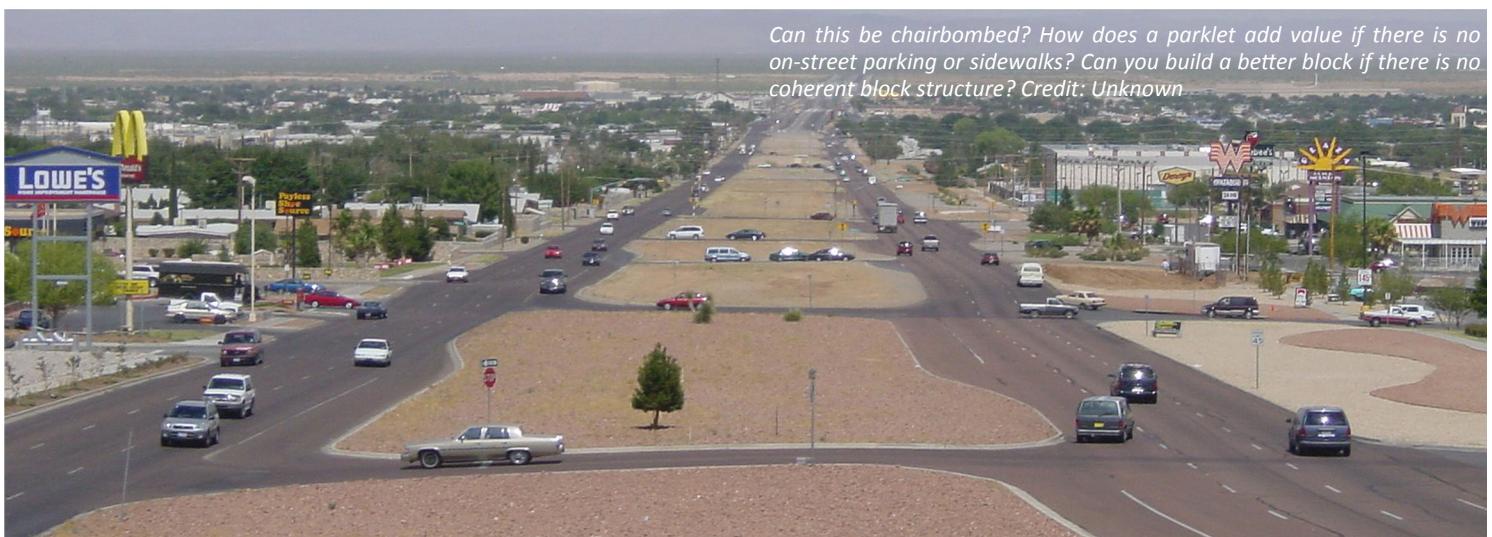
#### WHY HERE AND NOT THERE?

Theoretically, tactical urbanism can be applied to the arterials, parking lots, and cul-de-sacs of America. Yet, the best examples are consistently found in compact towns and cities featuring an undervalued/underutilized supply of walkable urban fabric. We believe this calls attention to the limited social, economic, and physical re-

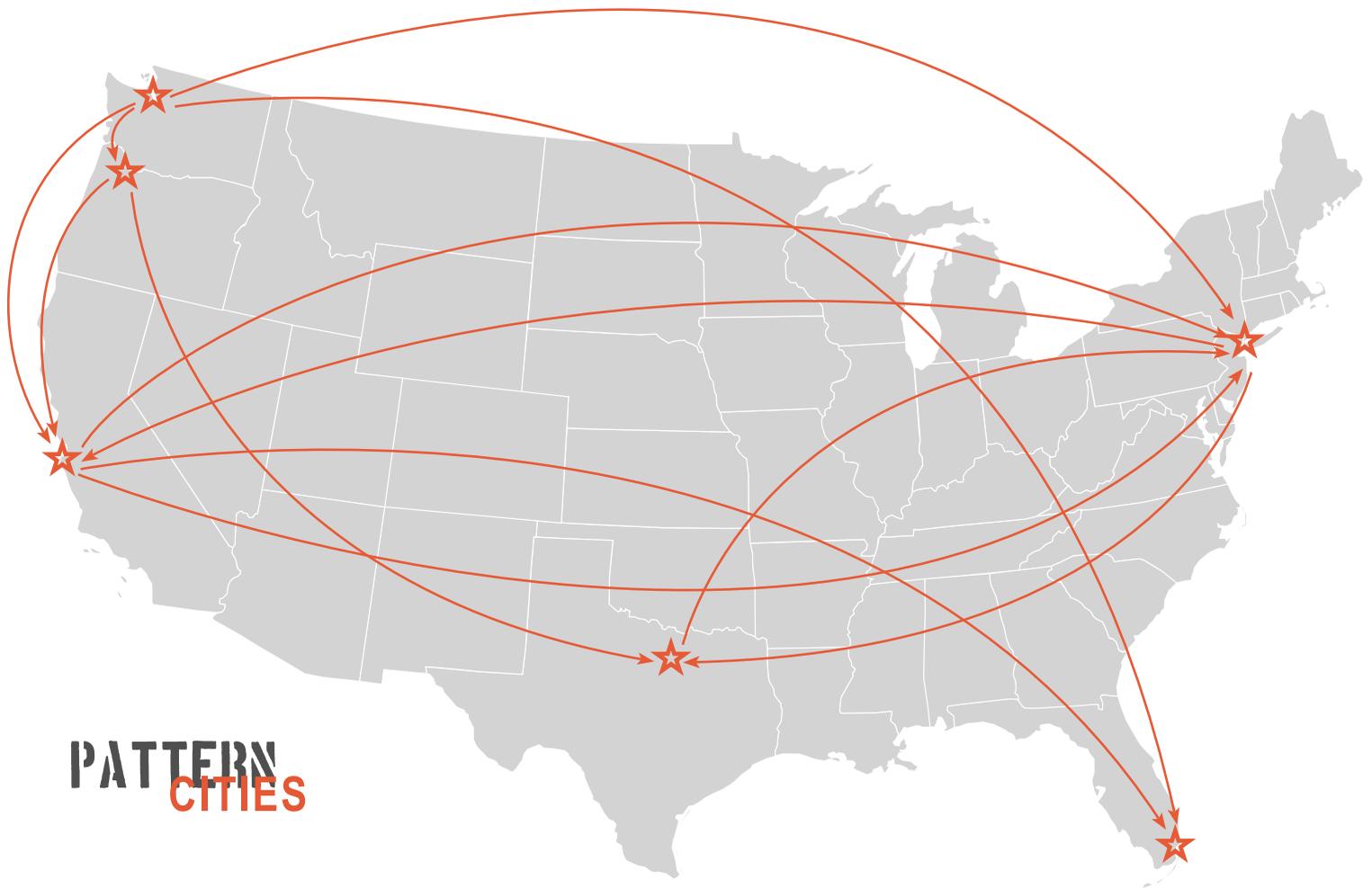


The rise in tactical urbanism may be attributed to three recent and overlapping trends.

siliency found in sprawling, auto-centric environments. It seems that human-scaled places, where social capital and creativity are most easily catalyzed, are a pre-requisite for tactical urbanism. The larger moves and design techniques, such as those highlighted in the *Sprawl Repair Manual* and *Retrofitting Suburbia* might provide more appropriate first moves in dealing with America's unwalkable suburbs.



Can this be chairbombed? How does a parklet add value if there is no on-street parking or sidewalks? Can you build a better block if there is no coherent block structure? Credit: Unknown



## PATTERN CITIES

## TACTICAL TIMELINE

Select Patterns of Influence

A handful of cities continually establish urban development paradigms that others readily follow. These cities, which we call Pattern Cities, aren't always the progenitors of innovation, nor are they necessarily Global Cities. Rather, they are the first to adapt ideas

at a meaningful scale and/or time in history. In the age of the Internet, new patterns spread faster than ever before. Tactical urbanism is but one pattern and it's being adopted in cities across the United States and beyond. Learn more at <http://patterncities.com>

- |             |   |             |   |
|-------------|---|-------------|---|
| <b>1914</b> | NYC launches the Play Streets program   | <b>2007</b> | Sao Paulo, Brazil bans billboards, inspires Ad-Busters around the world     |
| <b>1950</b> | Play Streets spread to London, England  | <b>2009</b> | Pavement to Parks begins in San Francisco                                   |
| <b>1965</b> | Seattle starts first Open Streets initiative  | <b>2010</b> | Build a Better Block started in Dallas                                      |
| <b>1970</b> | San Francisco artist Bonnie Ora Sherk introduces Portable Architecture project, a forerunner of Park(ing) Day | <b>2010</b> | DoTank Chair Bombs the Streets of Brooklyn                                  |
| <b>1973</b> | Guerilla Gardening efforts start in NYC   | <b>2010</b> | NYC rebrands San Fran's Pavement to Parks as Pop-Up Cafes                   |
| <b>1997</b> | City Repair adopt intersections in Portland   | <b>2011</b> | City Point developers use Site Pre-Vitalization at Brooklyn's Dekalb Market |
| <b>2001</b> | First Pop-Up Retail event held in London  | <b>2011</b> | Guggenheim Museum opens its traveling T Town Hall, the Guggenheim Lab       |
| <b>2005</b> | Park(ing) Day develops in San Francisco   | <b>2011</b> | San Francisco launches the Parkmobile                                       |
| <b>2006</b> | Programmed, Bogotá-styled Open Streets initiatives spread to North America                                    | <b>2011</b> | Activists begin Weed Bombing Miami streets                                  |
| <b>2006</b> | Pavement to Plazas program starts in NYC  | <b>2012</b> | Grand Central Park, Biscayne Parkway bring insta-parks to downtown Miami    |
| <b>2007</b> | Depave program launched in Portland, OR   |             |   |
| <b>2007</b> | Site Pre-Vitalization used for Hercules Market in Hercules, CA  |             |   |



*Les Bouquinistes. Credit: Charles Simond, La vie parisienne à travers le XIXe siècle, Paris, E. Plon, Nourrit et cie, 1900, p. 458.*



*What began as an unsanctioned use of public space in the 16th century has become a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Credit: EventSeekr.com*

## TACTICAL TIMELINE

### Les Bouquinistes

Les Bouquinistes in Paris, France, demonstrate that tactical urbanism is nothing new. Beginning in the 16th century, unsanctioned booksellers began congregating along the banks of the Seine to hawk the latest best-sellers.

