

# MAINSTREETS

ACTIVATING PLACES FOR ENGAGED COMMUNITY



**Co\*lab** made this toolkit after piloting a process we called Mainstreets. Our approach and methods project is an accumulation of lessons learned from years of leading place-based community initiatives in Halifax, Nova Scotia and beyond.

This **toolkit** is a guide to help you activate public spaces & under-used spaces. It can help you connect resources and opportunities, build community & change the culture of development in your neighbourhood.

We encourage you to use the guide to support your work in making communities more resilient and collaborative. You are free to use the content, share it, and we ask that you credit Mainstreets as a source. We strive for this to be a living document so please send us a note about how you are using it and what could be added/ improved.

Please be in touch if are curious about ways we could support you and your community. Co\*Lab provides coaching, research, training and public speaking: [spark@thecolab.info](mailto:spark@thecolab.info)



# WHO IS THIS FOR?

- This toolkit is for placemakers, changemakers, neighbourhood associations, business districts, city champions and engaged citizens.
- Individuals and/or groups can use this Toolkit to make neighbourhood change.

# WHY MAINSTREETS & PLACE MATTER?


We have focused on Mainstreets because they can a powerful catalyst to create resilient and thriving communities.

“Place does matter—it matters not only for sustainable urban development, but also for the health, safety, and happiness of every human being on the planet. For these and a thousand more reasons, we need to take our places seriously—the way we shape them, manage them, and live them together in the 21st century.” - PPS



Credit: Project for Public Spaces



An aerial photograph of a vibrant city square. The square is paved with a geometric pattern of light and dark tiles. Numerous people are walking, some pushing strollers, and many are riding bicycles. In the background, there are historic buildings with gabled roofs and a prominent church spire. A large white text box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing a quote and the name Fred Kent.

“Everyone has the right to live in a great place. More importantly, everyone has the right to contribute to making the place where they already live great.”

- Fred Kent

# MAINSTREETS VISION

Compelling public space strengthens community identity and restores energy to the core of our towns and cities



Complete streets are safe, welcoming and accessible to all users



Balanced modes of mobility include pedestrians, cyclists and public transit



A thriving local economy



# CONTEXT

Why are  
Mainstreets  
so important?

Mainstreets once were vibrant hubs of villages, towns and cities where people connected, supported their local economy, and worked within walking or trolley distance of their home.

Post-war, car-centric city planning created swift changes as major highway development led to sprawl. Commercial activity and new housing supply moved to the outskirts of towns and cities. This drastically shifted the choices people made about where to live, work and play.

Modern planning practice now recognizes that sprawling towns and cities with empty cores are unsustainable economically, culturally, and environmentally. This issue is so intertwined with dependence on cars, that individuals and groups need support to make lasting change.

Mainstreets process is be a powerful aid to creating resilient and thriving places. It's time to reinvest in and take responsibility for the core of our communities.





**READY?**

Do you want to bring attention & energy back to the centre of your town?

Do you want to re-imagine & animate your neighbourhood?

Do you want to cultivate the beauty & potential of your Mainstreet?



# ROADMAP

1

## GET STARTED

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Preparing yourself; finding and working with people who care

- Assessing your Mainstreet
- Finding community partners

2

## LISTEN & GENERATE

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Uncovering community history; understanding where we are; and exploring dreams for the future.

- Past stories
- Present reality
- Future ideas

## TRY IT OUT

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Take action → learn → take action → learn

- Start somewhere
- Design for community, by community

3

## DEMONSTRATE & CELEBRATE

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Celebrate the past, present & future with a community festival that closes your main street to cars and opens it for people. Showcase stories, activate opportunities, and harness the vision of what could be.

4

# 1

# FOUNDATIONS

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Preparing yourself and finding the people who care about your neighbourhood.

# PERSONAL PREP

Before beginning take the time to clarify your intent

## BEING MINDFUL

Perhaps your actions today will not solve all of the chronic problems of society. However - when action is taken from a place of clarity with trusting partners, and with an understanding of diverse perspectives - your actions can create a wave of positive change.

As people working among and for community, it is important that we understand our own assumptions & illusions.

Reflect on the following:

### General questions:

How will I listen to what is really needed in my community?  
How can I create sustainable change?  
How can I enable connections between people?  
What is needed in the world, now?

