

1ST EDITION

DIY COMMUNITY

COOKBOOK

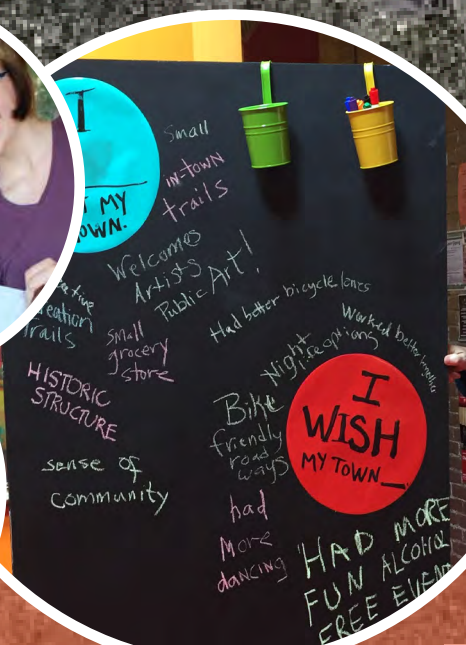
CREATED BY



COMMUNITY
WORKSHOP

A DO-IT-YOURSELF
GUIDE TO MAKING
YOUR COMMUNITY A
MORE LIVABLE PLACE

Dive in and start cooking up happier,
safer, healthier, stronger, more
connected and livable towns and
neighborhoods.



COVER PHOTOS: BURLINGTON PARTNERSHIP FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY (STENCILS); WARD JOYCE DESIGN (CHECKERS); COMMUNITY WORKSHOP (CHALKBOARD)

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1ST EDITION
NOVEMBER 2019

DIY COMMUNITY COOKBOOK

CREATED BY

AARP Vermont and Community Workshop LLC

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY

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DIYCOMMUNITYCOOKBOOK.COM

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ABOUT US.



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AARP VERMONT

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization with 125,000 members in Vermont and nearly 40 million members nationally. Through a wide array of special benefits, services and information resources, we help our members make important choices, reach their goals and dreams, and make the most of life after 50.

Associate State Director: Kelly Stoddard Poor



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COMMUNITY WORKSHOP LLC

Imagine a brighter future for your community.
Now let's make it real.

Community Workshop helps people come together to create great communities. CW is a small Vermont-based consulting firm that brings creative engagement, planning and placemaking to towns, cities and organizations across North America.

Principals: Rebecca Sanborn Stone and David Hohenschau

ABOUT AARP LIVABLE COMMUNITIES.

For over a decade AARP Vermont has been fully committed to helping make Vermont towns, cities and neighborhoods more livable. A livable community is a place where people of all ages can thrive—with access to appropriate and affordable housing and transportation options, with close proximity to services such as health care, and with desirable features including shopping, gathering places and outdoor spaces. Such a community enhances personal independence, allows residents to age in place, and engages people of all ages in civic, economic and social life.

A new facet of this work has been a focus on promoting community “placemaking” efforts around the state. Placemaking projects are focused on activating public spaces by strengthening the connection between people and the places they share. It often begins with temporary changes with the goal of leading to permanent, long-term impact that builds social capital and supports healthy, active lifestyles for people of all ages and abilities. From education, workshops and hands-on projects to public outreach, advocacy and collaboration, AARP Vermont has become a leader on this front. Overwhelmingly, older Vermonters want to age in place. Cultivating public spaces in which to gather, socialize and engage with others is an integral part of a livable community.

AARP and other partner organizations recognize a need and a desire among communities across the state to transform their public spaces through low-cost, high impact interventions—like the DIY recipes featured in this publication. We hope to inspire those who have a vision for their community to take action by providing ideas, support and resources for positive change.

MORE ON AARP LIVABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAMS: LIVABLE@AARP.ORG | FOLLOW US: [TWITTER@AARPLIVABLE](https://twitter.com/AARPLIVABLE)
LIKE US: [FACEBOOK/AARPLIVABLECOMMUNITIES](https://facebook.com/AARPLIVABLECOMMUNITIES) | STAY INFORMED: AARP.ORG/LIVABLE-SUBSCRIBE



WITH THANKS AND ADMIRATION.

.....

TO EVERYONE COOKING UP LIVABLE PLACES

This cookbook was inspired by—and is dedicated to—the creative community members everywhere who are taking change into their own hands. We're grateful to people doing small things, big things, and really anything to spark change and momentum in their towns and neighborhoods.

TO THE DO-IT-YOURSELFERS IN VERMONT AND BEYOND

The idea for this guide comes from two places. In Vermont, we've been inspired by the many small towns and organizations that are working hard on livability and placemaking. They are adapting and remixing urban ideas and creating their own rural solutions, often on a shoestring. We're featuring many of their stories and projects:

<i>Bethel Revitalization Initiative and Bethel Better Block</i>	<i>Hardwick Community Trails</i>
<i>Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community and The Image Farm</i>	<i>Langdon Street Alive (Montpelier)</i>
<i>Connect Hyde Park</i>	<i>Pop-Up Theater</i>
<i>Danville Village to Village</i>	<i>Northfield Common Connections</i>
<i>Activating Alley Lane (Brattleboro)</i>	<i>Winooski Parklet Project</i>

Numerous groups and individuals have been pushing the boundaries on creating vibrant, livable places at the national level. We're inspired and have learned from numerous groups including AARP's Livable Communities programs, Andrew Howard and Team Better Block, Project for Public Spaces, Street Plans Collaborative, Walk [Your City], Isaac Kremer and Candy Chang.

TO OUR VERMONT PLACEMAKING PARTNERS

We're lucky to work with a great team of partners and collaborators in Vermont. Thanks to each of them for their thoughtful ideas and contributions to this cookbook and the projects within.

<i>Richard Amore Vermont Department of Housing + Community Development</i>	<i>Amy Cunningham Vermont Arts Council</i>	<i>Alissa Matthews Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food + Markets</i>
<i>Michele Bailey Vermont Arts Council</i>	<i>Gary Holloway Vermont Department of Housing + Community Development</i>	<i>Lisa Ryan Preservation Trust of Vermont</i>
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	<i>Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital</i>	

DIY COMMUNITY COOKBOOK

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STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS AND ALL THE INSPIRATION YOU NEED TO CREATE SIMPLE, INEXPENSIVE PROJECTS AND SPARK CHANGE IN YOUR TOWN OR NEIGHBORHOOD.

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PHOTOS, TOP TO BOTTOM:
MONTPELIER PARKLET | WARD
JOYCE DESIGN

HINESBURG POP-UP PARK
PLANNING | CATHY RYAN

HYDE PARK POP-UP PLAY TRAIL
| COMMUNITY WORKSHOP



WELCOME TO THE DIY COMMUNITY COOKBOOK.

THIS BOOK IS FOR THE DREAMERS AND THE MAKERS, THE MOVERS AND THE SHAKERS.

We've all seen Main Streets with empty storefronts and crumbling sidewalks. We've seen streets designed more for cars than for people, and people disconnected from neighbors. Big problems can feel overwhelming and out of our control. Small projects can feel like a drop in the bucket. But we believe that everything starts with a spark, and that everyone is capable of igniting one.

In the past decade there has been an explosion of small, quick, inexpensive and experimental livability projects in cities and urban neighborhoods. They are driving major changes in planning, equity and engagement.

We see the same benefits in the small Vermont communities where placemaking projects are catching on:

- Take Montpelier, which started with Vermont's first parklet in a parking space. That parklet has moved and transformed, and helped spark a statewide interest in placemaking.
- Take tiny Bethel, which started just by creating a tiny pocket park on Main Street. That led to a pop-up

university, which led to Vermont's first Better Block project, which led to major public art projects and downtown reinvestment.

- Or take Hinesburg. Planners attended an AARP Placemaking workshop and learned about these recipes. They went home and combined them into a vibrant pop-up event to gather input on a park and create the momentum to act.

Still, even low-cost projects can take more funding, expertise and resources than rural areas have. Too many towns are reinventing the wheel or don't know where to start. We're proud to release the first edition of the *DIY Community Cookbook*—the first resource of its kind geared toward places with small budgets and big heart.

We hope you'll use the recipes and ideas here to inspire and guide your own ideas. We hope you'll use them as a starting point for creating your own solutions to community needs. We hope you'll have fun in the process. And we hope you'll tell us how it goes and what other recipes you'd like to try in your

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THE DIY COMMUNITY APPROACH.

This book is full of projects that could be truly do-it-yourself affairs. You could do them alone, in a single afternoon. And if you're the only person around ready to start improving your community, then by all means go for it.