However, much like brick and mortar restaurants denounce today's food trucks, physical bookshop owners complained loudly enough to have the booksellers banned in 1649. Not to be deterred, les bouquinistes proved so popular that the city had to eventually allow their presence. However, regulations confined them to specific locations and stipulated that each "shop" must collapse into a box at day's end.

In 2007 the area occupied by Les Bouquinistes was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site, which makes this tactic one of the slowest, if not the most lauded, examples of tactical urbanism.

- 1500s** Traveling Book Sellers begin setting up informal "pop-up" shops along the Seine
- 1649** Book sellers banned at Pont Neufe, later reinstated
- 1789** "Bouquiniste" appears in French dictionary
- 1859** City permits Bouquinistes at fixed points along the Seine, regulates amount of space allowed, charges registration fee
- 1930s** Box dimensions are fixed, regulated by City
- 1993** Jacque Chirac signs law standardizing new box size
- 2007** Declared UNESCO World Heritage site
- 2012** 300,000 books, 900 boxes, 240 sellers, along 3km of prime Seine real estate



*The boxes of Les Bouquinistes.  
Credit: Acscosta via Wikipedia*

# TACTICAL Urbanism

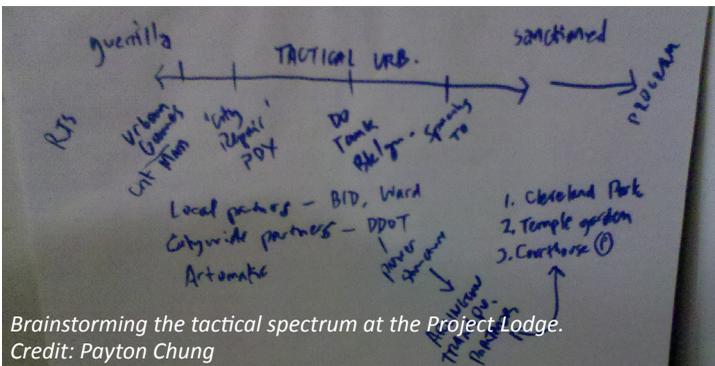


## THE TACTICAL URBANISM SPECTRUM

Tactical urbanism projects can be placed along a spectrum of unsanctioned to sanctioned efforts. Many examples in this guide began as unsanctioned grassroots interventions that proved so successful that they soon became sanctioned or permanent. The Depave program, for example, began with neighborhood activists but has transformed into a non-profit funded by the City of Portland and the EPA. This is how short-term action creates long-term change. This is tactical urbanism.

## VOLUME 2

Two dozen tactics are included in this, the second survey of tactical urbanism projects. While not comprehensive, and mostly limited to the North American context, the work described herein presents numerous opportunities to transform our towns and cities into better places to occupy together. If you have additional tactics to add, please send them to [info@streetplans.org](mailto:info@streetplans.org)





*Because there should be one...*  
*Credit: Team Better Block*

# TACTICS

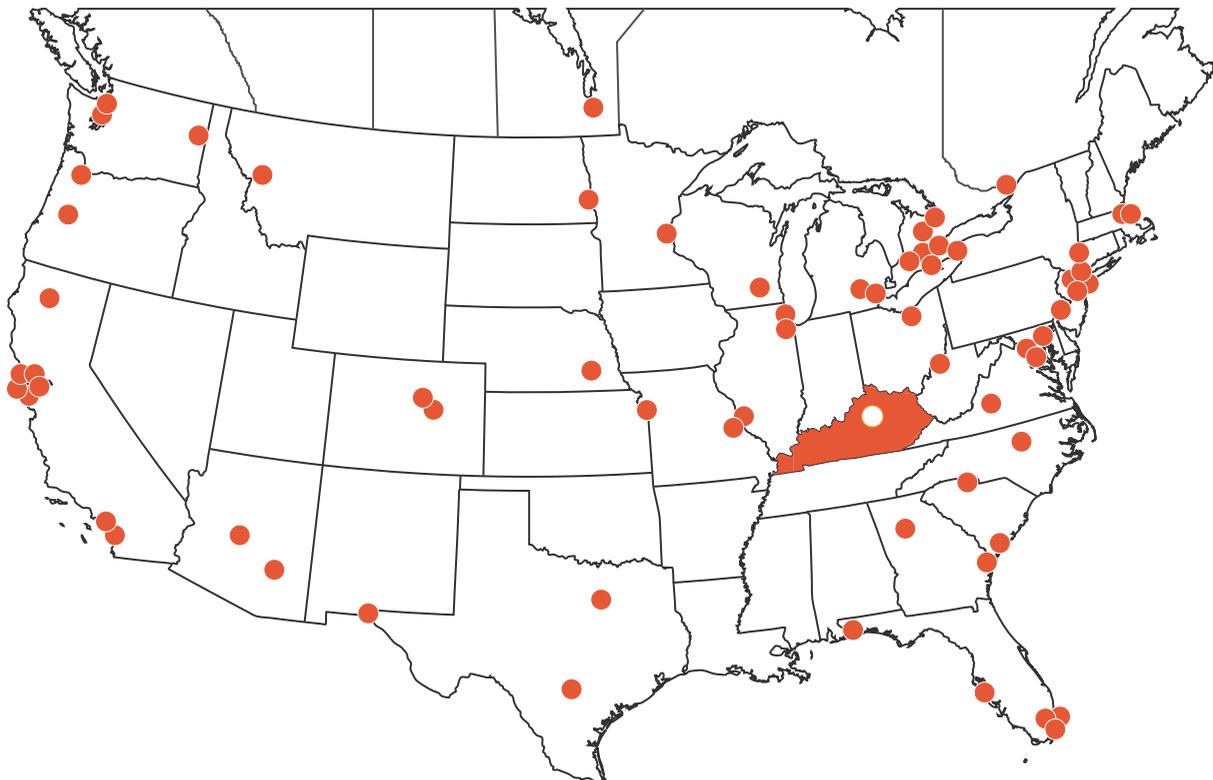
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## OPEN STREETS SUMMARY MAP - 2005



## OPEN STREETS SUMMARY MAP - 2011



# OPEN STREETS

**PURPOSE:** To temporarily provide safe spaces for walking, bicycling, skating and social activities; promote local economic development; and raise awareness about the detrimental effects of the automobile on urban living.

**LEADERS:** City departments  
Politicians  
Advocates  
Non-Profits

**SCALE:** City || District || Corridor

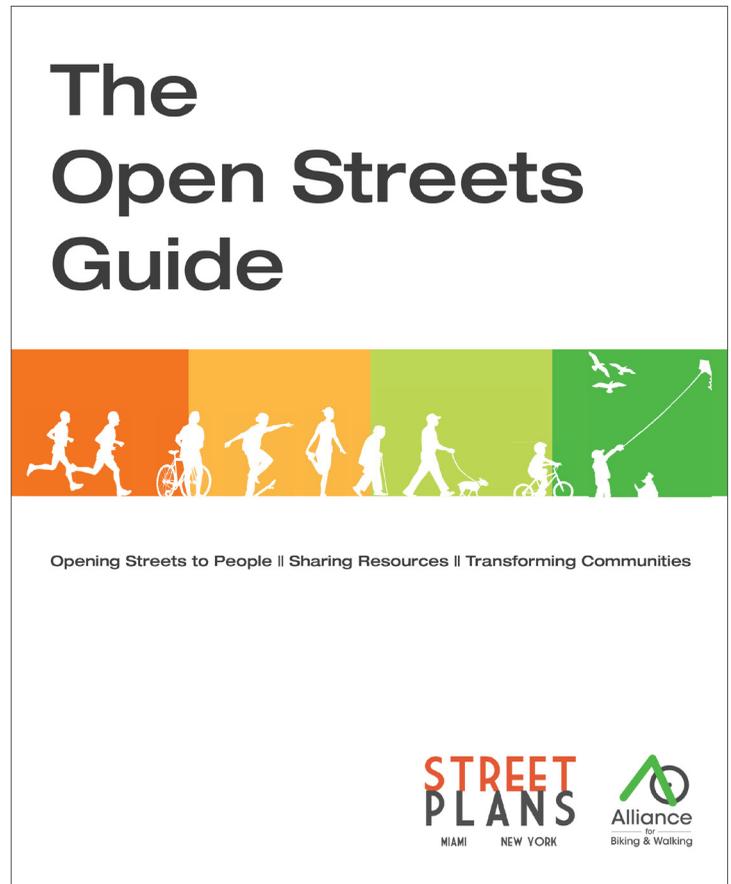
**FACT:** 50 of the 70 known North American open streets initiatives began within the last three years.