### Personal questions:

What do I need? What is in it for me?  
What am I passionate enough about to take responsibility for?  
Who am I acting on behalf of?

The more clarity you have, the better prepared you will be to navigate the process.

For more info see the Presencing Institute on Personal ways of knowing

**Link:** <https://www.presencing.com/principles>

The success of an  
intervention  
depends on the  
interior condition  
of the intervenor.

- William O'Brian



# STREET SELECTION

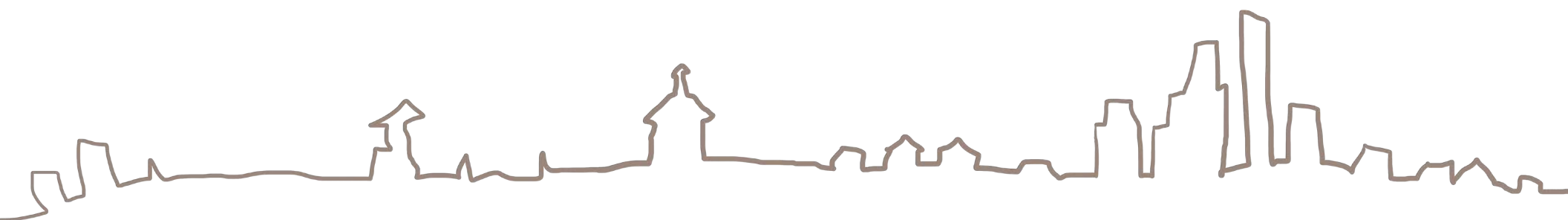
How do I know if a street is suitable for the process?

Is there a street in your community that could be more vibrant? Could public space be more useful? Could people be more connected? Could local business be more integrated?

**Answer these questions:**

- Was this street historically a shopping destination?
- Were there streetcar tracks?
- Are there currently empty storefronts or vacant lots?
- Is the street within walking distance of a dense residential neighbourhood?

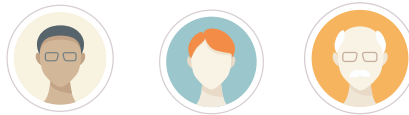
The more times you responded “yes!” to these questions, the better.



# FINDING PARTNERS

## Finding community partners

### MEET PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY WHO CARE



Community partners are the cornerstone of a successful Mainstreets project.

Ask yourself and others: who cares about this community? neighbourhood? local economy and jobs? public spaces and places for people? sustainable transportation?

Have one-on-one sessions or meet in small groups of people who trust each other. Elicit and record their stories, hopes and concerns about the community. No need to think quantitatively here - get to know people, listen to learn.

### FINDING PARTNERS

Finding other events that already happen on your Mainstreet can lead you straight to citizens dedicated to celebrating the street. Food festivals, farmers markets, pedestrian Sundays, crafter/flea markets. Events like these already bring lots of energy and people to the street. Partner with other community groups to integrate projects where possible.

### WHERE TO BEGIN...



Look for these local groups in your community:

- walking groups
- community safety organizations
- business district associations
- cycling organizations
- youth groups looking for projects
- community groups
- town planner / economic planner / transportation planner
- local and regional politicians
- residents/neighbourhood associations
- “Friends of \_\_\_\_\_” associations

# FORMING A TEAM

A diverse & invested team will carry your Mainstreets Project to fruition

When creating your team, consider that the relationships you have with each other and the wider community will create the conditions for success. The more people's individual strengths are encouraged the more resources you have to work with. There is strength in diversity - the more voices heard the deeper the impact.

A strong team can build upon and amplify community strengths.

People in the community will trust an invitation coming from someone they can relate to. A core team should reflect the community you want to engage. It's key that those who will be most affected by a project be involved.

It may be easier to find experts on a specific topic rather than community members but be careful not to load your team with too many "experts". You want people with a variety of experiences and backgrounds.





# WORKING TOGETHER

Getting things done, means finding ways to bring people together

## CREATE A LIGHT STRUCTURE

Set up meetings and allow for sub-groups to form based on what people care about. Find a simple way for your team to work together well. Avoid centralized decision-making and encourage people to give input where they have real power and agency to act. Make sure your team stays connected and meets only when needed to prevent burn-out. Define group principles such as “How do we want to work together?” When a group gets stuck it can be helpful for team members to ask for what you need, and offer what they can.