Any individual—or project—can have an impact by itself. But the DIY community approach is most

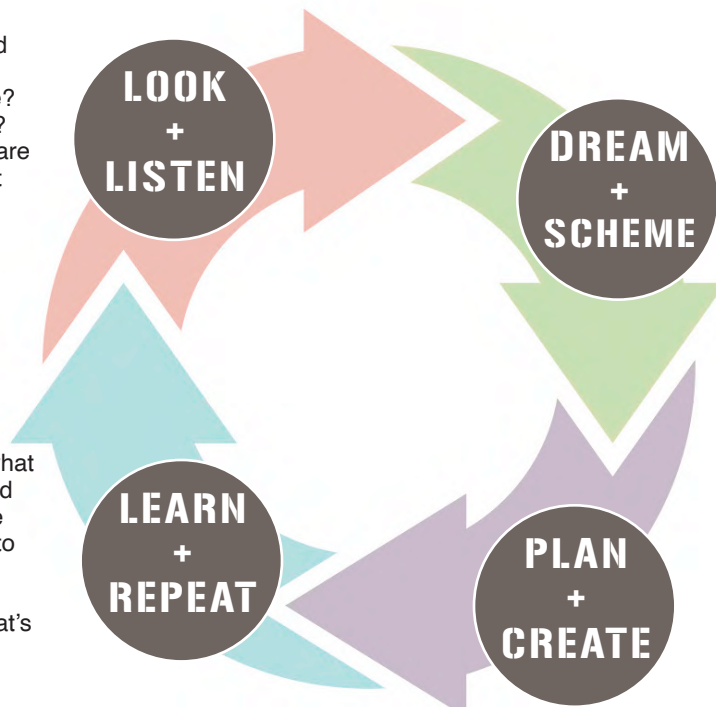
powerful when it's less about standalone projects and more about a culture of community-led action.

If you're looking to really spark change—or change that lasts—then start by shifting from DIY to DIO (do-it-*ourselves*) and from single projects to a broader strategy of experimental, incremental, inspired improvements.

Take a look (or walk) around your community. What's needed and what's possible? What needs brightening up? What feels unsafe? Where are people disconnected? What would delight people?

Use your DIY project as an experiment. Snap photos. Collect data. Talk to people. Find out what worked and what didn't, what people loved and what they imagine next. See who's energized and ready to do more. Then start again:

Now what's needed and what's possible?



Start thinking about the big ideas and goals you'd like to accomplish and very small ways to test them out or start. Find out who's doing good things, who needs help, and where there are gaps.

Once you have a great project idea, make it even better. Can you combine a few small projects into a more powerful demo? Can you find partners and engage new volunteers? Can you build skills or gather data for a future project? Then make it happen and make it fun.

HOW TO USE THIS COOKBOOK.

There's no wrong way to use this cookbook. Choose a single project to try or combine them all into a powerful event. Use the ideas and tips to inspire your own thinking or reference the how-tos to learn more about DIY community projects.

WHAT YOU'LL FIND

We've organized this book into two main sections:

- **HOW-TOS:** Quick overviews of the key skills you need to make your DIY projects successful. Start here for info on fundraising, building a team and choosing materials.
- **RECIPES:** Step-by-step instructions for some common DIY community projects, along with many ways to adapt them and make them your own. Find a project that works for your community and see how other places have made it happen.

We've organized the recipes into Easy, Intermediate and Challenging categories to help you find the right place to start. But you'll quickly see that there are ways to adapt every recipe to make it simple or complex. Pick something that interests you, think through the steps, and create something that works for you. The best way to do that is to start small, work together, experiment—and have fun.

WHAT YOU WON'T FIND

We won't give you shopping lists. We won't give you exact dimensions and architectural plans. Why not? Because we believe that every project should be created for the specific place and people it will serve. Use these recipes to learn about general steps and ways to design a project that works for you. Visit us online for some free kits, templates and plans (and let us know what else you'd like to see).

DIY VERMONT.

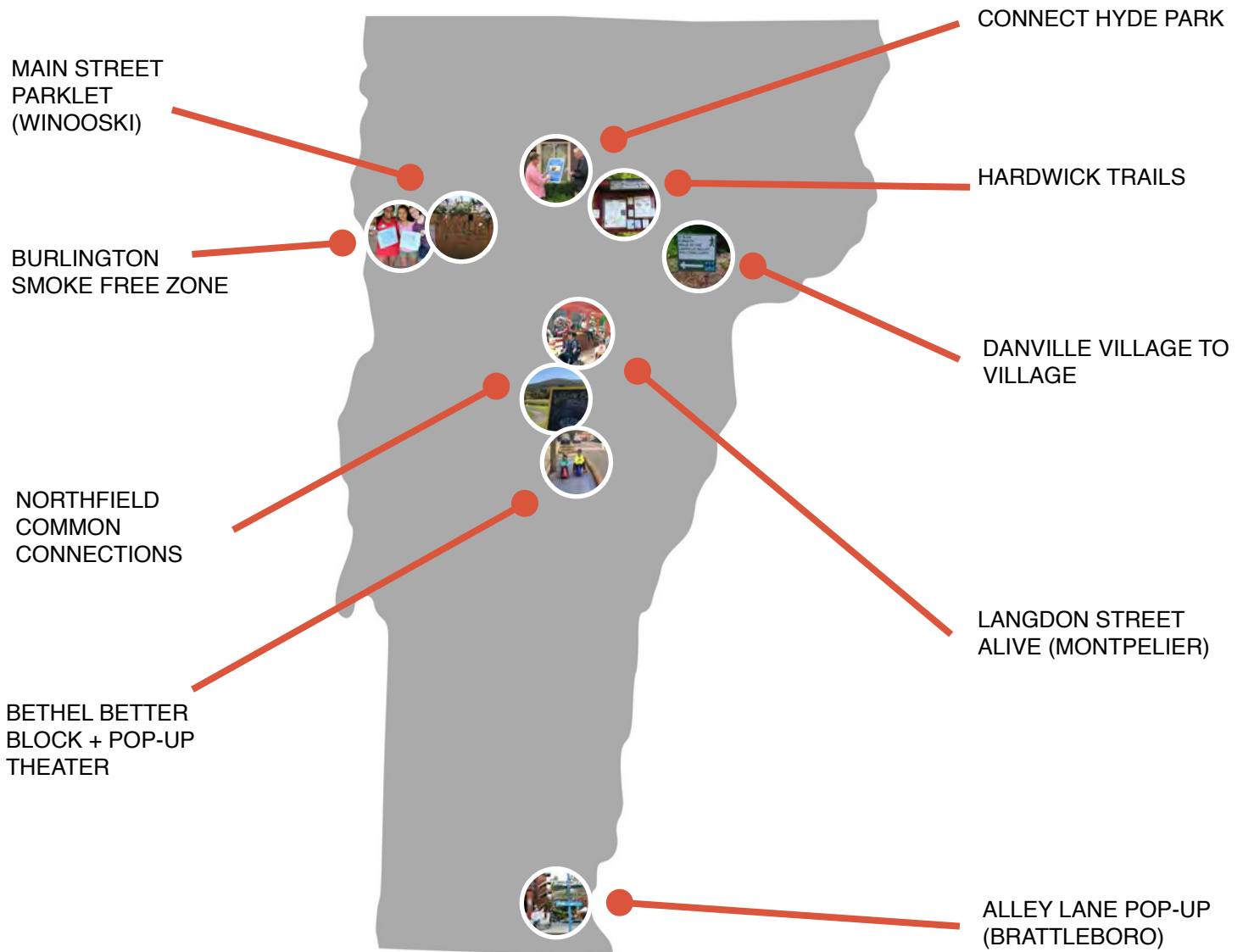
Placemaking, tactical urbanism and DIY community projects are happening all over the world, and they have been for years. Indeed, these recipes aren't new ideas. Many have been around for decades or are inspired by other placemaking and tactical urbanism projects.

"Small towns" in much of the world might mean 50,000 people. Working in Vermont, where many communities are under 2,000 in population, we've found that even the simplest urban projects can still tap out local resources. And even the best guides and resources designed for broader audiences can still be challenging to apply in areas with limited resources or don't fit with small town culture.

This book is intended to make those exciting projects accessible to communities with limited staff and resources, whatever their size or location. We've chosen projects that address many of the challenges common in small towns and rural areas, but needs like accessibility and economic development are common everywhere. And we've tested and worked with a range of Vermont communities to find out what actually works and to gather success stories. You'll find many of those stories here.

We hope you're inspired by the work happening here in Vermont—a small state with a big do-it-yourself spirit—and take some time to learn more.

WE'RE FEATURING:







HOW-TO.

GET PERMISSION

BUILD A TEAM

FIND FUNDING

MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE

SPREAD THE WORD

GET PERMISSION

Guerrilla projects can be great, but for most situations you'll need some kind of permission. That can be very quick and easy for small, temporary and simple projects. It can be a lengthy process for other situations or more complex projects. Start by talking to people early and finding out exactly what you will need to make your case and clear the way.

THINK IT THROUGH.

ASK YOURSELF:

MAKE PLANS:

1

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

- Who owns the site or property where your project will be (individual, business, municipality, state)?
- Who else has authority over what happens there (town government, boards or commissions, landlord)?
- Who may care or be strongly impacted (abutters, other site users or stakeholders)?

2

WHAT'S COOL + WHAT'S NOT?

- What federal, state or local laws relate to your project or site?
- Are there guidelines from neighborhood associations, historic districts, school zones or other areas?
- What are the policies or preferences of private landowners or property

3

WHAT'S THE PERMIT PROCESS?