Open Streets initiatives are increasingly common in cities seeking innovative ways to meet environmental, social, economic, and public health goals. Open streets are often referred to as “ciclovía,” which in Spanish translates literally as “bike path.” The origin is largely thought to be Bogotá, Colombia, a city known worldwide for being a leader of the ciclovía/open streets movement. However, before there was Ciclovía in Bogotá, there was “Seattle Bicycle Sundays,” which first launched in 1965, predating Bogotá’s ciclovía by nearly a decade.

While the benefits of Open Streets initiatives are widely recognized, perhaps the most tangible benefit is the social interaction and activity that develops—thousands of people of all ages, incomes, occupations, religions, and races have the opportunity to meet in the public realm while sharing in physical or social activities. In doing so, participants develop a wider understanding of their city, each other, and the potential for making streets friendlier for people.

The resulting vibrancy therefore enables people to experience their city’s public realm in a different way, which helps build broader political support for undertaking more permanent pedestrian, bicycle, and other livability improvements. In this way, open streets are a tool for building social and political capital, while having very real economic impacts for businesses, vendors, and organizations along the chosen route.

Perhaps Waterloo, ON City Councilor, Melissa Durrell, said it best when describing her city’s Car Free Sunday initiative: “This is about bringing people into the core.”



*The Open Streets Project Guide.  
Credit: Street Plans and Alliance for Biking & Walking*



*Madison, Wisconsin's Ride The Drive initiative consistently draws 20,000 - 25,000 participants. Credit: Mike Lydon*



*Atlanta's Streets Alive! initiative brings people together.  
Credit: Mike Lydon*

# PLAY STREETS

- PURPOSE:** To create safe spaces for people of all ages to be social and active.
- LEADERS:** Neighborhood / Block Associations  
Advocates  
City departments
- SCALE:** Street || Block
- FACT:** Many city neighborhoods lack adequate park and open space. Play Streets fill this need by providing a safe space for recreation and community interaction.

“Play streets,” popular in New York City and London, re-purpose the public right-of-way for recreational activities. In essence, play streets create a public playground within a space formerly used for the movement and storage of private automobiles. They often occur seasonally and are typically located adjacent to schools or in neighborhoods where open space is scarce. When implemented in low-income neighborhoods, they may be paired with farmers’ markets or underutilized school playgrounds, which can have a multiplier effect.

In New York City, a ‘play street’ is made possible when 51% of the residents living on a one-way residential block sign a petition and offer it to their local police and transportation officials, who then send it to the local Community Board for review. If approved, the City provides youth workers to oversee the program. Approximately 75% of these initiatives are organized by the New York City Police Athletic League, which began organizing play streets in 1914.

New York’s Jackson Heights neighborhood demonstrates how an incremental approach may bring forth permanent change. In 2008 and 2009 a single block of 78th street (located next to a school, between Northern Boulevard and 34th street) was closed to motorists on Sundays-only during the spring, summer, and fall months. Instantly loved by community members, the block was then closed in July and August to motor vehicle traffic every day during the following year. Succeeding once again, the play street expanded to include the month of September in 2011 so that public health officials could study how the street closure works when school is in session. If deemed successful by the City, the street will become permanently closed to motor vehicles, while remaining fully open to people.



A London play street.  
Credit: [streetplaylondon.blogspot.com](http://streetplaylondon.blogspot.com)



In Jackson Heights, car-free space creates carefree play space.  
Credit: Clarence Eckerson



Play streets create playgrounds where they don't currently exist  
Credit: New York Times

# BUILD A BETTER BLOCK

**PURPOSE:** To promote livable streets and neighborhood vitality.

**LEADERS:** Local Advocates  
Local Businesses

**SCALE:** Street || Block || Building

**FACT:** Fort Worth's Better Block Project was "built" using only \$500 worth of materials. Today, some of the changes proposed are being made permanent by the City of Fort Worth.

Local community activists in the Dallas neighborhood of Oak Cliff launched the Build a Better Block project. Spearheaded by Go Oak Cliff, the organization relied upon cheap or donated materials, and the work of many volunteers to transform a single underutilized urban block.

In short, Build a Better Block encourages local activists and property owners to temporarily activate vacant storefronts and public space. In Dallas, the first effort utilized food vendors and sidewalk cafe tables as places to congregate. "New York style" cycle tracks painted along the curb pushed cars outward to reduce the number of travel lanes, which effectively slowed traffic. Finally, native landscaping and street furniture helped improve the block's sense of place.

To date, the Build a Better Block effort has had a substantial spin-off effect: the momentum gained from the project led to the permanent use of formerly underutilized retail space. Additionally, the process helped advocates in Dallas and Fort Worth garner a commitment from their leaders to permanently implement complete street improvements. It has also spurred a new consultancy firm, called Team Better Block. They are now advising other organizations and cities to use the low-cost, low-risk process to to incite change.

As a touchstone of the tactical urbanism movement, the Better Block approach continues to capture the attention of urbanists and advocates. Similar efforts have now taken place in Fort Worth, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Memphis, and beyond.

In Oyster Bay, NY, a similar strategy deployed by DoTank and Street Plans utilized "pop-up shops" and a farmers' market, which have since become permanent. This includes Billy Joel's 20th Century Cycles, a motorcycle showroom that has become a regional draw. Joel participated in the initial event and was struck by the potential of the space he now rents.



Before and after: Dallas Build a Better Block  
Credit: Go Oak Cliff

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## South Main Loses Highway Designation – Door Now Open for Complete Streets Makeover, Bike Lanes On the Way

Written by Kevin Buchanan on January 11, 2011



The Fort Worth, TX Build a Better Block effort led to permanent change.  
Credit: [fortworthology.com](#)

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In Oyster Bay, Billy Joel rehabbed a vacant storefront for his motorcycle collection, which is now a regional draw. Credit: Mike Lydon



A street temporarily transformed.  
Credit: Art Monaco Portland via [my.parkingday.org](http://my.parkingday.org)

# PARK(ING) DAY

- PURPOSE:** To reclaim space devoted to automobiles, and to increase the vitality of street life
- LEADERS:** Advocates  
Non-Profits  
Community Groups
- SCALE:** Street || Block
- FACT:** In 2011, 975 on-street parking spaces were temporarily reclaimed in 165 cities, 35 countries, and across six continents.

PARK(ing) Day is an annual event where on-street parking spaces are converted into park-like public spaces. The initiative is intended to draw attention to the sheer amount of space devoted to the storage of private automobiles.

While its provenance is sometimes debated among advocates in New York and San Francisco, research reveals that Bonnie Ora Sherk, a San Francisco-based artist, first began converting pavement to parks with her 1970 project entitled “Portable Architecture.”

Nonetheless, the outward marketing of the initiative first occurred in 2005 when the interdisciplinary design group Rebar converted a single San Francisco parking space into a mini-park. The group simply laid down sod, added a bench and tree, and fed the meter with quarters. Instantly garnering national attention, PARK(ing) Day has spread rapidly amongst livable city advocates and is thought to be the pre-cursor to New York and San Francisco’s parklet and pavement to parks programs.

At its core, PARK(ing) Day encourages collaboration amongst local citizens to create thoughtful, but temporary additions to the public realm. Once reclaimed, parking spaces are programmed in any number of ways; many focus on local, national, or international advocacy issues, while others adopt specific themes or activities. The possibilities and designs are as endless as they are fun.

While participating individuals and organizations operate independently, they do follow a set of established guidelines. Newcomers can pick up the PARK(ing) Day Manifesto, which covers the basic principles and includes a how-to implementation guide.



Bonnie Ora Sherk's 1970 Portable Architecture project.  
Credit: Bonnie Ora Sherk



A PARK(ing) Day installation.  
Credit: flickr user iomarch



In 2010 a group of non-profit and neighborhood organizations hosted a pot-luck park(ing) day after party below the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway.  
Credit: flickr user Brodowski

# GUERRILLA GARDENING

- PURPOSE:** To introduce more greenery and gardening into the urban environment
- LEADERS:** Neighborhood Advocates
- SCALE:** Block || Lot
- FACT:** Guerilla Gardening first began in 1973 when New York City activists threw condoms with local seeds, water, and fertilizer into vacant lots

First coined by Liz Christy and her Green Guerilla group in 1973, guerilla gardening is now an international movement. Although there are many permutations, guerrilla gardening is the act of gardening on public or private land without permission. Typically, the chosen sites are vacant or underutilized properties in urban areas. The direct re-purposing of the land is often intended to raise awareness for a myriad of social and environmental issues, including sustainable food systems, urban storm-water management, improving neighborhood aesthetics, and the power of short-term, collaborative local action.

When applying the tactic to contested land, guerilla gardeners often take action under the cover of night, where vegetables may be sowed, or flower gardens planted and cared for without running the risk of being caught.