Respect all perspectives in a group and be open to different ways of accomplishing positive change.

### For resources see:

<http://http://aositoronto.weebly.com/the-chaordic-path.html>

<http://groupworksdeck.org/>



# HOSTING CONVERSATIONS

A pivotal part of creating successful projects is to find a collective purpose

## DESIGNING YOUR FIRST PUBLIC GATHERING

### Purpose of the first gathering:

- Find people who will commit to work together to create a Mainstreets project
- Uncover stories and become familiar with the context of the street

Choose a neutral, welcoming and accessible space, such as a library or community centre. Consider who needs to be invited and how you will reach out to them in a meaningful way. Begin the meeting by explaining the main steps in the process such as storytelling, dreaming, brainstorming, community projects and a celebratory festival.

Make it personal by giving an example about why this matters to you. Invite others to share their stories or say something about why they showed up. Encourage people to listen to learn from and about each other. Hearing from everyone at the start of the meeting will break-the-ice, and make it easier for everyone to speak up as the project progresses.

### Ask questions to uncover what the group wants to do and how:

- What is needed in our community?
- What is needed in the world?
- What do we need?
- What is the purpose/ heart of this project?
- What principles of co-operation can help us work together well?

Take time -  
though problems  
of the world seem  
urgent, rushing  
doesn't build  
resiliency,  
**relationships** do.

# LEADERSHIP & TEAMS

Stepping across the threshold and finding ways to bring people together

## TRANSPARENCY

Create a clear road map of what will happen and communicate it to neighbours so that people can engage. Describe what the project is and what it is not. This clarity will build trust and manage expectations.

## PARTICIPATORY LEADERSHIP

Good facilitation gives everyone a voice. This skill needs to be practiced. The process and project will be more successful with skillful coordinators and facilitators.

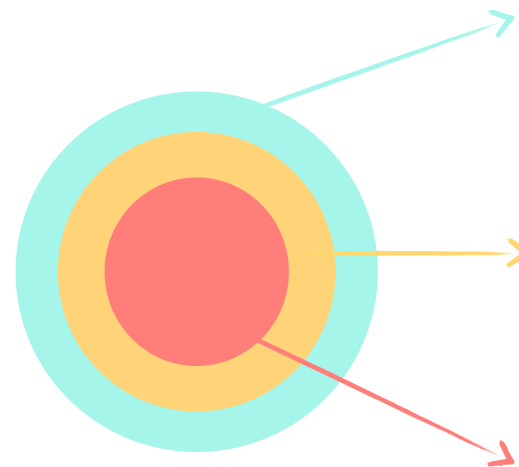
For **resources** on how to host a meeting with diverse perspectives, see the following:



[www.artofhosting.org](http://www.artofhosting.org)

## MULTIPLE WAYS FOR PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE

Invite people to participate and contribute in a variety of ways such as:



### SUPPORTER:

Supporters need to be kept informed and can cheer from the sidelines.

### CONNECTOR

Connectors are aware of upcoming actions / dates. They participate in some actions, connect the core team or coordinator to other key people and communicate this with their network.

### CORE TEAM

Core Team members will participate in monthly meetings to plan the festival and take an active role in engagement and actions all the way through. It is important that the core team include as many of the diverse sub communities of your street as possible.

As time goes on, let people be fluid in their commitments. A Supporter may want to step in at a later time to help with actions, or someone active at the beginning may need to step back. Hopefully many people will want to join in along the way.



# 2

## LISTEN & GENERATE

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Discovering our stories, exploring where we are now, and envisioning our future.

# DISCOVER

Sensing “Where are we now?” making meaning from what we have learned

## GETTING OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY

Spend time and observe together and on your own. Get to know your street. Talk to people, listen to learn. Walk through your community together and debrief with a potluck. Be curious and suspend judgement. Appreciate the beauty and what is already working. Take note of potential. Think big picture and don't get bogged down with ideas at this point, let them pass - if they are good they will come back again!

## THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Where and how are people naturally gathering or lingering? Smoking? Waiting for a bus? Notice. Document. Take sidewalk chalk and draw on the sidewalk things you are noticing. Look for clues for how people are using the spaces on the street.