- Is a formal permit or permission needed for your site and project and what is the process is for applying?
- What requirements might you need to meet (such as insurance, a design plan, materials list or traffic control)?
- What costs are associated with the permit itself or with meeting permit requirements?

- Officials are here to help. Start by asking someone to help you figure out what you need to know.
- If your project spans multiple properties or sites, you'll need to get all of them on board.
- Some public spaces and roads are governed and managed by a local government, but others are under state control. Find out which.
- Start simple. The more complicated (and larger) your project gets, the more likely you'll hit roadblocks.
- A site or project may be subject to regulations on many levels (local road guidelines, sign regulations, zoning bylaws and state health codes).
- Rules can have exceptions. Don't be afraid to ask—respectfully—whether it's possible to try something new or get an exemption.
- Start very early. Some permit processes can take weeks or months to navigate and you may need to revise your plan.
- Be prepared. Research whether your idea has been allowed in other places.
- Anticipate what problems might arise and how you'll address them.
- Ask for help. Officials or owners are often glad to help you make sure your project will work.

GETTING PERMISSION, CONT.

4

WHAT'S YOUR PLAN B?

ASK YOURSELF:

- What aspects of your project are least likely to be allowed?
- How you can change your site or concept if necessary?
- What alternate time frames, materials or construction methods might work?

MAKE PLANS:

- Don't wait to make a plan B. Decisions can take awhile and you don't want to be stuck if you get a last minute "no."
- If your project is turned down, find out why. You may not be able to change the decision, but you'll know for next time.
- Be flexible. Sometimes a small detail or one design aspect can hold up the whole project. If you can adjust that small thing, you may sail through.



SAMPLE PERMIT PLANNER | SUMMER PARKLET

PROJECT ELEMENT	WHAT'S NEEDED	ENTITY	PROCESS + TIMING	WHAT'S NEEDED	PLAN B
Parklet base (two parking spaces)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term parking permit (1 week) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply through town clerk (2 weeks out) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$25 fee • Insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use church parking lot
Pop-up taco stand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendor permit • Health dept. waiver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town (vendor) • State (health) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply through town clerk (2 weeks out) • Contact state (2 months out) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$50 fee • Description of stand, timing, food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for food truck with its own permits
Sidewalk stencil signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal permission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let them know plan and materials (1 month out) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only chalk allowed; must clean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay off town sidewalks

BUILD A TEAM

Some projects truly are do-it-yourself affairs. But most of the time it's easier and more fun if you have a team. Your specific project will dictate who you need, how many people, and for what roles. Read on for info about how to identify and work with partners and volunteers.

THINK IT THROUGH.

ASK YOURSELF:

1

WHO'S
INTERESTED?

- Who has worked on similar projects or issues in the past?
- What impacts will your project have and who cares about those impacts?
- What type of project are you planning and who cares about those issues or projects?
- Who is looking for a way to connect or get involved?

2

WHAT ARE THE
PLANNING +
LEADERSHIP
ROLES?

- Who will make decisions about the project and planning?
- How much planning and design is needed and how much is set?
- What roles need to be filled (leadership, planning tasks, coordination) and what's expected?
- How will a planning team or organizers work together?

3

HOW
ELSE CAN
PEOPLE GET
INVOLVED?

- What specific tasks and needs will you have throughout the project?
- When and where will you need people and how many?
- What are some more creative or unusual ways people could contribute?
- What's in it for them?
- Are there any limitations or restrictions on involvement?

MAKE PLANS:

- Start when your idea is just an idea. Invite others to help shape it.
- Start with the usual suspects. Talk to people you've worked with before or know make good partners.
- Go beyond the usual suspects. Think about groups you wouldn't ordinarily work with.
- Get personal. Direct invitations and asks mean the most.

- Never turn down interested volunteers, even if you don't think you need them. Find a role somewhere.
- Be strategic. Think about who will be impacted or served by the project and who needs to be on board. Include them in project leadership.
- Set clear norms. Early on, agree on how you will work together, make decisions, and treat each other.

- Think beyond typical volunteers. Needs might include supply donations, professional services, photography or media assistance, or transporting supplies.
- Be clear about the specific times and places you need help, what skills are needed, what volunteers should expect, and what you are asking.
- If possible, open it up. Sometimes people will step up to offer something surprising.
- Be clear, fair and transparent about any restrictions on volunteers or offerings.

BUILDING A TEAM, CONT.

4

HOW WILL YOU FIND HELP?

- Where can you post volunteer opportunities or project information?
- What groups or individuals can you ask directly?
- How early will you need to ask people to sign up?
- How will you manage and track volunteer sign-ups ?

ASK YOURSELF:

MAKE PLANS:

- Start with people or groups who you know are likely volunteers. Try volunteer lists, service clubs, school service programs and corporate programs.
- Decide what information you need to collect from volunteers and set up a form or way to do it. Several online platforms like signup.com offer ways to post opportunities and collect information.
- Give options. You'll get more people if they can help on their own time and terms.

5

HOW WILL YOU MANAGE + SUPPORT YOUR TEAM?

- How will you communicate and coordinate with volunteers?
- How can you clearly explain what's needed and set expectations?
- What will volunteers need to stay happy, healthy and safe?
- What will you do if people don't show up?
- How you can celebrate and build long-term investment?

- Communicate with volunteers about where to be, when to be there, and what to bring. Ask them to confirm.
- When in doubt, ask volunteers to sign a waiver. Be sure youth volunteers have parents' permission.
- Provide safety equipment, water, snacks, tools, or whatever volunteers will need.
- Plan for no-shows. You'll always have some people who don't show.
- Keep your team happy. Make it a party, celebrate, and engage them again soon.

SAMPLE TEAM PLANNER | SUMMER PARKLET

TEAM NEED	TASKS	COMMITMENTS + REQUIREMENTS	WHEN	WHERE	WHO
Core team (3 leaders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead teams: Design/Build; Program; Outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly meetings and leading own team; past project experience needed 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core team meetings at coffee shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask winter pop-up helpers
Design team (3-5 people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create concept • Design elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kickoff meeting and 3-4 other meetings; independent work • Design experience helpful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kickoff in March • Other team meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kickoff at Town Hall • Work from anywhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask college art dept. • Advertise to list
Launch party volunteers (12-16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifts at launch party (setup, cleanup, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-hour shift (or more) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parklet site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soccer team • Rotary

FIND FUNDING

Even when you're starting with a low-cost community project, you'll likely still need some funding to make it happen. Start by thinking about the true costs of your project and where you can be flexible. Learn more about how to tap traditional funding channels like grants or fundraisers, as well as creative ways to piece together a budget and resources.

THINK IT THROUGH.

ASK YOURSELF:

1

WHAT DO YOU
REALLY NEED?

- What “hard” or direct costs are required for your project?
- What materials or equipment will you need, in what quantities, and at what costs?
- What additional costs might you have (insurance, cleanup, advertising, permits)?
- What is the total estimated cost range for the project?

2

WHAT DO
YOU HAVE?

- What funding might be available for your project from your group or partners?
- Is funding confirmed and in hand or still pending?
- What materials, tools, equipment or other resources do you have on hand?
- Who might be able to donate supplies, services or other resources?
- Where might you find low-cost or free materials?
- Can you borrow supplies or equipment from a neighbor, partner organization or business?
- Who can contribute time to the project?
- Can you adjust the project design based on what is available?

3

WHAT CAN
YOU BEG,
BORROW OR
STEAL?

MAKE PLANS:

- Think beyond the likely suspects. How about health agencies, childcare and senior centers, realtors, town committees and schools?
- Play the long game. Think about what might happen after your project and who might help carry it forward. Involve them early.
- Look for ways to substitute products or reduce your needs.
- If you have funding from a group or organization, find out whether there are any restrictions on its use.
- Consider whether you can repurpose or reuse existing materials or substitute something close to what you need.
- Those who can't donate or volunteer may be glad to lend you something.
- If you're asking for loans or donations, communicate about when you'll need items, what condition you need, when you'll be done, and whether you need to return everything.
- After you gather donations, check your budget again and figure out how much funding you really need to cover gaps.

FINDING FUNDING, CONT.

ASK YOURSELF:

MAKE PLANS:



WHAT FUNDING SOURCES FIT YOUR PROJECT?

- What grants or local funds might support your project?
- What local businesses or organizations might care about your cause or gain publicity by sponsoring?
- Is there town or city funding for community projects?
- What are the “match” requirements or restrictions on funding sources?

- Approach potential donors early. Some spend their budgets early in the year. Others have specific windows for requests.
- Businesses may not have donation money, but do have advertising funds.
- Grants can require a lot of work. If you only need a small amount of money, be sure it’s worth your time.
- Will you make or buy something that another group could use at the end? Ask early and you might find someone to share the cost.



HOW CAN YOU RAISE FUNDS?

- What fundraisers have worked for other groups in the past?
- What kind of fundraiser or activity might benefit the project in other ways?
- How you can make it easy for people to donate and what might they get in return?
- Is there a good (or bad) time to be asking for money?