Guerilla gardening is an excellent tactic for noticeably improving an urban neighborhood. Often times, gardens are cared for years after they are first created, illegally. Indeed, the first garden started in a vacant New York City lot by the Green Guerillas became so loved that volunteers and the New York City Parks Department now maintain it. This exemplifies how unsanctioned short-term action creates sanctioned, long-term change.



*Guerilla Gardening offers an outlet for creative energy.  
Credit: Lorelee Edwards, Lethbridge Guerilla Gardening*



*Green Guerillas at work.  
Credit: Guerilla Gardening Development Blog*

# POP-UP RETAIL

- PURPOSE:** To promote the temporary use of vacant retail space or lots.
- LEADERS:** Developers  
Local Entrepreneurs  
Artists  
Corporations
- SCALE:** Street || Building
- FACT:** 'Pop-up retail,' was coined in late 2003 by trendwatching.com. The concept of pop-up urban improvement initiatives has since been applied to dozens of other similar temporary interventions.

Apparel companies looking to generate brand awareness first utilized the pop-up retail tactic. At first, such efforts made temporary use of vacant retail spaces by creating an event-like atmosphere for a limited time—sometimes even just one day. For retailers, the focus is generally on marketing or proof-of-concept, rather than producing sales.

Companies large and small, property owners, artists and community organizations quickly adopted and calibrated the concept for a wide range of purposes. To be sure, pop-up retail is moving beyond the common seasonal holiday store and the trendy one-off designer brand sales event to becoming a sanctioned community revitalization technique. Main streets with vacant store fronts, oversized parking lots, and underutilized public spaces are increasingly being used as local incubators for a seemingly endless number of temporary to permanent commercial and community uses.

For example, in Oakland, CA an urban planner and restaurant owner are collaborating in producing Pop-uphood, a three-block stretch of short-term lease pop-up stores intended to revitalize the downtown through new business incubation. In this way, the pop-up trend reflects the new economy where aligning the interests of property owners and local entrepreneurs is happening in a more nimble and creative way.

Finally, the interest and public exposure pop-ups generate by way of their temporary nature provide a powerful tool for sparking long-term change. Successful pop-up stores often earn the right to stay, creating a win-win for the property owner, occupant, and neighborhood.



*Manifesto Bicycles is one of six stores in Oakland's Popuphood.  
Credit: Oakland North*



*Melbourne's Rebecca Walk features pop-up retail under a rail viaduct.  
Credit: Mike Lydon*



*The solar powered KiosKiosk is a pop-up store that can be setup almost anywhere.  
Credit: KiosKiosk*



The iconic, but temporary changes in Times Square will be soon be upgraded and made permanent.  
Credit: New York City Department of Transportation

# PAVEMENT TO PLAZAS

- PURPOSE:** To reclaim underutilized asphalt as public space without large capital expenditure
- LEADERS:** City Departments  
Business Improvement Districts
- SCALE:** Street || Block
- FACT:** Following the implementation of the New Times Square pedestrian plaza, injuries to motorists and their passengers declined by 63%. Similarly, pedestrian injuries decreased 35%, even while pedestrian volumes increased

Pavement to Plaza programs, popularized recently in New York City, but echoed in cities like San Francisco, seemingly define sanctioned tactical urbanism. These interventions typically start by using temporary, inexpensive materials to re-assign excessive motor vehicle space for the use of pedestrians and/or bicyclists. Because these efforts do not require a large outlay of capital, public spaces are able to appear almost overnight. While the city funds the design and the construction, partners from the local business or advocacy community are usually asked to operate, maintain, and manage the new plazas.

Following the immediate closure of Times Square, the centerpiece of New York's highly successful "Greenlight for Midtown" street improvement project, Tim Tompkins of the Times Square Alliance realized that people might want to sit somewhere. So, he bought 376 folding chairs for \$10.74 each and "instantly — millions of people have a new way of enjoying the city."

By taking this experimental "pilot project" approach using temporary materials, the City and public-at-large are able to test the performance of each new plaza without wasting scarce public resources. When successful, the plazas transition into a more permanent design and construction phase, which is happening currently in many of New York City's first generation of pilot plazas and sustainable street projects.



*Broadway at Columbus Circle: Before and after.  
Credit: New York City Department of Transportation*



*Putnam Triangle: Before and after.  
Credit: New York City Department of Transportation*

# PAVEMENT TO PARKS (PARKLETS)

- PURPOSE:** To reclaim underutilized asphalt as public space without large capital expenditure
- LEADERS:** Local Restaurants  
Municipalities  
Transportation Departments  
Business Improvement Districts
- SCALE:** Street || Block
- FACT:** Startup costs for a “parklet” in San Francisco include a \$1,000 application fee, and a \$650 fee for the removal of parking meters. A \$221 fee is then charged annually. Parallel Park, a parklet in Vancouver, BC cost \$18,000 to design and construct.



One of San Francisco’s many parklets.  
Credit: flickr user Jeremy Shaw

The similar Pavement to Plaza projects carried out in New York City inspired San Francisco’s Pavement to Parks program. Using many of the same techniques—moveable tables and chairs, painting asphalt, and the installation of inexpensive planters and re-purposed stone blocks, municipal officials were able to quickly establish a formal program that increased the balance of public space.

The Pavement to Parks program is a collaborative effort between the San Francisco Mayor’s Office, the Department of Public Works, the Planning Department, and the Municipal Transportation Agency. The low-cost “parklets” are now found in more than 20 locations throughout the city.

As in New York, the City views each parklet as a laboratory for testing the potential of a more permanently designed public space. The materials are meant to be temporary and the design malleable should changes be desired during the trial period.

A typical parklet consists of a platform that sits flush with the sidewalk. Each one is built in the place of two or three parking spaces. In most cases, they include seating and various amounts of greenery and occasionally include bicycle parking and/or tables to serve as outdoor dining areas for nearby restaurants or cafes. The cost of constructing a parklet is typically covered by an individual business or several businesses that recognize the ability to attract customers. Privately sponsored or not, parklets are part of the public realm and completely open to the public at large.



Some parklets feature bicycle parking.  
Credit: flickr user Jeremy Shaw



Vancouver, BC’s “Parallel Park.”  
Credit: Facebook user Parallel Park

# POP-UP CAFES

- PURPOSE:** To promote outdoor public seating in the parking lane (during the warm months) and to promote local businesses
- LEADERS:** City Departments  
Local Restaurants  
Business Improvement Districts  
Local Designers
- SCALE:** Block || Street
- FACT::** Parking spaces used for Pop-Up Cafes in NYC are leased from the Department of Transportation

Inspired by New York City's Pavement to Plaza program, San Francisco began its own Pavement to Parks effort, which includes parklets (page 19). That riff on the concept was the imported back to New York an re-named pop-up cafés, which have become specialized tactic used where public outdoor seating is sorely needed.

Similar to how things are set up in San Francisco, New York City's program requires that the business sponsoring the café must agree to cover the design, construction and maintenance costs. If such agreement is reached, the City's Department of Transportation provides technical assistance and may even make street improvements, such as applying traffic markings or placing safety bollards around the cafe.

In cities with a short supply of public space and a need for more publicly accessible seating, pop-up cafés are fast becoming a valued addition to the public realm. When successful, they act as placeholders for a time when city sidewalks can be permanently expanded. Outside of New York City and San Francisco, parklets and pop-up cafés may be found in Long Beach, Los Angeles, and Vancouver.



*A narrow sidewalk limits the possibility of outdoor seating.  
Credit: DNAinfo.com*



*Trading parking space for outdoor seating improves the public realm.  
Credit: DNAinfo.com*



*Pop-up cafes are sponsored by private businesses, but are public spaces open to anyone  
Credit: DNAinfo.com*



Depavers assess their work.  
Credit: Brent Wojahn/The Oregonian

# DEPAVE

- PURPOSE:** To reduce storm water pollution and increase the amount of land available for habitat restoration, urban farming, tree planting, native vegetation, and social gathering
- LEADERS:** Neighborhood Activists  
Non-Profits
- SCALE:** Lot || Block
- FACT:** Since 2007, over 700 volunteer have replaced more than 94,100 square feet of unnecessary asphalt with permeable gardens and community green space. As a result, 2,221,115 gallons of stormwater is diverted annually.

While impervious surfaces are a fact of urban life, the paving of millions of acres contributes to numerous environmental problems, namely the polluting of our waterways through stormwater runoff.

Portland's all-volunteer Depave organization seeks to incrementally reduce stormwater pollution by surgically removing unnecessary pavement. To do so, Depave transforms impervious driveways and parking into community green spaces and gardens that naturally mitigate stormwater runoff pollution.

Depave began as an unsanctioned, self-organized neighborhood effort in 2007, but has blossomed into an influential non-profit organization that has received grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Patagonia, and the Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation Districts. It is also supported by many other businesses, organizations, government departments and schools. Depave therefore provides a great example of how short-term unsanctioned initiatives can become sanctioned, long-term efforts within a very short amount of time.

Over the past four years Depave has turned nearly 100,000 thousand square feet of parking lots into expanded school yards, community gardens, food forests, and pocket parks. While this work has reduced millions of gallons of stormwater runoff, it has also built strong ties between neighbors and the city in which they live.

If you want learn more, Depave written a helpful how-to guide describing their process.