- Where are the opportunity sites? (vacant street fronts, places people are already gathering, footpaths)
- Are there amenities that encourage people to linger on the street and in public spaces (seating, tables, maps, community bulletin boards)?
- Are there amenities that invite children, seniors, dog walkers to the area?

- Is the Mainstreet easily accessible from where people live/ the residential neighbourhood?
- Do pedestrians and bicyclists have clear access to the area and supportive infrastructure (bike lanes, bike parking, outdoor furniture, way-finding)?
- Who uses the public spaces, local shops, the places for people along your Mainstreet?

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

- What perceptions or cultural norms prevent change from happening?
- What does the status quo look like in your neighbourhood?
- Is there a lack of agency or belief that change is possible?
- Are there disconnects between certain groups that could benefit from working together?
- What projects are already happening that relate to our purpose?
- Who uses the shops and public spaces along your Mainstreet?

The process of sensing and discovery will build trust and cohesion on your Core Team that will create a positive, lasting impact. These relationships may outlast your actions and celebrations. That would be quite a success, wouldn't it?

**LINK:** see [www.betterblock.org](http://www.betterblock.org) for more strategies

# STORIES

Engaging the community to uncover “Where did we come from?”

Stories are our identity. When a neighbourhood knows its stories, it knows itself, its values and strengths. Being grounded in history allows the community to invest in creating a healthy and sustainable future.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR STORY-CATCHERS

- What is the story of car-centric development in your neighbourhood?
- What was life on the Mainstreet like when it was booming? What were the times of transition like?
- When were the highways, freeways, sub-urban shopping centres built?
- What impact did this have on the Mainstreet?

## GATHERING STORIES

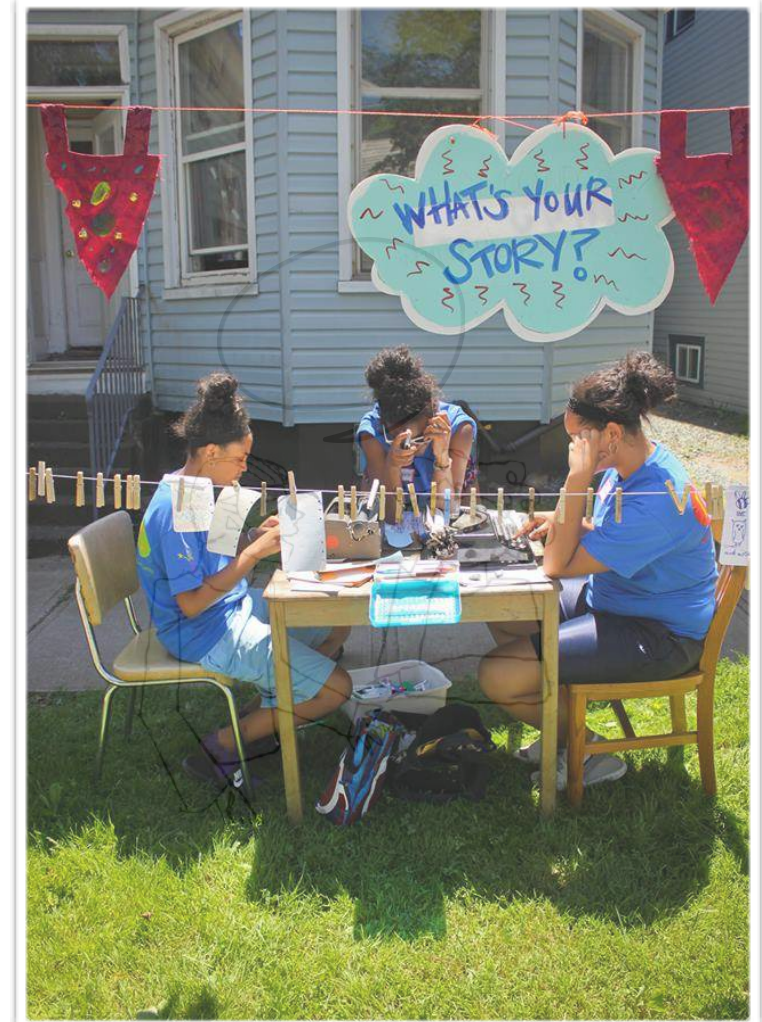
How you plan on sharing stories will influence how you collect the stories.