- You can always set out donation buckets, but think more creatively. Find a fundraiser that will be worth your time (and fun too). Even better if it aligns with or supports your mission.
- Plan carefully. Try not to overlap with other local fundraisers.
- Think about where to reach the core audience for your project. Can you set up a booth at an event? Run an online fundraiser?

SAMPLE BUDGET PLANNER | SUMMER PARKLET

BUDGET ITEM	QUANTITY NEEDED	ON HAND + SOURCES	COST	TOTAL COST	NOTES
Pallets	10 (good condition)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 (school—loan) • 8 (Garden Center) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 (free) • 8 @\$3 each 	• \$24	• Ask Garden Center about borrowing
Paint (red, yellow, orange)	2 qts each	• Hardware store	• 6 @\$15 per quart	• \$90	• Store returns available for \$5 each if color doesn't matter
Parking permit	1 (1 week)	• Town (apply to town clerk)	• \$25	• \$25	• Ask town to waive permit

FUNDING SOURCES.

	SOURCES	TIPS
IN-KIND	<p>Donations or loans of goods and services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food: restaurants or grocery stores, home chefs, local farms • Plants: garden centers, gardeners • Tools or equipment: hardware stores, contractors, town crews • Labor: businesses or schools with volunteer programs, service clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan out donations. Find out when people have supplies and when it's convenient to pick them up. • Offer to thank donors publicly at the event and/or in publicity materials. • Think about the total cost. You might be able to find a free or cheap item, but it could cost more in the long run if you have to pay to transport or fix it. • If people can't offer exactly what you need, think about what you can do with things they do offer.
GRANTS	<p>Donations of money or technical services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community foundations or funders in your project field (such as food/farm funders for a garden project) • Awards, competitions, fellowships • State agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community foundations often have small grant programs designed specifically for local projects. Look on their websites or call and ask for help. • Plan early. Many grants only come around once a year or have short application windows. • Find out whether grants require your group to be a registered nonprofit. If you're not, a town or other nonprofit might can serve as a "fiscal sponsor" for you.
DONORS	<p>Financial donors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate giving programs • Service organizations (like Rotary International) • Institutions (hospitals, colleges) • Municipalities • Community donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list of local organizations and businesses that donate to community projects. Search online or in newspapers to find out what they've supported in the past. • Stop in or give a call. The best way to ask for funds is to personally connect with someone. • Managers at many businesses can make small donations themselves. If you're asking for more, you may need to submit a formal application.
FUNDRAISERS	<p>Soliciting community donations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crowdfunding campaigns • Donation jars or booths/tables • Fundraising events (auctions, raffles, dinners, races) • Challenges or competitions • Naming opportunities • Selling swag 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital crowdfunding campaigns can be a great way to quickly raise money online. Do your research on platforms, since they each charge different fees. Some, like ioby or Patronicity, are designed specifically for community projects. • Think carefully about typical fundraisers like bake sales or raffles. When you factor in time and supplies, they can cost you more money than you earn. • Think creatively. Can you offer a fundraiser that ties in with your project or that would also attract volunteers?



MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE

Whatever your project, you want people to use it and enjoy it. Aim for “universal design” in everything from your planning process to your project activities. That means making sure that all people can access, understand, and use what you create regardless of differences (age, ability or disability, race or culture, income or resources). You won’t meet the needs of every person in the community, but if you make your project more inclusive, then it’s a win.

THINK IT THROUGH.

ASK YOURSELF:

1

WHAT’S YOUR
“UNIVERSE” OF
USERS?

- What populations, demographics, races, ages, abilities and disabilities are present in your community?
- Who is most likely to want to use or access your project, and who could benefit from it?
- What are their particular needs, talents, barriers and interests?

2

WHERE ARE
THE
BARRIERS?

- How might people want to use, enjoy or participate in your project?
- What barriers might prevent people from doing so (physical, transportation, cost, information)?
- What might make people uncomfortable or discourage them from participating?
- What might prevent people from even learning about the project?

3

HOW CAN
YOU MAKE
THE DESIGN
UNIVERSAL?

- What general changes to the project, activities or design could make it more inclusive and easier to access?
- What choices of site, materials, design or project would allow more people to use it or feel comfortable?
- How can you share information, reach out, and connect with users to inform them of accessibility?
- How can you include diverse users in the design process?

MAKE PLANS:

- Start with curiosity and empathy. Watch people on the street or near your project site. Pay attention to who’s in the community and where they struggle.
- Try not to make assumptions. Ask people directly about their experiences and ask those who serve different groups.
- Think about who you don’t see—people who may not feel welcome or able to access services.
- Go down the list of differences and think individually about each one. How would language barriers look different from physical barriers or age barriers?
- Think about visible barriers, but don’t forget invisible barriers and differences too. You can see age or a wheelchair. You can’t see learning differences or many medical conditions.
- Scan your project for any major barriers, such as a site that’s inaccessible to many or a time that won’t work for working parents.
- Find small ways to improve the concept. Can you move a parklet to a space near handicapped parking? If you’re building a play street, can you offer safer and more comfortable seating?
- Do no harm. Be sure your project does nothing to reduce accessibility (like blocking sidewalks).

MAKING IT ACCESSIBLE, CONT.

ASK YOURSELF:

4

CAN YOU OFFER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS?

- What users or needs still may not be supported by your project?
- What specific accommodations would help address those needs?
- What alternatives or options can you offer those who are unable to participate?
- How can you inform people of the options and accommodations you offer?

5

IS YOUR PLANNING PROCESS INCLUSIVE?

- Do your partners or planning team represent the diverse users and groups in the community?
- How can you make the project planning, design and leadership more welcoming and inclusive?

MAKE PLANS:

- After doing your best to make the project universally accessible, think about whose needs are still not being met. Can you offer special services like transportation, translation, or cost assistance?
- How will people learn about the project and decide whether they can participate? Share info about accessibility and offer a way for people to ask questions.

- If certain users or groups are not represented, identify people in the community you might approach. Personal invitations help people feel welcome.
- Have people had negative experiences in the past? Even if your process is open and inclusive, some will be reluctant to try again if they have been excluded.

SAMPLE ACCESSIBILITY PLANNER | SUMMER PARKLET

USER DIFFERENCES	POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO USE	UNIVERSAL DESIGN IMPROVEMENTS	POTENTIAL ACCOMMODATIONS
Age (older adults)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility and stability (parklet surface) • Vision (info fliers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat, secure surface with good traction • Reduce text and increase font size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benches near parklet for those unable to enter • Large-print fliers for senior center
Language (English language learners—ELL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language (info and events) • Feeling unwelcome or unsafe in public spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual symbols on fliers and events • ELL community leaders on planning team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translated materials • Volunteer translators for event
Geography (neighborhood)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation (no safe way to access parklet from some parts of town) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign as mobile parklet that could move to other neighborhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer free shuttle for launch party

UNIVERSAL DESIGN STRATEGIES.

	EXAMPLES	TIPS
MOBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to site surfaces, materials and construction • Benches, seating and rest areas • Location near accessible parking, curb ramps and good-quality sidewalks • Location near bike, pedestrian and public transportation options • Places to leave strollers, walking devices or other equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about where and how people will move around the site. Then think about how the experience would be different for people with different devices, body sizes, or abilities. • If you're not sure how your space will work for someone with mobility challenges, try it out. Use a pair of crutches or push a stroller to see where accessibility needs work. • Choose an accessible site. Look for ramps, accessible restrooms, and adequate parking.
SENSORY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage, lighting and colors with high contrast and good visibility • Information available in multiple formats (print, audio, video) • Sound systems and good acoustics • Minimal loud noises, flashing lights and other common sensory triggers • Large, clear fonts; color palettes visible to those with color-blindness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to make text on signage, documents and messaging as short and simple as possible. That's good for everyone. • Think about how people with different sensory abilities would experience the project. Design it to be welcoming for all. • Check websites and forms for ADA compliance. • Use free online tools to check contrast, color palettes and other details.
LANGUAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple, clear, short and readable text with headings and bullets • Inclusive and sensitive word choices • Language that resonates and feels comfortable to people in the community • Graphic cues or symbols making text more understandable • Clear forms and instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many people who might struggle to read text, from young children to those with vision, processing or language barriers. The same steps can improve readability for all. • Many common words and phrases actually have darker origins or connotations that may be seen as disrespectful today. Do your homework and learn which words to avoid. • Use a free readability checker to scan text. Aim for about a 6th-grade reading level.
SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free events, discounted passes and assistance for those with cost barriers • Thoughtfulness around triggers for those dealing with trauma • Clear messages welcoming all people • Childcare, food, transportation or other resources to help people attend • Adequate restrooms, spaces for nursing moms or medical needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of all the costs of participation. A potluck meeting might seem fun, but costs from transportation and childcare to the ingredients and time to cook can be a barrier for some. • If you can't offer resources like accessible restrooms, then ask a local business or organization to open their space. • Think beyond physical barriers and consider what will make people comfortable. Offer different ways of participating and styles of events.