Clear instructions.  
Credit: Picasa user DepavePDX



Depaving in action.  
Credit: Picasa user DepavePDX



The Fargo Forest Garden replaced 3,000 square feet of asphalt.  
Credit: Picasa user DepavePDX



Chairbombing.  
Credit: Aurash Khawarзад

# CHAIR BOMBING

**PURPOSE:** To improve the social well-being of neighborhoods by salvaging waste materials and activating the public realm.

**LEADERS:** Community Activists  
Local Property Owners  
Small Businesses

**SCALE:** Street || Building

**FACT:** By taking discarded shipping pallets and converting them into quality public seating, the urban waste stream can be reduced, and streets made more welcoming.



*Collecting discarded shipping pallets.  
Credit: Ted Ulrich Design*

Whether to rest, socialize, or to simply watch the world go by, increasing the supply of public seating almost always makes a street, and by extension, a neighborhood, more livable.

Chairbombing is the act of removing salvageable material from the local waste stream, and using it to build public seating. The entire process of building and placing the chairs requires attention to the design and construction, but also a thoughtful approach as to where they are needed most, and where they would be able to support existing social activity, or serve as a catalyst for community gathering.

In general, chair bombing calls attention to the general lack of public seating in the urban environment. It also indicates locations where further physical improvements may be made by a municipality, property owner, retail tenant, and/or other change agents.

Chair placement begins by retrieving discarded materials such as shipping pallets from dumpsters, construction sites, or other locations where solid waste is found. The pallets can be disassembled and then reassembled for seating.

DoTank, a Brooklyn-based interdisciplinary collective, has placed chairs in six locations throughout northern Brooklyn. While the bombings are often done in conjunction with outdoor events, the first effort has resulted in permanent seating at Blue Bottle Coffee in Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood.



*Chairs placed adjacent to Brooklyn's Blue Bottle Coffee.  
Credit: Aurash Khawarзад*



*Permanent seating added by Blue Bottle Coffee.  
Credit: Aurash Khawarзад*

# FOOD CARTS / TRUCKS

- PURPOSE:** To provide low cost food, incubate small businesses, and activate undertutilized sites.
- LEADERS:** Entrepreneurs  
Municipalities
- SCALE:** Block || Lot
- FACT:** Portland's food carts are regulated as normal restaurants, including semi-annual inspections. They also pay rent for the off-street parking spots they occupy.

From construction sites to industrial parks, hospitals to local neighborhood centers, cities large and small continue to witness a surge in street food vending activity.

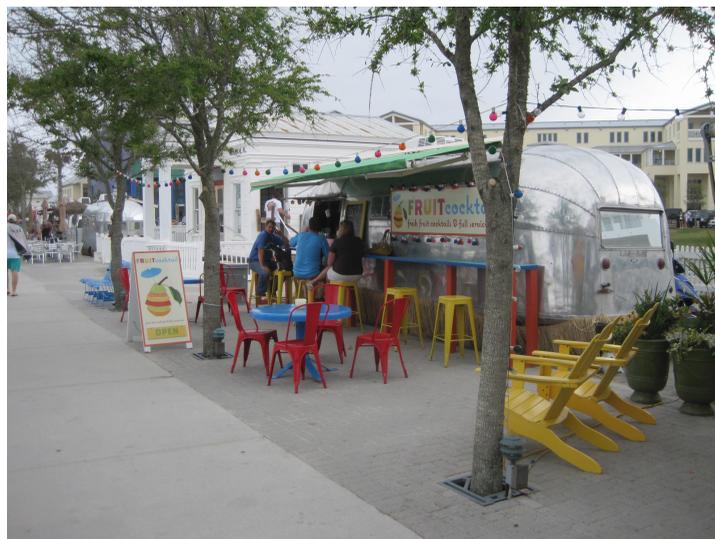
Long before the Twitter-induced food truck craze, noted urbanist William H. Whyte acknowledged that street food is a magnet for human activity. Food carts and trucks not only stimulate entrepreneurial activity, they serve a critical role in the activation of the public realm. Indeed, few people know where people tend to congregate as well as a good food vendor, as his or her success relies upon high pedestrian volumes. In turn, a good food vendor, or groups of vendors quickly become an additional destination within already successful places of congregation.

In Portland, Oregon, food carts take on a unique character. Typically housed in stationary trailers, RVs, or self-made shacks, the City encourages vendors to cluster their fare. With each new arrival, each food vendor's prosperity often increases. And because they mask surface parking lots, they activate otherwise harsh street edges that repel human activity. In many cases, porches, bar stools and garden seating are added, resulting in an even more inviting streetscape. Interestingly, Portland's food carts are regulated as normal restaurants, including semi-annual inspections. They also pay rent for the off-street parking spots they occupy. Today, the city's most successful food cart entrepreneurs are able to move into more permanent locations, which allows opportunity for the next operator to take their place in a succession of small business development.

From Los Angeles to Miami, smart cities not only lower the barrier to entry, but also nurture such businesses because they reflect and contribute to the strength of the local economy, and enhance the city's sense of place.



Food carts mask surface parking lots in downtown Portland.  
Credit: Better Cities & Towns (New Urban Network)



Food carts line the central square in Seaside, FL.  
Credit: Mike Lydon



Vendors activate a park edge in Brunswick, ME  
Credit: Mike Lydon

# SITE PRE-VITALIZATION

- PURPOSE:** To temporarily activate a (re)development site.
- LEADERS:** Municipalities  
Developers  
Citizen Activists  
Business Improvement Districts
- SCALE:** Block || Lot || Building
- FACT:** Red Barn, the developer behind the temporary Hercules Market Hall, sees the project as market research on “what people look for, what they want to eat, the goods they want, and how long they will stay” for a more permanent project they call Market Town.



The Dekalb Market entrance in downtown Brooklyn  
Credit: Mike Lydon

Site Pre-vitalization is the temporary re-activation of a previously inactive, underutilized parcel of land. This tactic brings a variety of art, food, and retail uses to a single location. Typically, this is done to generate needed revenue for the land owner/developer, raise the community’s awareness about the site’s long-term potential, and to build community while supporting local entrepreneurs.

Site pre-vitalization uses often include public markets, art exhibitions and studios, community festivals, beer gardens, micro-retail opportunities, flea markets, and other temporary programs capable of “pre-vitalizing” a site before more permanent building is possible. By activating a site during the planning, approvals, and financing stages, a vacant site can therefore provide low-cost community building and economic opportunities while a more formal transition occurs, from inactive parcel of land to a fully redeveloped and programmed addition to the town or city.

Site Pre-vitalization is a relatively new tactic and one that is largely a private sector response to the restrictive commercial lending standards now imposed by banks. Thus, the tradeoff between the temporary uses—markets, beer gardens, ping-pong tables, art shows, vegetable growing etc.—and the realization of the final long-term private development has not yet been addressed. We’ll be watching this tactic closely as Proxy, Dekalb Market and others like it move from temporary installations to permanent development.



Proxy is a temporary placeholder for a long-term development plan.  
Credit: Inside Scoop SF



Hercules Market.  
Credit: Dan Gregory



The BMW Guggenheim Lab, New York City.  
Credit: Bob Arihood

# POP-UP TOWN HALL

- PURPOSE:** To provide a temporary forum for discussions of civic importance
- LEADERS:** Philanthropic Organizations  
Community Coalitions  
Activists
- SCALE:** Block || Building
- FACT:** The Guggenheim Lab will travel to nine major world cities in six years.

A pop-up town hall provides an informal, non-government sponsored venue for serious civic discourse and the exchange of ideas. While pop-up town halls often make use of underutilized city spaces, such as vacant lots or storefronts, they can also be held in a myriad of other venues. Pop-up town halls should capitalize on locations where a healthy dose of civic discussion is already occurring; for instance, some pop-up town halls are organized in tandem with conferences, exhibitions, festivals and other events.

The BMW Guggenheim Lab captures the spirit of this tactic. The Lab, which is designed to temporarily re-imagine an overlooked city space as a civic forum, is a migratory town hall that is traveling between nine different cities. The carbon fiber structure is to be disassembled and reassembled in each of the nine cities—it is sometimes referred to as a “traveling toolbox.”

The objective is to provide a space that brings people of many disciplines together brings in a discussion on the future of their city. The organizers of the BMW Guggenheim Lab call their invention “part urban think tank, part community center, and part public gathering space” which are the basic characteristics of any pop-up town hall.



*The BMW Guggenheim Lab site before construction began,  
Credit: wallpaper.com*



*A temporary cafe was built adjacent to the Lab.  
Credit: © flickr user archidose*



*Over 100 free events were hosted at the Lab.  
Credit: Mike Lydon*

# INFORMAL BIKE PARKING

- PURPOSE:** To increase the supply of bicycle parking where needed.
- LEADERS:** Community Activists  
Local Businesses  
Property Owners
- SCALE:** Street || Block || Building
- FACT:** Every parked bicycle belongs to a potential customer.