### Ask your team:

“How will you share stories once you’ve collected them?” This might be a great activity for a self-identified action team to take on, or everyone in your core group to participate in. Begin to identify storytellers early in your process!

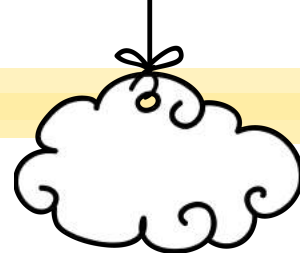
### Story collecting and sharing tactics:

- audio / video recording
- website / blog
- story circles in local café or library
- quotes on posters in storefronts & telephone poles



# VISION

Sparking imagination by uncovering “What could our future be?”



When engaging people about how they would like to improve their neighbourhood, there is a tendency for the conversation to move towards what is currently wrong. The visioning step is an opportunity to leave that all behind and dream big and wild. For some groups this means dreaming out 25 years into the future and for other it can be what is the wildest thing we can make happen by this summer.

## MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY'RE AT

People have generally been over-engaged without seeing their ideas influence change and become reality. There is endless information, activities, and clutter. People are overworked and overwhelmed. They carefully choose how they spend their spare time within their busy schedules. With this as our context, supporting people to imagine what is possible and work towards a collective vision is no easy task. Get out on the street, the bus, into the cafes, libraries, grocery stores, and storefronts to meet people where they are at.

## AN APPRECIATIVE APPROACH

It is more energizing to focus on what the neighbourhood already has (skills, resources, infrastructure, natural beauty, local culture, history) than focusing on what to eliminate or what it is done poorly. The same goes for moving towards action, it is better to concentrate on shared goals and ideas that the community wants rather than what people don't want.

### **Ask people:**

What could the future of this neighbourhood look like?  
If you had 3 days to transform this neighbourhood what would you do?

### **Ask your team:**

How do we encourage blue sky thinking?  
How do we work beyond our assumptions & illusions?

## ENGAGEMENT TACTICS

List of 100 ideas in public spaces and storefronts that people can add to



Community chalkboards in parks or foot paths



Bristol board or big paper on walls in cafes for people to draw on

Maps of the street that people can add to



Host public engagement sessions to uncover visions and dreams



**NOTE:** As you uncover visions and dreams for the neighbourhood, whether its through one-on-one conversations, or larger engagement sessions, it is helpful to make them visible to the community as soon as possible.





Invite people into the possible with powerful questions & creative methods



# HARVEST


Making meaning from what we have learned

Gather as a Core Team to review the visions, ideas, gaps, and stories you've collected. Talk, listen, share anecdotes, think, reflect.

## Think and reflect together on:

- What is needed on this Mainstreet?
- What are the stories of a desired future from your community?
- What themes arise?
- What are the minority voices saying or did you hear them?
- What is important here?
- What needs to be shared with the community to guide us into action?
- What don't we know?

Synthesize your learnings into a concise, clear and fun overview for a general audience. Think beyond the normal power point presentation. Consider alternate presentation approaches such as PechaKucha or Ted Talk, or a mural, or a play.

 **LINK** [www.pecha-kucha.org](http://www.pecha-kucha.org)  
**LINK** [www.ted.com/talks](http://www.ted.com/talks)



# 3

## TRY IT OUT

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Community Action Projects are small-scale prototypes that will enable your team to learn quickly, to create a sense of 'what is possible' in your neighbourhood, and can bring new public & political attention to your Mainstreets Project.

# ACTION PLANNING

This is a framework for action & implementation

Creating on-street prototypes explores new ideas and positive change through action, not just talk. Although the first idea or solution is rarely the best one, by building quick, low cost, low risk prototypes clarifies ideas and can demonstrate what works and what doesn't in a short time frame.

## STEP 1: GATHER

Gather interested supporters of action projects. Invite a broad range of people and/or specifically invite people who have expressed interest in the project. You could send out a far-and-wide invitation and/or specifically invite people who have expressed interest in taking a particular action. The success of each action depends on people taking responsibility for what they are passionate about.

## STEP 2: SHARE THE HARVEST

Share what you've learned about the past, present of and desired future for the street. Inspire the team with examples of projects from other towns or cities.