SPREAD THE WORD

You've got a great project in mind, but will they come? You can't just expect people to show up, volunteer or support your project. Don't rely on a standard poster or press release. Think carefully about whom you need to inform and the best ways to reach them, and then get creative. With a little planning and strong messaging, you can create a buzz and make your project a success. Read on for tips on how to spread the word early, widely, often and effectively.

THINK IT THROUGH.

ASK YOURSELF:

1

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW WHAT?

- Who needs to authorize or support your project?
- Who will be excited about it and who can help you?
- Who will be impacted or concerned?
- Who is likely to attend or participate?
- What info do these stakeholders need?

2

WHEN DO THEY NEED TO KNOW IT?

- Which partners or officials need to be informed early on?
- Are you trying to recruit attendees, volunteers or collaborators?
- How much lead time will people need to get involved or show up?

3

HOW DO PEOPLE GET NEWS?

- What communication channels do people use in your community: Newspapers? Social media? Old-fashioned bulletin boards?
- How else do people get news: Word of mouth? Email lists? At the dump or soccer sidelines?
- Where can you find each different group you want to reach and what channels do they each use?

MAKE PLANS:

- Think beyond the likely suspects. Think about less common partners like health agencies, childcare and senior centers, realtors, town committees, and schools.
- Play the long game. Think about what might happen after your project and who might help carry it forward. Involve them early.
- If you need to involve municipal officials, start early. It can take awhile to get on their agendas.
- Check deadlines for local media. Their publication deadlines may be sooner than yours.
- Don't forget communication after the project. Take lots of photos and spread the word about your project results – and what's next.
- Nothing beats direct, personal invitations. Talk to people one-on-one.
- Use traditional channels like local news, direct mail, websites and email. They still work.
- Get creative—you can spread the word via public art, sidewalk stencils, notes taped on pizza boxes and much more.

SPREADING THE WORD, CONT.

ASK YOURSELF:

MAKE PLANS:

4

WHAT ARE YOUR CALLS TO ACTION?

- What specific actions do you want people to take when they hear about your project (click, donate, come, volunteer, share, etc.)?
- How can people learn more, ask questions or get involved?
- In what ways do your stakeholders like to participate and what gets in the way?

- Make it as easy as possible for people to sign up, come, get more info or spread the word. Have simple sign-up forms and create fliers or messages they can pass along.
- Don't expect people to dive into a project all at once. Give them an easy way to start (sign up for news or click to learn more). As they get more interested, you can ask them to get involved in new ways.

5

WHY WILL PEOPLE CARE?

- Why do you care?
- What aspects or outcomes of the project will really matter to people?
- What messages will resonate, catch their attention and make them want to learn more?
- Who are the best messengers for different stakeholders?

- Tell people why you are doing the project. Tell stories—yours and others'.
- Connect your project to things people already care about. For downtown business owners, that might be attracting more shoppers. For parents, it might be safety or activities for kids.
- Start with a conversation rather than a request. Ask people directly what matters to them and how you can help.

SAMPLE OUTREACH PLANNER | SUMMER PARKLET

AUDIENCE	CHANNELS	TIMING	MESSAGES	ACTIONS
Families with Kids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School newsletter • Playgroup Facebook page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook posts starting 1 month out • Newsletters: Save the Date 1 month before; details 1 week before 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm involved because I want to create a free, safe place for families to sit and play downtown • Free launch party will offer fun for families, with food, games and music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit website or RSVP to Facebook event for updates and more info • Come to event [insert date, time, place]
Restaurant Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct outreach • Chamber of Commerce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Door-to-door visits 3 months out • Chamber newsletter 1 month out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parklet will test ways to attract downtown visitors and patrons • The launch party is a chance to gain exposure and offer samples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign up to be a food vendor for the launch party • Talk with us about how the parklet could support your business
Public Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct outreach • Through Town Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting 3 months before (concept) • 1 month before (plan, ask) • 1 week before (final prep) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parklets have helped other towns test ideas and reduce long-term costs • Let's work together on a design that works for you • Our volunteers can help with some clean up tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support parklet concept • Review design and offer ideas to make it work for crews • Help move pallets

CHOOSING CHANNELS.

	CHANNELS	TIPS
MEDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local / regional newspapers Public access TV Major TV networks Radio stations Podcasters or videocasters Paid advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to reporters directly and build relationships. Local news outlets usually want content and are glad to cover local events. Know the outlets. Understand what kind of stories they cover, what formats, and when they publish. Develop your pitch. Figure out why your project or event is newsworthy, when you want it shared, and why it would be of interest to readers.
DIGITAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Websites Email lists or newsletters Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube) Online discussion forums or bulletin boards Event calendars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many projects need a webpage to post information. But you may not need a whole site. See whether an existing site can host your info before starting a new one. If you don't have a large following or contact list, find some partners who do. Most groups are glad to spread the word. Only use an online channel if your audience uses it too.
PRINT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bulletin boards + shop windows Signs + banners Posters + fliers Direct mail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List the places in your community where people post information. Find out which ones are willing to take announcements or posters. Be sure to get permission or look up regulations before hanging signs – some communities have stricter rules than others.
CREATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Street stencils + public art Chalkboards Fliers on pizza boxes, in grocery bags, or in library books Pop-up booths and parklets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People are swamped with messages and advertising. Where are they <i>not</i> expecting to see them? Start there. Connect your creative communications to the project itself. Planning an art project? Use art to spread the word. Doing a survey about a park? Conduct the survey from a parklet.



PHOTOS: LACONIA, NH, PARKS + REC (LEFT); COMMUNITY WORKSHOP







EASY RECIPES.

STREET STENCILS

GIANT CHECKERS

STREET STENCILS

Whether you're creating a pop-up bike lane or getting creative with guerrilla art, street stencils are a great addition to your toolbox. Stencils are an easy way to add markings and messages to streets, sidewalks, or any hard surface. You can use them for signage and safety, easy play installations, or just to make people smile.

EASY

STREET STENCILS

INFORMATION • ART • TRANSPORTATION



minimal-
moderate
planning



2-3 hours
active
1 day total



graphic
design
(optional)



utility knife
stencil cutter
(optional)



\$10-50

INGREDIENTS.

- Stencils or stencil blanks (foam sheets, mylar, posterboard or other stencil material)
- Double-sided tape or adhesive spray
- Tempera, chalk or marking paint (or other desired paint)
- Spray can, paint sprayer, roller or brush
- Cardboard or masking tape

STENCIL TYPES.

PLAN AHEAD.

- Will you be stenciling a road, sidewalk, floor, parking lot, or somewhere else?
- How long do you want your stencils to last? Under what conditions?
- Will you need to remove all traces or can you allow the stencils to fade away?
- What is your surface material and what condition is it in?
- Do you need a custom design or can you find a standard stencil?

STREETS



BETHEL BETTER BLOCK
BETHEL REVITALIZATION INIT.

Creating a pop-up bike lane or crosswalk? Use street stencils to show what's allowed.

PLAY



CONNECT HYDE PARK
COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Turn a sidewalk into a playground with hopscotch, dance steps, or other games.

SIGNAGE



BETHEL BETTER BLOCK
BETHEL REVITALIZATION INIT.

Use sidewalk stencils to advertise an event or to create wayfinding without physical signs.

ART



LET'S GET PURPLE STENCIL KIT
COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Get creative and use stencils to create beauty, color, information or inspiration.

RECIPE.

CHOOSE A TYPE + SITE

The steps and materials for your stencil project will vary a lot depending on what you want to stencil. Start by getting clear on the details, where you want to stencil and for what purpose. If you're just stenciling your driveway, then skip right to the fun part. But if you're planning a larger project or using

public

property, then you need to plan.

IDENTIFYING YOUR SITE + PURPOSE

If you are going to stencil a road or sidewalk, take it seriously. The wrong choices could mean a big fine—or an accident. Talk to your town manager,

RECIPE, CONT.

public works department or private landowner to find out what's allowed, what's not, and how to get permission. Be prepared to talk about types of paint, how long stencils last and how to clean up.

GET DOWN TO DETAILS

Once you know where you'll paint and what's allowed, start getting specific. Look at your site and find a spot that's as smooth, flat and clean as possible. Measure, so you'll know how large your stencil can be.

Think about how much your stencils will be exposed to weather, how much foot traffic they will receive and how long they need to last.

DESIGN YOUR IMAGE

Making stencils is the hardest part, so consider buying one ready-made. It's easy to find large numbers, letters, basic shapes and bike or pedestrian symbols.

If you're making your own, draw it yourself or look for a printable stencil or image online. You'll need a graphic with simple and clean lines that can be done in a single color (multi-colored stencils are usually done with separate stencils and layers). Pay attention to what's left when you cut. You may need to edit an image to simplify or change the size. When in doubt, try it out on scrap paper.

CHOOSE A MATERIAL

You'll draw, trace or print your design onto a stencil "blank" or material. Mylar or plastic stencil materials work the best and hold up well, but they can be hard to find. Foam craft sheets are cheap and durable. Posterboard and cardboard are great for large stencils, but you'll need to laminate or reinforce the edges so they'll hold up to wet paint.