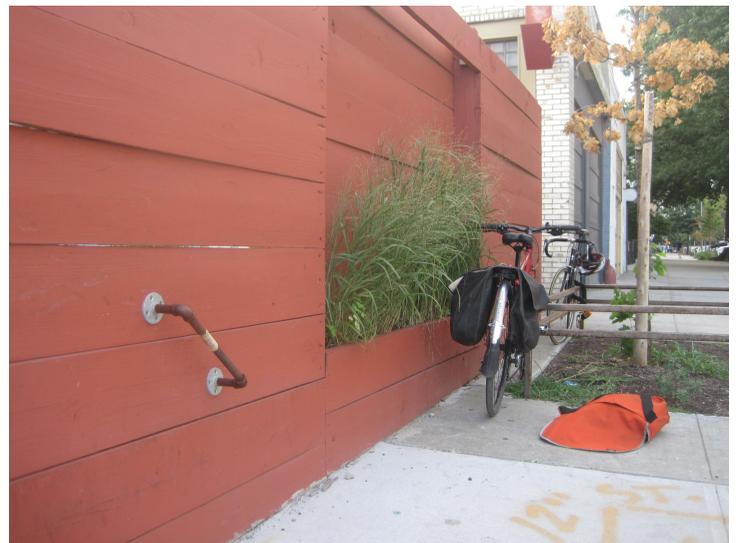
At the intersection of tactical urbanism and transportation infrastructure is the creation and installation of informal bike racks. The lack of parking options in many cities is inspiring activists, including progressive businesses and “enlightened” property owners, to take it upon themselves to install various types of temporary and semi-permanent solutions.

Groups like DoTank have built bike racks and tested them on lamp posts in Williamsburg, with the intent of providing bike parking while also making a statement about the city’s lack of bicycle parking. Businesses such as ¿Por Que No? taqueria in Portland, have also taken it upon themselves to install bike parking in front of their store as a tactic for attracting and servicing customers from the city’s growing bicycle community. Finally, property owners, such as Green Desks in Brooklyn’s DUMBO neighborhood, have affixed “bike rails” directly adjacent to the entrance of the building to meet growing demand.

While not all informal bike racks designs are practical or secure for long-term use, they do indicate demand. Smart cities will leave the well-designed racks alone, while replacing the more poorly conceived temporary solutions with higher performing city racks.



*Valet event parking by The Street Plans Collaborative.  
Credit: Mike Lydon*



*Small bike rails provide bicycle parking at a popular beer garden.  
Credit: Mike Lydon*



*To meet demand, this property owner installed a long bike rail.  
Credit: Ronald Woudstra*

# INTERSECTION REPAIR

- PURPOSE:** To repurpose neighborhood street intersections as community space.
- LEADERS:** Neighbors  
Activists  
Community Organizations  
Home Owners Associations
- SCALE:** Street || Block
- FACT:** City Repair and local residents refer to intersection repair as an exercise in “Village Building.”

Intersection repair reclaims neighborhood streets as public gathering places. The initiative first began in Portland, OR and continues to be stewarded by City Repair, a local placemaking group.

While the brightly painted intersections communicate to drivers that they are entering a place of neighborhood importance, it’s the process of making and maintaining the repaired intersections that matters most. Indeed, once the initial reclamation occurs, neighbors often take it upon themselves to further enhance their new public gathering place with benches, community bulletin boards, gardens and art positioned prominently at the corners. In some cases, less temporary paint has given way to bricks and cobblestones.

While the design elements are important, “repaired intersections” encourage neighbors to interact more frequently and give them a nearby place to care about outside their homes.

Intersection repair provides another great example of how tactical urbanism initiatives move along the continuum, from unsanctioned activity to a fully sanctioned program. Unsurprisingly, Portland’s Bureau of Transportation did not initially allow intersection repair. Regardless, communities continued to transform implement them anyway. As is the case with many unsanctioned tactics, the City no longer stands in the way. In fact, the Bureau of Transportation has an official City Repair liaison. This liaison helps coordinate the permitting, street closures, and oversees some of the designs to aid in the success of each project.

Intersection repair projects may now be found in communities across the United States.



*Intersection repair is a placemaking and community building tactic.  
Credit: Flickr user Sara Dent*



*An intersection repair project in Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Los Angeles Eco-Village Blog*



*This is what an intersection repair master plan looks like.  
Credit: Sara Dent*



*A billboard turned swingset.  
Credit: Broken City Lab*

# AD · BUSTING

**PURPOSE:** To reduce visual pollution within the public realm.

**LEADERS:** Activists  
Municipal Leaders

**SCALE:** Corridor || Block || Building

**FACT:** Citizens of São Paulo were amazed at the architecture of their city once billboards blocking building facades were removed.

In 2007, one of Brazil's largest cities adopted a radical ban on outdoor advertising. São Paulo's "Lei Cidade Limpa" or Clean City Law was a project led by mayor Gilberto Kassab and gave the world an example of what a major city could look like without being overrun by advertising.

In the United States, marketing and advertising has pervaded the public realm to such a degree that activists and civil servants have begun to develop and implement creative tactics combating the daily onslaught of consumerism. While the goal of ad-busting is to improve the aesthetic quality of public spaces, it also sends the message that the public realm should not be used unabashedly for the selling and consumption of commercial products.

Groups such as the Public Ad Campaign and DoTank have developed physical methods of altering existing ads to reflect a different message—one that highlights local art and/or community events and assets. DoTank's digital community billboard project, called WeSee.U.S., allowed passersby to anonymously submit live photos from their smart phones. The submitted photos were displayed in real-time on an empty billboard, which allowed individuals to share their own visuals with the community at large.

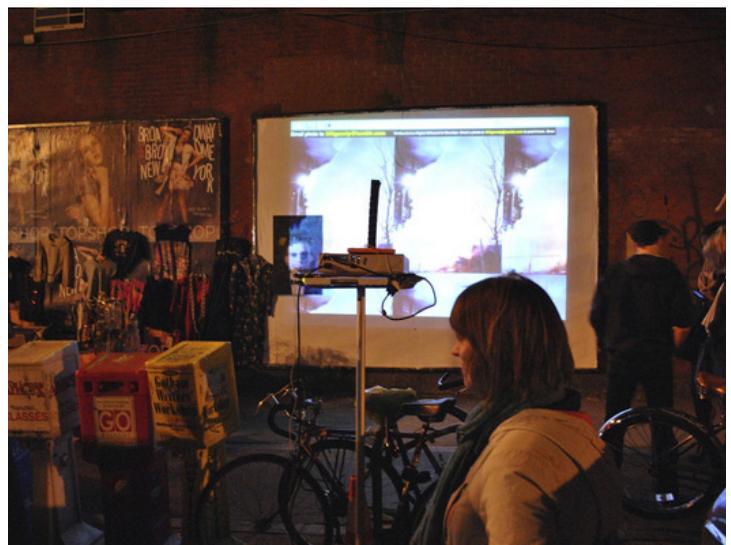
The advertising content generated during the WeSee.U.S. installation quickly became community oriented, focusing on the people and events taking place in the neighborhood rather than on the products corporations urge us to buy.



*What if...  
Credit: This is Not an Ad*



*Ad-busting.  
Credit: Credit: This is Not an Ad*



*The WeSee.U.S. installation.  
Credit: Aurash Khawarзад*

# RECLAIMED SETBACKS

- PURPOSE:** To create a more engaging streetscape by activating the space between the structure and the sidewalk.
- LEADERS:** Property Owners  
Activists
- SCALE:** Lot
- FACT:** Most municipal zoning codes require setbacks between the street and the primary structure, which often creates awkward and underutilized semi-public spaces.

Setback reclamations intentionally activate the underutilized, semi-public space found between the public right-of-way (typically the sidewalk) and a property owner's principal structure. The distances are uniformly mandated in municipal zoning codes and homeowner associations often limit their use beyond ornament. Awkward setback distances of 20 feet or more are especially common in single-family neighborhoods built after the 1920s. Increased setback distances broke the traditional relationship between street, building, and building owner. As a result, most social activity is found in the backyard, not the front.

Setback reclamations range from illegal structure extensions to temporary programming to community gardening. Such tactics help diminish the real and perceived distances found between the structure and the sidewalk. If done well, reclamations can effectively create a more engaging and social neighborhood street environment.



*Free poems make for an engaging experience in this Streamboat, CO neighborhood.  
Credit: Mike Lydon*



*Front setbacks provide a perfect opportunity to grow food.  
Credit: flickr user Shira Golding*

# PARK MOBILE

- PURPOSE:** To add more neighborhood green space and to further activate streets with public seating.
- LEADERS:** City Departments  
Business Owners  
Business Improvement Districts  
Neighborhood Organizations
- SCALE:** Street || Block
- FACT:** Each parkmobile costs approximately \$6,000.

One of the most appropriate uses of tactical urbanism is to jumpstart the implementation of long-term vision plans. Parkmobiles, designed by San Francisco-based CMG Landscape Architecture, were installed in the summer of 2011. They are a direct response to the neighborhood's desire for more green space, as voiced in San Francisco's Yerba Buena Street Life strategic plan. Fashioned from custom dumpsters, each parkmobile fits within a single vehicular parking space and contributes to "a vision and road map for a next generation of public space in the Yerba Buena District." Other initiatives featured in the plan include widened sidewalks, mid-block crossings, and the tactical conversion of alleys into plazas or shared streets.

At present there are six parkmobiles being moved periodically around the neighborhood. Each unit contains a different type of vegetation, including Tasmanian Tree Ferns, Strawberry Trees, Yuccas, and shrubs that attract birds and butterflies. In doing so, they highlight the importance of an agreeable pedestrian experience and recognize the importance that vegetation and seating play in creating an attractive environment for pedestrians.