Have conversations in small groups of two or three people to enable everyone to be heard. Share a summary of the smaller group discussion with the entire group.

## STEP 3: WHAT ARE THE NEEDS?

Talk about what is **NEEDED** and what people have asked for.

## STEP 4: WHAT IS THE DESIRED FUTURE?

What is the story of the future I want to be a part of?  
Choose an aspect of the **DESIRED FUTURE** as a project goal.



## STEP 5: BRAINSTORM!

BRAINSTORM a list of **actions** that could lead to the project goal.

Lists, lists, lists! WRITE DOWN and/or DRAW IDEAS.

### \*Rules for brainstorming

Don't limit yourself by what you think is or is not currently possible. Don't limit others by shooting down their ideas. This is a time for open experimentation.

Remember, the goal of the action project is to learn together, rather than focussing on immediate results. We are walking towards the future we want.

**Examples:** If seniors are asking for places to sit and rest between destinations, and the desired future is a street that works for people of all ages, the action could be putting simple benches out and see how they're used. If people are asking for more affordable food options and the desired future is a strong local, healthy economy - find market vendors or food trucks that are willing to set up temporarily, plant a fruit tree, set up a bbq and give away free food, etc.

In your action group, reflect on your "**How Might We**" Statement and:

- Write your learning objectives.
- Who needs to be involved?
- How long will it take?
- How will you observe/evaluate its impact?

## STEP 6: FILL OUT HOW MIGHT WE...

Gather a small group who like to focus on a specific **action** and create a "**How Might We**" **statement**.

How might we \_\_\_\_\_  
**ACTION**

to \_\_\_\_\_

with \_\_\_\_\_  
**NEED**


so that \_\_\_\_\_  
**PEOPLE**

\_\_\_\_\_ **DESIRED FUTURE** ?

## STEP 7: REFLECT

Reflect on your "**How Might We**" Statement and discuss these questions:

- What do you want to learn from the prototype?
- Who needs to be involved?
- How long will it take?
- How will you observe/evaluate its impact?

A photograph of a group of people sitting at a table in a restaurant or cafe. The scene is captured from a slightly elevated angle, showing several individuals engaged in conversation. In the foreground, a woman with dark hair and a black top with a patterned scarf is seen from the side, looking towards a man in a blue jacket who is gesturing with his hands. To his right, a woman with a long braid is seen from the back, wearing a dark green top. In the background, other people are visible, including a woman with red hair who is smiling. The lighting is warm and indoor, with blurred lights in the background.

Let's be careful with the present that we create,  
because it should look like the future that we dream.

What is the story of the future I want to be part of?



## TAKE ACTION & OBSERVE

Get to it! Get your prototype out on the street, and see how people use it.

### Ask users:

- How does this impact you?
- Was it pleasurable?
- How could it be better?
- How did it change your experience of being on the street?
- Ask other questions that may shine light toward your learning objectives.

### Observe:

- How did they use it?
- How often did people use it?
- How does it change the pedestrian or cyclists experience?
- Count everything: # of users, amount of time used, etc.

## DEBRIEF: LEARNINGS & IMPACT

Team debrief, as scheduled.

### Ask yourselves:

- What did you expect would happen?
- What actually happened?
- What worked well?
- What could be improved and how?
- What's next?

## ITERATE

Repeat this action process a few times if you can. Each time you debrief, write another "How Might We" statement, and try something else. The only true failure of prototyping is if you don't learn, pivot and try again. Each iteration of your prototypes will get you closer to the desired future of your community.

\* For more on '**How Might We**' **Statements**, see Human Centered Design resources such as: <http://www.designkit.org> co\*LAB first came across this tool from our friends at Exhibit Change in Toronto.

\* For more on **Debriefing Learnings and Impact**, read up on After Action Review

## REMEMBER...



Your role is a supportive one. If some actions don't happen or look different than you thought, maybe that's okay. Ask yourself: Is it serving the community? If you encounter chaos and you jump into control mode, you are not cultivating an environment where your community is self-led and independent. Your job as a coordinator is important - but you are not in charge, no community needs someone telling them what to do. Work with what wants to happen, keep your project's purpose in your focus, and keep in good relationship.