MAKE YOUR STENCILS

You can always draw or trace designs onto blanks. You can print directly onto some materials. You can attach a paper printout to the stencil material and cut through both layers. If you are thinking big, hang cardboard or posterboard on a wall, project your design onto it and then trace. You'll need a sharp utility knife, scissors, or a stencil cutter to cut. Use a

flat mat and work on small sections at a time.

PICK A PAINT

The right paint depends on your surface, how long it should last, and what's allowed. Test your paint and stencil ahead of time to see how well they apply, how much they run, how well they hold up and how easily you can remove them.

- Professional spray chalks or marking chalks are easy to apply, fairly durable and come in multiple colors. They may smudge with rain but take awhile to wear off.
- Kids' spray chalks are intended to wash off easily (but test to be sure!). They usually come in small cans and may be expensive.
- Chalk paint mixes are cheap and easy. Make them thick or thin as needed and apply with a brush or roller. Try grinding up sidewalk chalk sticks to make your own, or make another easy paint from cornstarch, water and food coloring.
- Tempera paint is easy to find and clean. It may smudge with rain but holds up to foot traffic. You can paint or roll it on or thin and use a paint sprayer. If you're looking for something semi-permanent, you can use latex house or indoor paint the same way.

PREP YOUR SITE

Your surface needs to be clean and dry. Sweep up loose dirt and dust and then use a damp cloth or mop if needed. If you're going to be outside, choose a clear, dry day. Set up a barricade or "wet paint" signs. Consider applying a base color if you want your design to stand out.

STENCIL AWAY

Do a couple of test runs to perfect your technique before you start stenciling. Position your stencil and step back to be sure it's right-side up and in the right place. If your design is close to the stencil edge, use cardboard



or tape to mask around it. Use tape or a light spray adhesive to hold your stencil in place. Paint away, but don't apply too much—it can run or bleed. Carefully lift your stencil straight up to see how it came out. If needed, put it back and touch it up. Wipe it off before placing it down again.

MONITOR, CAPTURE + RETOUCH

Snap some photos as soon as the paint is dry. Then keep an eye on them. You may need to touch them up if they get wet or have a lot of traffic. See whether

people interact with them the way you intend. Be ready to clean them off quickly if needed.

CLEAN UP

It may be okay to let your stencils gradually fade away, or you may need to remove them. If you've tested your paint, you'll know what it takes to clean it off. Water and a scrub brush will work for most temporary paints. Don't use solvents, cleaners or pressure washers unless you know they won't damage the surface.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN.

- Don't go it alone. Whether you are going guerrilla or planning a project, invite at least one person to join you. It's much easier (and more fun) if you have extra hands.
- Look for unexpected places to stencil—alley walls, flower pots, stair steps, or even ceilings. Or unexpected ways: "rainworks" use a unique resist coating that only appears when it rains.
- Think beyond the usual symbols and have some fun. Planning a bike lane? How about a zombie or an animal on a bike instead of the standard stencil?
- Color outside the lines. When your stencil is done, add detail or more color, create paths or lines, or add new layers.

IDEA GALLERY.



PHOTOS: (TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT): RAINWORKS, WIKIMEDIA IMAGES, COMMUNITY WORKSHOP, SAN FRANCISCO BICYCLE COALITION (FLICKR), ISTOCK PHOTOGRAPHY

ON THE GROUND

BETHEL, VERMONT.

During the Bethel Better Block Project, volunteers used street stencils for everything from a multi-modal transportation lane to a giant Twister game. Check out what they did with chalk spray and tempera paint.

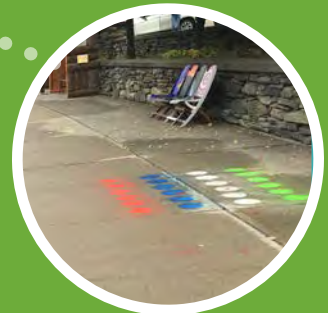
PHOTOS: COMMUNITY WORKSHOP LLC AND TEAM BETTER BLOCK

Tempera paint and custom sidewalk stencils helped build buzz before the event.



Stencils and chalk spray were key to marking the "blue lane." Whimsical designs showed that it wasn't just for bikes.

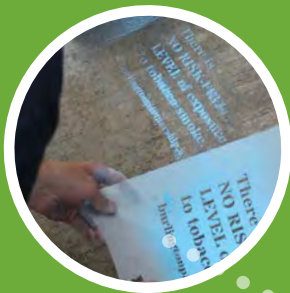
Stencils even added fun touches to the event, with games scattered around town.



BURLINGTON, VERMONT.

The Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community and University of Vermont Libraries worked with designer Matt Heywood of The Image Farm to create an anti-smoking awareness campaign with stencils at the center. They created stencils with smoking awareness statistics and messages. Students and staff stenciled buildings and sites in the city and on campus as smoke-free zones. See how they used design and temporary materials to send a critical message.

PHOTOS: BURLINGTON PARTNERSHIP FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY AND THE IMAGE FARM



After developing a clear goal and campaign concept, organizers created messages and transferred them onto stencils.



Local youth took the message to the streets. With permission, they spray painted buildings, streets and sidewalks.



Stencils are impactful, but even more so when they are part of a coordinated campaign. At the University of Vermont, they spray painted steps to clearly mark a smoke-free zone. Then they stenciled coordinating benches, wrapped poles and hung banners to get the message across.



GIANT CHECKERS

Giant checkerboards and chessboards add instant fun and activity to parks and parklets, festivals or events, indoor spaces and more. Whether you paint a board directly on the ground or create a portable one to take with you, gameboards are a great way to bring people together to play, socialize and be active.

EASY

GIANT CHECKERS

MULTIGENERATIONAL • PLAY • PUBLIC SPACES



minimal
planning



2-3 hours
active
1 day total



no special
skills



tape measure
T-square
tape
stencils



\$50-\$80

INGREDIENTS.

- 24 disks (Frisbees, plates, pail lids, etc.)
- red or white paint (chalk, spray, or liquid)
- black paint (chalk, spray, or liquid)
- marking chalk or pencil
- large piece of cardboard
- square tarp, drop cloth or mat, 12' x 12' or desired size (for portable board)

PLAN AHEAD.

- Will your game board stay on one site or do you want a portable checkers set?
- Will your game be left unattended in a public space?
- If your board will be used outdoors, how long will it stay outdoors?
- Do you want to use your board for chess as well as checkers?

RECIPE.

CHOOSE YOUR BOARD TYPE + SITE

Decide where and how you will use your checkers set. If you plan to paint your board directly on the ground, then find a flat site at least 15' x 15'. Be sure you have permission to use it and that it is safe and accessible. If you want to make a portable board, then find a square tarp or drop cloth about 12' x 12' (or your desired size).

LAY OUT YOUR FRAME

Be sure your surface is clean and dry. Start by laying out a square frame. Use chalk on the ground, or a pencil, chalk or marker for cloth.

- If you are working on the ground, mark one corner. Measure out your desired frame length with a tape measure or rope and mark the second corner. Use a compass or T-square to make a 90-degree angle and then measure to the third corner. Repeat for the fourth corner. Use a straight edge to draw lines connecting the corners and mark the outer edges of the board.
- If you are using a cloth or mat, carefully measure the sides and be sure the cloth is square. If needed, trim one side. If your edges are not

perfectly straight, use the steps above to mark a square frame on the cloth and square the edges.

MAKE A GRID

Note the length of each side of your square. Divide the side length by 8. That number will be the size of each square. (If your board is 80 inches long, your squares will be 10 inches.) Stretch a tape measure between two corners of your board. Starting at one edge, measure the length of a square and make a mark (i.e., 10 inches). Repeat all the way across to mark the sides of eight squares. Repeat on the opposite edge of the board. Using a board or tape measure as a straight edge, draw lines connecting the marks on each side of the board. Repeat the process of measuring, marking and drawing lines going the other direction. When you are done, you'll have a grid of 64 squares.



RECIPE, CONT.

PAINT YOUR SQUARES

Decide on the colors of your board squares. Your background surface will be one color. If it is dark, you will want to paint lighter contrasting squares (usually red or white). If your background is light, try red or black squares. Start by making a template (see Street Stencils for more on materials and techniques). Draw a square of the dimensions you calculated above (i.e., 10" x 10"). Use a utility knife to cut out the center of the square. Position your template over one corner square that you marked and tape or hold it firmly in place. Use permanent spray paint to paint squares on a cloth or for a permanent board on the ground. Use chalk spray for a temporary board. Completely paint in the square; be sure to completely paint the corners and edges. When done, pick up the stencil and repeat, leaving

alternate squares blank. In the next row, leave the first square blank and paint the second to continue the alternating pattern.

MAKE YOUR CHECKERS

Many common items can make great checkers— plastic plates, Frisbees, bucket lids, or tree circles. Choose a disk or circular object that is slightly smaller than the size of your squares. Be sure the disks are unbreakable and safe. If you plan to leave your board outside, choose something durable and waterproof. You'll save time if you can find disks that are already red and black. If you can't find the right colors, spray paint 12 disks red and 12 black (or whichever colors you choose).