Overall, the initiative pays homage to San Francisco's longstanding tactical tradition of improving the larger urban landscape in small and fluid ways.



*Parkmobiles are, well, mobile.  
Credit: Dwell via Miyoko Ohtake*



*A parkmobile located outside of SPUR's urban center.  
Credit: Dwell via Miyoko Ohtake*



*A parkmobile working as intended.  
Credit: Mark Boster/Los Angeles Times.*



Weed bombing on an overgrown corner in downtown Miami (Not photoshopped).  
Credit: Grant Stern

# WEED BOMBING

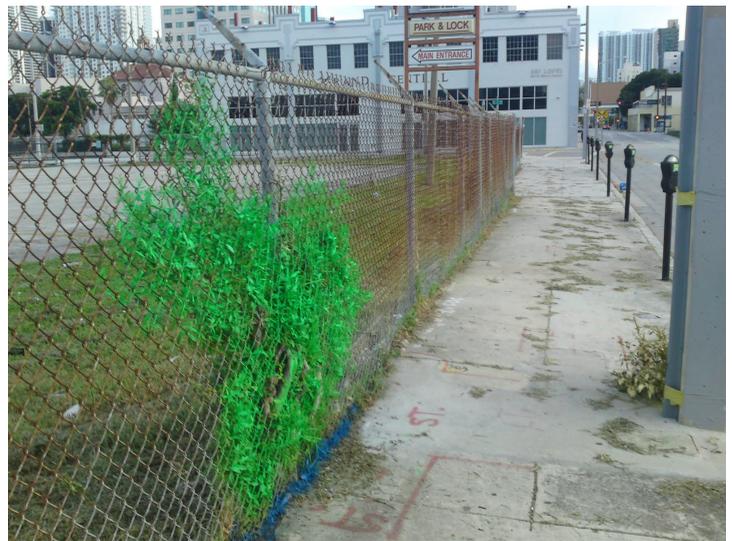
- PURPOSE:** To draw attention to blighted neighborhoods and to incite action in cleaning them up.
- LEADERS:** Neighborhood Associations  
Artists  
Activists
- SCALE:** Street || Block
- FACT:** Weed bombing began in Miami, FL under the cover of darkness, but sheds light on public and private property negligence.

Weed bombing is the act of converting overgrown weeds into works of street art. Inspired by other forms of ‘tactical bombings,’ downtown Miami resident and business owner, Brad Knoefler enlisted other neighborhood activists and artists to spray paint weeds in bright colors. Knoefler, who is also the founder of the Omni Parkwest Redevelopment Association (OPRA), is a vocal critic of the various large-scale redevelopment plans slated for his Omni Parkwest, and the lack of maintenance efforts. He is also known to take action into his own hands. “We used to cut the weeds ourselves,” say Knoefler, “but it’s much more beneficial to beautify them and convert them into street art. Unlike traditional graffiti, weed bombing doesn’t damage private or public property and has immediate benefits to our quality of life.”

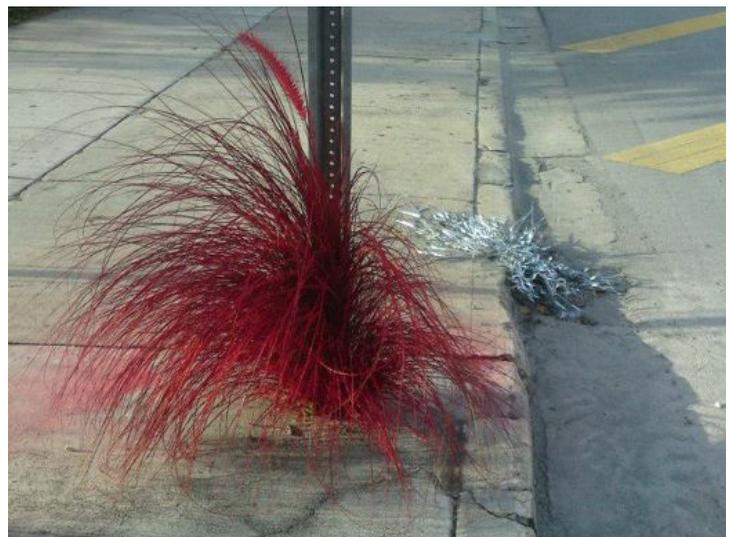
While Knoefler undertook the effort in creative protest, he’s found little resistance from the city and downtown development authority. Still, according to one newspaper article, Knoefler plans to keep bombing the weeds until a more concerted, sanctioned city effort is made.



*Weed bombing can make overgrowth look more like flowers.*  
Credit: Kerry McLaney



*A weed bomb just north of downtown Miami.*  
Credit: Kerry McLaney



*Weed bombs highlight disparities in where public and private maintenance dollars are spent.*  
Credit: Kerry McLaney



# MICRO-MIXING

- PURPOSE:** Too incubate new businesses and sustain existing ones through the co-location of mutually supportive uses.
- LEADERS:** Entrepreneurs  
Property Owners  
Business Improvement Districts
- SCALE:** Block || Building
- FACT:** The simplest form of retail micro-mixing is the coffee shop inside the book store, something corporations figured out long ago.

By mixing multiple businesses in a single retail space, micro-mixing provides entrepreneurial shop owners an opportunity to mitigate the high overhead costs associated with opening a new venture. This tactical retailing technique combines complimentary uses and activities that can be used by existing retailers as well as cooperative and startup incubator spaces. The best use of the micro-mixing technique can create some of the most exciting and memorable shopping experiences.

The success of large format bookstores in the 1990's and 2000's illustrated the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between a coffee shop and a bookstore. These two uses together, a latte and a new book, seem to fit together naturally.

Today, more unconventional and perhaps more exciting mixes are emerging. In Denver, Salvagetti Bicycle Workshop has included an espresso bar on its sales floor. In New York, Barbershops are selling clothing, and jewelry stores are selling Vietnamese sandwiches. In Providence, a craft co-op store is running a gallery out of the back of house space and a coffee shop is selling potted plants and gardening supplies. All of these operators are creatively maximizing the return on their space's floor area by working together with complimentary retailers.

At its core, micro-mixing is a "buddy system" economic development strategy that helps small businesses grow incrementally. By using clever merchandising and efficient space planning, existing retail spaces can quickly be adapted to handle multiple users or businesses. Thus, micro-mixing provides an easy opportunity to test new ideas. If successful, micro-mixing tenants can one day strike out on their own.



Salvagetti Bicycle Workshop  
Credit: Panoramio user chachafish



Happy Coffee Espresso Window  
Credit: Jonathan Shikes



*The construction of Grand Central Park took one month.  
Credit: Grand Central Park*

# PARK- MAKING

**PURPOSE:** To increase the supply of park space by quickly reclaiming undertutilized parcels of vacant land and parking lots.

**LEADERS:** Activists  
Artists  
City Departments  
Business Improvement Districts  
Neighborhood Organizations

**SCALE:** Lot || Block

**FACT:** Miami's Grand Central Park is a five-acre park that was built in 30 days.

While it's exciting that the tactic of PARK(ing) Day has led to the development of parklets and pavement to plazas programs, larger public spaces are still needed in many urban neighborhoods. A new response to this challenge is the tactic of park-making, which utilizes the techniques of PARK(ing) Day and deploys them at a larger scale. In Miami, FL, local activists are partnering with private sector companies and government entities to transform some of the city's most overlooked opportunity sites into sizeable parks.

The 5-acre Grand Central Park, pictured at left, is the brainchild of the Miami's most notorious Weed Bomber, Brad Knoefler (see pgs 36-37). Knoefler, and his colleagues at the Omni Parkwest Redevelopment Association (OPRA) took it upon themselves to transform the former Miami Arena site into a much needed park space. After securing a local grant, OPRA procured pro bono landscape design services and signed a multi-year lease with the property owner. Fees generated from programmed events, concerts, and food vendors will sustain the maintenance of the park and pay the lease obligation. Built in early 2012, and in just 30 days, the park has already been a huge success.

Building on this model is Bayfront Parkway, a one-week installation led by Street Plans and the engineering firm C3TS. While several a downtown plans have called for transforming Biscayne Boulevard's median parking lots into a green doorstep for downtown Miami, action has never been taken...until now. At the time of publication, the one-block park intervention is currently underway and generating support from stakeholders to follow through with the long-term park plan.



*In Miami, Biscayne Boulevard's medians are dedicated parking lots.  
Credit: Ana Bikic*



*Biscayne Parkway transformed one parking lot into a park.  
Credit: Ana Bikic*



*Biscayne Parkway's exercise equipment is a popular attraction.  
Credit: Ana Bikic*

# CAMPS

**PURPOSE:** To create or take part in the temporary occupation of space, often with an eye toward creating permanent change.

**LEADERS:** Activists  
Protesters  
Refugees  
Government  
NGOs

**SCALE:** Lot || Building || Block || District

**FAST FACT:** In his book *Camps: A Guide to 21st Century Space*, author Charlie Hailey organizes 103 types of camps into three broad categories: Autonomy, Control, and Necessity.