# PLACE-BASED TACTICS

Here are a few things we've tried out or have been inspired by



## POP-UP HOOD

Fill vacant retail spaces with short term, low cost occupation. It promotes economic development and revitalizes a street by being a local incubator for innovative commercial community uses. The buzz created by this initiative can often support the property owners, occupant and the neighbourhood.

**link:** <http://www.popuphood.com>



## PARK(ING) DAY

Take over a single parking space and turn it into a temporary park by paying the meter for a few hours. This simple idea has spread into a platform for communities around the world to experiment in the urban realm.

**link:** <http://parkingday.org>

## POP-UP INFRASTRUCTURE

Temporary demonstration projects to pilot what a bike lane or crosswalk (or something else) would be like on a street. You can raise awareness, test and learn what works best in terms of infrastructure in a low cost low-risk way. Work with your city or town to test the viability of bike lanes, cycle tracks, dedicated transit lanes or expanded sidewalks. You can use white duct tape or make your own removable paint or spray chalk so that it can disappear when the project is over.

**link:** <http://www.treehugger.com/bikes/>



## BIKE VALET

Bike valet is like a giant welcome mat, a gesture of dignity and respect for those who walk, stroller, and wheel toward community (events). Celebrate biking culture and shift perception to create a sense of pride, safety and access.

**link:** <http://clean.ns.ca/programs/transportation/bike-valet/>



## STREET ART

Using storefront spaces, walls and billboards to display art that provokes new thinking about challenging urban issues (example broken city lab in windsor doing residencies around everyday realities of skyrocketing vacancy rates, failing economic strategies & a place in need of new imagination)

**link:** [www.brokencitylab.org/srsi/](http://www.brokencitylab.org/srsi/)



## ACTIVATING SPACES

Space in the city can be transformed through events such as small concerts, arts installations, poetry readings, outside dance hall, and more. Highlight the beauty and potential of vacant spaces and shift the negative perception in a neighbourhood about a space. Remove red tape and issues around liability for the social innovator actor that has great ideas to make their city better

**link:** [www.gapfiller.org.nz](http://www.gapfiller.org.nz)



## PLAYFUL STREET DESIGN:

by changing an everyday seemingly mundane activity or place into a playful and unusual part of someone's day it can bring pride and a sense of playfulness and social interaction.

### PEOPLE PATHWAYS

Draw attention to pedestrian laneways that already exist in your neighbourhood. Many alleys are historic right-of-ways for pedestrians. Learn about the history of these laneways (hot tip: check out old fire lane maps). Likely there are publicly owned laneways already around that you don't know about. These often neglected areas are important public spaces and key for walkable and connected neighbourhoods.

**link:** [www.lanewayproject.ca](http://www.lanewayproject.ca)

### NEIGHBOURHOOD WALKS

Offer free neighbourhood walking tours. They can bridge social and geographic gaps by bringing residents together, increase urban literacy, expose people to new stories and landscapes, and shift perception about pedestrian spaces.

**link:** <http://janeswalk.org>

### TRANSIT HUBS

Make bus stops into creative hubs of activity with multiple uses (local shops, local stories, swings, maps, mini library, wayfinding signage...). Celebrating transit and local neighbourhoods shifts the perception of what it means to wait for a bus.

### RED SWING

Anonymously hang red swings in public spaces inspiring playfulness.

**link:** <http://www.redswingproject.org>



### LITTLE FREE LIBRARIES

They're little. They're free. And they're so cute.

Encourage a culture of sharing resources by putting one up in your neighbourhood! What other resources can you share?

**link:** <http://littlefreelibrary.org>



### BENCH BOMBING

A simple way to make places more comfortable make benches and place them where there is a need. William Whyte said, "people like to sit where there are places for them to sit".





## INTERSECTION PAINTINGS



Streets are usually the only public space we have in our neighborhoods. Placemaking reclaims that space for the whole community by creating a massive street mural together. The SPACE becomes a PLACE.

**link:**

[www.placemakinghalifax.wordpress.com](http://www.placemakinghalifax.wordpress.com)  
[www.cityrepair.org](http://www.cityrepair.org)

## COMMUNITY MURALS



Bringing youth and community together using art as a tool for social change. Creating art can transform places, individuals, communities and institutions. Projects beautify neighbourhoods, engage community and express ideas and perspectives that are underrepresented.