MAKE IT YOUR OWN.

- Get creative with materials. Instead of spray painting on the ground, you could use floor tiles or existing tiled pavement. Instead of painting a cloth, you could sew one of patchwork squares. Short on time? You can also buy a premade set.
- Double the fun by adding chess symbols to your disks. You can find outlines of chess shapes online. Download an image and print it out to make a stencil. You can also print or order vinyl stickers to place on your shapes.
- Build a *place* around your game. Add benches and an umbrella to keep people comfortable. Add a sign to welcome people in. Make it the centerpiece of a parklet.
- Plan a tournament or a game day, or bring a portable checkerboard to a park or event.
- Add other giant lawn games to make a play park. You can find free plans online to make inexpensive games like Twister, bowling, Jenga, dominoes or Scrabble.



AARP NATIONAL LIVABILITY CONFERENCE POP-UP PARKLET
DESIGN: ISAAC KREMER
PHOTO: COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

ON THE GROUND

BETHEL, VERMONT.

The Bethel Revitalization Initiative created a temporary checkerboard for a weekend Better Block project. They marked off a board in a parking lot—one of several games and activities set up in a temporary beer garden and concert area. They spray painted tree slices to use as checkers and borrowed a set of giant chess pieces.

PHOTOS: BETHEL REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE AND RICHARD AMORE

Bethel started with a public workshop and site walks to identify what people wanted to see downtown. Top priorities included more games and activities.



A local bar offered its parking lot for a beer garden and stage with live music. Checkers and other games created extra activities to keep people busy.



Volunteers used chalk spray to paint squares and lay out the board. A local forester cut tree circles to serve as checkers and another community loaned a chess set for the day. As in many public spaces, kids repurposed the space for their own games.



MONTPELIER, VT.

In Montpelier, a large chessboard became the centerpiece of a popular downtown pocket park. Designer Ward Joyce created a built-in chessboard made of landscaping tiles, doubling as patio space. He created large, sturdy wooden chess pieces that stood up to weather and ongoing use.

PHOTOS: WARD JOYCE DESIGN

The first step was to lay out the board in the pocket park area and to create a patio surface.



The wooden chess pieces were large enough for the giant checkerboard, sturdy enough for repeated use, and inexpensive enough to leave outside without protection.

The finished board was a key activity to enliven the pocket park and encourage people to spend time.







INTERMEDIATE RECIPES.

CHALKBOARDS

WAYFINDING

POP-UP THEATER



CHALK BOARDS

Community chalkboards are a great tool for gathering ideas, sharing information, or enlivening public spaces. You can make or find them to fit nearly any purpose or budget, from custom kiosks to classroom castoffs. Chalkboards can be structured spaces with answer blanks or just blank walls. Whatever the form, chalkboards are a fun way for people to read and interact with each other's ideas.

CHALKBOARDS

COMMUNITY INPUT • ART • PUBLIC SPACES



moderate
planning



2+ hours active
1+ day total



graphic
design,
carpentry
(optional)



tape measure
other tools as
needed



\$40-200

INGREDIENTS.

- wall or site for freestanding chalkboard
- chalk and container
- stencils and paint or signs
- chalkboard paint, stickers and/or plywood (based on design)
- additional lumber and mounting hardware, as needed

CHALKBOARD OPTIONS.

PLAN AHEAD.

- Is the board primarily intended to gather input, share info, or activate a space?
- Will it be installed for just a day, left in place, or moved around?
- Who can help monitor the wall, record input and keep it clean?
- Will the wall be indoors and protected or open to the elements?
- Are there sign regulations or other permissions needed at your site?

MOUNTED



NORTHEASTERN VT REGIONAL HOSPITAL

The simplest chalkboard is a flat panel mounted on a wall or fence. Whether interior or exterior, you may need to use anchors or first mount a frame on the wall to safely attach your chalkboard.

FREESTANDING



RICHMOND, VT | CLARE ROCK

A freestanding chalkboard is a great option for flexibility. Build or buy a frame with legs and attach your panel for a board that you can easily move around and fit into narrow spaces. Shop around—it may be cheaper to buy a chalkboard than to build one.

KIOSK



HARTFORD, VT | COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Kiosks are freestanding structures with panels arranged in a square or triangle. They are more complicated to assemble, but kiosks are stable, highly visible and can easily fit into small spaces.

RECIPE.

SCOPE OUT A SITE

Find a specific site that will work for the type of chalkboard you want to install, or choose a site and figure out what type and size board will work. At your site, scope out specific spots to install or stand

a chalkboard. Look for a spot that is visible and close to places where people pass by or spend time (i.e., near benches or water fountains). Be sure that neither the wall nor people writing on it will block sidewalks, hallways, doors or paths (you'll need 3-4 feet of clearance). If you're planning to mount your board, you'll need a large, flat wall, fence or posts at

RECIPE, CONT.

eye level. If it's not sturdy enough to anchor a heavy board, consider using chalkboard stickers. If your board will be freestanding, then look for a large, flat area. If you plan to move your chalkboard around or you don't have a particular site in mind, then visit a few likely spots. If your board will be outdoors, look for areas sheltered from wind and rain. Once you've found a spot, take good measurements and photos.

CREATE A CONCEPT

Decide what you want people to do and write. Are you gathering input on a specific question? Is it a public art installation? Will it be a blank "graffiti wall" for open-ended comments and drawings? Will you use a sample project or design your own? Make a sketch to plan the layout. Include spaces for a title, questions, information or signage, writing, and any other content you plan. If you want lines for writing, be sure to plan plenty of space for large handwriting (leave about six inches between lines).

CONSTRUCT THE SURFACE

Buy or build your chalkboard surface, whether painted plywood, stickers, or a ready-made chalkboard. Lay out and create a title, questions, answer blanks or whatever content you've designed. Depending on your materials and skill, you can handwrite or paint on lettering, use stencils, or try stickers or decals. When adding your content, keep in mind how long you want it to last. If you want the prompts and answer blanks to be permanent (and keep people from removing or smudging them), use a standard acrylic or house paint. If you want them to be temporary, regular chalk will do. Chalk markers look polished, but may not erase completely.

INSTALL YOUR CHALKBOARD

Build or buy a frame or any mounting hardware that

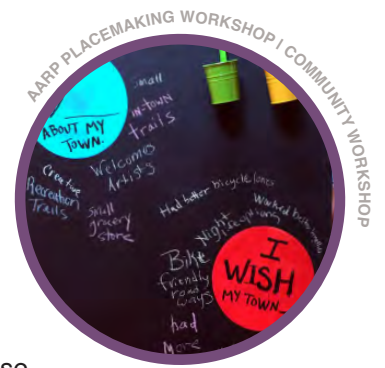
you'll need. Install the chalkboard at your site at the correct height, with the center of the writing surface about 4-5 feet off the ground. Pay close attention to stability and safety. If your chalkboard is freestanding, be sure that it's on a flat surface. Try pushing on it from different angles to test stability. If your chalkboard is outdoors, anchors are always a good idea. Try sandbags, buckets, or stakes. If you are mounting plywood or a chalkboard on a wall, use sturdy anchors and test it carefully after installation.

SEED YOUR CHALKBOARD

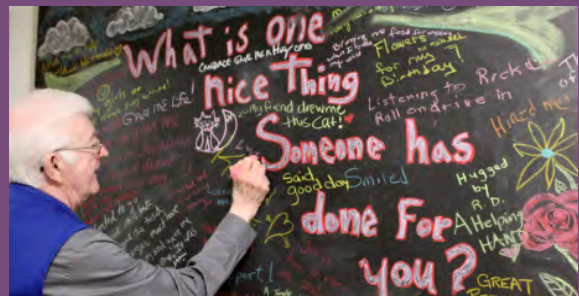
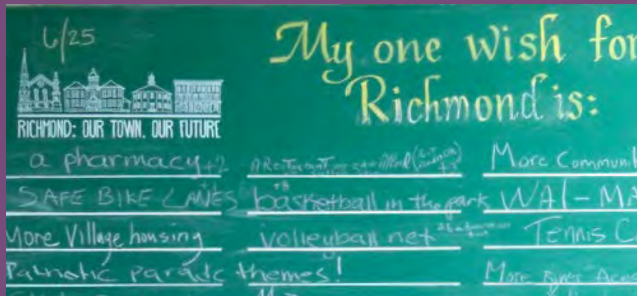
Attach or leave a container with chalk nearby (be sure it's waterproof if left outdoors). If you expect kids to use the chalkboard, consider leaving a stool. Enlist a few people to leave the first comments, modeling the kind of interactions and text you want to see. Take and share photos of the comments and people using the space to publicize the board and share what you've heard.

MONITOR, SHARE + ENJOY

If you don't have someone right near your chalkboard (at an event or in a shop), then check in often to see how people are using it. Look for damage and check stability, especially after storms. Erase or cover up any inappropriate or offensive content (you may want to create a policy ahead of time for what types of comments you will or won't allow). As the board fills up, photograph all the content before you erase it to leave more blank space. If you like, move your chalkboard to a new site after people have enjoyed it for a while (it's usually best to leave it in place for at least 2-3



IDEA GALLERY.