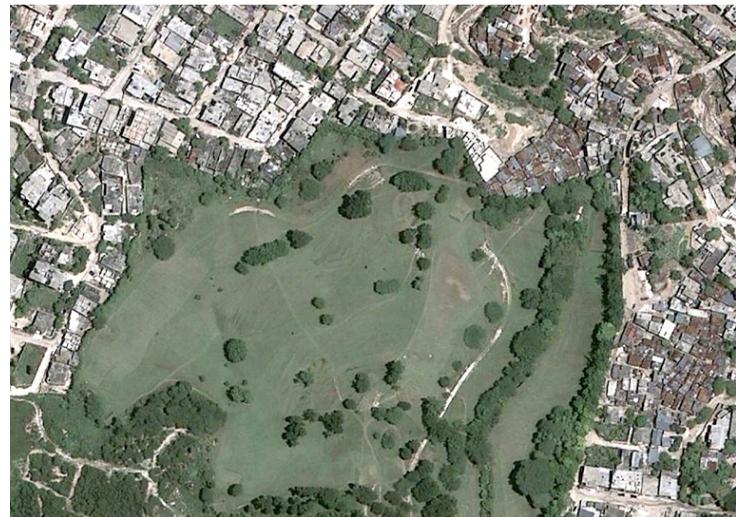
Whether for protest, military action, recreation, or necessary shelter, camps provide a ubiquitous cross-cultural reference, and not just one of outdoor occupation. While pervasive the cultural understanding of camps shifts on an almost daily basis. The much debated meaning of the Occupy movement is one of our most recent examples.

According to Hailey, the process of urbanization often begins with informal camps that eventually move along a continuum, from temporary to permanent, from being unsanctioned to sanctioned places of habitation. By their nature, camps capably adapt to various conditions and therefore serve well in the transitional phases of development. In this way, the connections between camp and city is nothing new. Indeed, many of the world's great cities began as Roman military camp outposts, including Vienna, Barcelona, and Prague. A less sexy example is that of the trailer park where the possibility of mobility is often a misnomer—mobile homes don't usually move, they evolve over time and very much stay rooted in place.

Camps of all types, demonstrate how the short-term action of temporarily occupying space, often leads to incremental, permanent change.



Occupy Camp.  
Credit: Chuck Wolfe



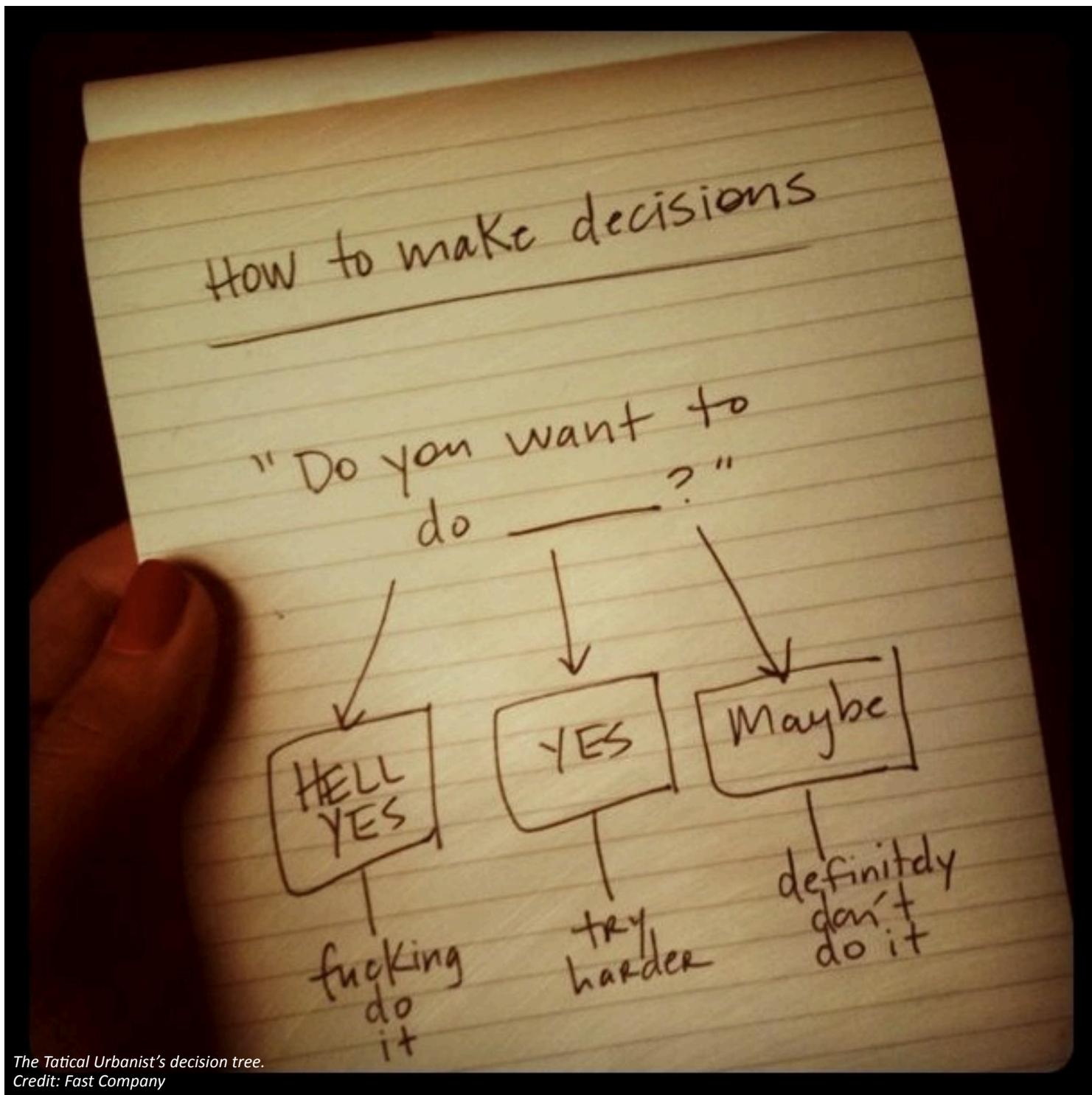
A park in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti before the earthquake.  
Credit: New York Times.



Same park in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti as post-earthquake relief camp.  
Credit: New York Times

# SHARE YOUR TACTICS

This tactical urbanism survey includes several strategies employed by individuals, local community groups, and municipalities. However, it's by no means exhaustive. The Tactical Urbanism Project is only going to get better through reader contributions. If you or someone you know has an addition to make or would like to organize a Tactical Urbanism Salon, please [EMAIL INFO@STREETPLANS.ORG](mailto:INFO@STREETPLANS.ORG) or share it on the Tactical Urbanism Facebook page.



*“...in order to do something big, to think globally and act globally, one starts with something small and one starts where it counts. Practice, then, is about making the ordinary special and the special more widely accessible — expanding the boundaries of understanding and possibility with vision and common sense. It is about building densely interconnected networks, crafting linkages between unlikely partners and organizations, and making plans without the usual preponderance of planning. It is about getting it right for now and at the same time being tactical and strategic about later. This is not about forecasting, nor about making decisions about the future. But it is about the long range, about making sure that one plus one equals two or three, about being politically connected and grounded, and about disturbing the order of things in the interests of change.”*

*- Nabeel Hamdi*

*Author, Small Change: About the Art of Practice and the Limits of Planning in Cities*

# SOURCES

## TACTICAL URBANISM

The Street Plans Collaborative  
Pattern Cities  
Tactical Urbanism Salon  
The Interventionists Toolkit  
Tactical Urbanism Facebook page  
Grist  
The New York Times  
The Atlantic Cities  
More Grist

## OPEN STREETS

The Open Streets Project

## PLAY STREETS

NYC Play Streets  
Play Street Becomes a Sanctuary  
Reclaiming The Residential Street  
As Play Space

## PARK(ING) DAY

Parkingday.org

## BUILD A BETTER BLOCK

Build a Better Block  
Fort Worth Better Block Project  
A New Face for an Old Broad

## GUERRILLA GARDENING

Guerilla Gardening.org  
Wikipedia

## PAVEMENT TO PLAZAS

NYC Plaza Program

## PAVEMENT TO PARKS

Pavement to Parks Program

## POP-UP CAFES

NYC DOT Pop-UP Cafes

## CHAIR BOMBING

DoTank

## POP-UP RETAIL

Trendwatching

## DEPAVE

Depave  
Streetfilms: Depaving Day!

## FOOD CARTS

Portland Food Carts  
The Architectural Maturation of  
Portland Food Carts

## SITE PRE-VITALIZATION

Dekalb Market  
Proxy  
Hercules Market: What Comes  
Next?  
Box Park Shoreditch

## POP-UP TOWN HALL

BMW Guggenheim Lab

## INTERSECTION REPAIR

City Repair  
Streetfilm

## AD-BUSTING

Public Ad Campaign

## PARK MOBILE

New Forms of Public Space:  
Parkmobile

## WEED BOMBING

Weed Bombing

## MOBILE VENDORS

The Street Vendor Project  
Custom Bike Urbanism

## MICRO-MIXING

## PARK-MAKING

Bayfront Parkway

## CAMPS

Camps: A Guide to 21st Century  
Space



A project of Locke's Department of Urban Betterment.  
Credit: Design Taxi

# TACTICAL LIBRARY