**link:** [www.groundswellmural.org](http://www.groundswellmural.org)

## BETTER BLOCK



The “Better Block” project is a demonstration tool that acts as a living charrette so that communities can actively engage in the buildout process and provide feedback in real time.

**link:**

[www.thecolab.info/mainstreets.org](http://www.thecolab.info/mainstreets.org)

## OASIS GAME

A community mobilization tool to materialize collective dreams of community development and sustainability. This translates in a community co-dreaming, co-designing and co-creating a project with their own hands and hearts, transforming degraded areas in playgrounds, urban gardens, social economy initiatives or cultural centers.

**link:** <http://institutoelos.org/en/jogo-oasis/>



## PARKLETS

A permanent version of Park(ing) Day. Turning parking spaces into beautiful, useful, pedestrian centric public space.

**link:** <http://pavementtoparks.sfplanning.org>



## IMPACT HUBS

Co-working spaces around the world. They are a global network of people, places, and program that inspire, connect and catalyze impact. Part innovation lab, part business incubator and part community centre.

**link:** [www.impacthub.net](http://www.impacthub.net)



# 4

## DEMONSTRATE & CELEBRATE

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This is the climax moment of your Mainstreets project. After months of working with the community, its time to celebrate, to share all the ideas and get the community spirit spilling into the streets. A vibrant Mainstreet is an expression of the values of the residents and the heart and soul of the community.





A street festival can be a celebration of the community, an activation of potential, and a demonstration of design ideas.





## COMMON PURPOSES

It is essential to celebrate your community. It is fantastic to be with community having fun on the Mainstreet where vehicle traffic usually dominates. Eating ice cream or listening to music with neighbours, then looking down to see the yellow traffic line below your feet is a memorable experience.

### **Having a street festival serves two major purposes:**

- 1) The festival is a big target that everyone is aiming for. The festival becomes the focal point for the community and everyone has to work together to make it a success.
- 2) The festival showcases the street's full potential and demonstrates the ideal pedestrian experience, a thriving local economy and strong community spirit.

## PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

The Festival should showcase immediate and long-term community-led projects and programs. Your team has co-created and supported projects leading up to the festival that demonstrate the vibrancy and potential of the neighbourhood - show them off! Community-led projects will inherently be rooted in the local context and speak to the various challenges of the area.

## A FEW ELEMENTS OF A GREAT STREET FESTIVAL:

- A market for local vendors and community members to sell and share their goods
- Trying out street infrastructure that is wanted by the community (planters with food growing, public space to comfortably hang out, bike parking, bike lanes, lighting)
- Open doors policy - Ask local business owners to get access to vacant spaces and to open their doors to buildings, that aren't typically open to the public
- People parade, a bike parade, many little parades, a big parade, etc...
- Youth activities - youth groups plan activities they want to see happen
- Children activities - ensuring a youthful energy and playful spaces for all ages
- Bring together various local talents and resources
- Live music - Essential to an inviting and celebratory atmosphere
- Food - Ask restaurants and community members to sell food on the street
- Games - Create spaces for people to play and interact
- Collaborative art projects
- Ceremonies and rituals that begin and end things or create markers for people to remember and celebrate together (it could be as simple as candle lighting, dancing, singing, or games)
- Neighbourhood walk that visits historically or culturally significant locations
- Organize a presentation of the process of people coming together to make this all happen (video, photos, gallery, play, song, etc)



### PLANNING TIPS:

- Apply early for a street closure permit
- Ensure the space chosen is a neutral space for all the communities you are trying to bring together
- Pick a date and align with other community events that are already happening. Look for other community events that you can collaborate with! This is the easiest way to ensure that you are aligned with the community, and not overlapping with other events. Make sure you've coordinated with local partners and key stakeholders.





TOOLKIT BY CO\*LAB



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**We couldn't have done this without the support and inspiration from so many others. We have been inspired and have learned from the principles & wisdom of:**

- Art of Hosting & Harvesting conversations
- The Natural Step Framework
- Oasis Game
- City Repair
- Hub Halifax
- Better Block
- Tactical Urbanism
- Candy Chang
- Design Thinking
- Lean Start-up
- Authentic Leadership in Action Institute
- Project for Public Spaces

**CO\*LAB**

A social impact agency that hosts innovative forms of public participation to deliver tactical, local and community-based projects.

Get in touch if you're interested in working with us.