PHOTOS (TOP TO BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT)
 BETHEL REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE
 CATHY RYAN | HINESBURG, VT
 CLARE ROCK | TOWN OF RICHMOND, VT
 NORTHEASTERN VERMONT REGIONAL HOSPITAL
 COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

MAKE IT YOUR OWN.

- Give your board some local flavor or style. Choose colors, fonts, questions or prompts that fit your community.
- Shop around for chalkboard options. You can find inexpensive chalkboard sheets that can be

repositioned on walls, or even chalkboard decals in fun cutout shapes.

- Don't stop at chalk. You can use butcher paper and markers to create a simple "graffiti wall" or use a dry-erase surface instead of chalk.

LEARN MORE.

Artist Candy Chang launched the Before I Die project in New Orleans to help deal with the death of a loved one. There are now 5,000 Before I Die walls around the world and the project has inspired many remixes. Free plans and stencil templates are available online.

BEFOREIDIEPROJECT.COM

NORTHFIELD, VT.

The town of Northfield was planning a pop-up placemaking event to gather community input about bike and pedestrian access, a new community park, and access to downtown. They wanted a chalkboard to gather input from the community in a visible way. But they also wanted to create a board that they could repurpose for other community events—and do it cheaply.

Northfield looked at several models and types of chalkboards. They went with a simple A-frame style. It was quick and easy to build, stores flat, and is stable on many surfaces.

PHOTOS: LYDIA PETTY, BONNIE KIRN
DONOHUE AND COLIN BRIGHT



The chalkboard worked perfectly for Northfield's initial event. The flexible design allowed them to use it horizontally or vertically and in many settings.



The board worked so well that Northfield is reusing it for other events and questions. They now have a tool to use for placemaking events in the future.

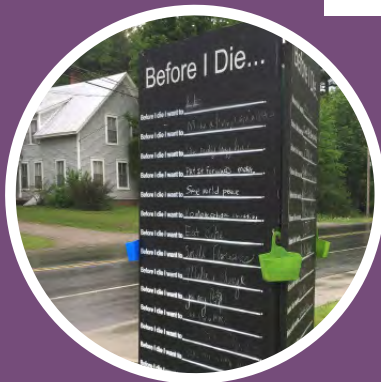


ON THE GROUND

BEFORE I DIE INSTALLATIONS.

Before I Die is an international project known for urban installations. But many small towns are using creative walls to spark conversation—and to show rural communities how urban placemaking ideas can fit locally. Here are three very different ways the project has shown up in Vermont.

PHOTOS: COMMUNITY WORKSHOP LLC (LEFT AND RIGHT), WAKE UP TO DYING (MIDDLE)



This kiosk-style board popped up outside Gifford Medical Center in Randolph and has now traveled all over the region.

In Montpelier, activists built a wall as part of the "Wake Up to Dying" project. It helped spark community conversations about dying and life.



A local nonprofit (BALE—Building a Local Economy) built a simple board in South Royalton. Other area groups borrowed it to bring energy to events.





WAYFINDING

Wayfinding signs are simple signs that help people find their way to parks and open space, bus stops, walking paths and other community assets. They may also highlight how easy it is to walk or bike there. Wayfinding signs can be quick and temporary projects with an immediate impact. If they work well, permanent wayfinding signs can be a great addition to villages and towns.

WAYFINDING SIGNS

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION • COMMUNICATION • RECREATION



moderate
planning



4-6 hours
active
1+ days total



graphic
design
(optional)



drill or punch
scissors
computer
(optional)



\$3-\$20
per sign

INGREDIENTS.

- list of 8-15 destinations or attractions
- zip ties or other mounting method
- web links or QR codes for destinations (optional)
- custom-printed signs or blank signs and lettering
- approved poles or sign locations

PLAN AHEAD.

- Where do (or could) people walk or bike in your town?
- What are the local sign regulations? How do you get permission to hang signs?
- Is there already signage in your area? Can you coordinate or tie in with it?
- How long will your signs stay in place?

SIGN OPTIONS.

WALK [YOUR CITY]



WALK [YOUR CITY]

Walk Raleigh was the first guerrilla wayfinding project to really take off, and it's become the standard model. You can design and print your own signs using the same popular template on Walk [Your City] – a user-friendly website (\$20 and up for a 12"x12" sign). Enter your starting point and destination, add a web link if you like, and choose which way the arrow should face. Walk [Your City] will calculate walking or biking distance, create a QR code, and print and ship you the signs.

CUSTOM DESIGNED



BETHEL BETTER BLOCK | FARMRUN

Want more flexibility? You can create your own design and then custom print it. Corrugated plastic lasts forever. You can get your designs printed online or at local sign printers for about \$4-5 per sign. Looking for something even cheaper and easier? Print your design onto standard cardstock or paper and laminate it. Just print a test version and hang it up to make sure it's readable before you print a whole batch.

HANDMADE



BRATTLEBORO ALLEY LANE | EVIE LOVETT

If you want to make signs yourself, you can get as creative as you like. You may be able to paint and repurpose old yard signs, plastic sheeting, lightweight plywood or even canvas banners. You can build old-fashioned arrow signs. You can even stencil or chalk directions onto pavement or other surfaces. Whatever you choose, pick a material that will stand up to weather and stay in place. See Street Stencils for more info on how to design and create your own stencils.

RECIPE.

CHOOSE AN AREA + GET PERMISSION

Choose an area to focus on, such as a neighborhood or a village center. You will need permission to hang signs on town or private property and you may also need approval of the sign designs. Check sign regulations and contact your local government for information on what's allowed and how to get permission.

IDENTIFY DESTINATIONS

Make a list of destinations within about a 10-20 minute walk (1 mile). Include places that residents or visitors may not know and would want to find (such as interesting trails or historic sites). If you want to encourage active transportation, also include well-known destinations that are safe and easy to access by bike or by foot. (Hint: you may want to create a spreadsheet or table to organize your information).

IDENTIFY SIGN LOCATIONS

Take a walk through the area you chose and look for places to post your signs. It's usually illegal to use utility poles, so look for streetlights, fence posts or

trees owned by a town or property owner who will give you permission. Good posts will be about 4-5 feet off the ground, visible to people on foot or in cars, and will not block line of sight or interfere with sidewalk passage. They will also be located near shops or amenities, intersections, walking paths, or other places people tend to go. When you find a good location to post a sign, match it to a specific destination in your list and record which one. Also note which way the sign will face (and which way an arrow should point).



CHOOSE A SIGN TYPE

There are many options for how to design and create your signs. First, you'll need decide what type you want, how much you want to spend and whether you want to get your signs custom printed or make them yourself. Think about what information you want to show, whether you have a particular design or color scheme and what your budget is. The most basic signs show only a destination and an arrow. More complex signs show distance, walking or biking time, and even information about the destinations. Some projects color code signs for different t

ANATOMY OF A SIGN.

SIGN DESIGN: FARMRUN

DISTANCE TEXT

If you want to add a distance or time to walk or bike, you'll need to calculate that before making your signs. You can use tools like Walk [Your City] or online mapping apps to get the travel distance or time. It takes the average person 20 minutes to walk a mile and 6 minutes to bike a mile.



DESTINATION TEXT

You may want to name a destination, or you may want to use fun language to highlight an activity. Think about highlighting underused places in the community, free activities or resources, or services that people might need. Clarify your intended audience (residents, visitors, kids or adults) and choose destinations to suit them.

QR CODES

QR Codes are small graphics that contain links to websites and can be read by digital phones. If you choose, you can create a unique QR code to put on each sign so that people can look up information about the destination. Start by finding a website with information about each destination and make a list of the links. Search online for a free QR code generator. Paste in your link and download the image it creates. If you are creating a digital sign to print, insert the image into your file and drag it where you would like it to go. If you are making signs by hand, you can print your QR code onto sticker paper and paste it onto your sign at the end. Visit the app store on your phone to download a free QR reader.

RECIPE, CONT.

types of destinations.

DESIGN YOUR SIGN

Decide what information you want to have on your signs and how you want to lay them out. If you're using Walk [Your City], much of this will be set for you. If you're making your own, choose fonts and color schemes that are highly visible and don't conflict with sign regulations. Think big: lettering should be at least 2 inches tall for someone to read it from 20 feet away.

MAKE YOUR SIGNS

Before you print or paint, double-check all the information on your signs. Be sure your sign locations, destinations and distances match up. Be sure your arrows are facing the right way and try scanning your QR codes to be sure the links work. If you're digitally designing signs, order and print. Print or make a test version to be sure the colors come out well and the lettering is legible from a distance. If you're hand painting or stenciling, try making one or two and viewing from a distance. You can even print test versions of each sign to hang up. Ask someone to walk the route and be sure it's accurate.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN.

- Get together with other groups or friends in town to brainstorm locations or choose destinations that offer a range of community benefits. Walk the area together to look for sign locations and have a party to make and hang signs.
- Don't have enough posts or poles? You can add more than one sign to the same post or go the old-fashioned route and create a single, fun

INSTALL YOUR SIGNS

Unless you're installing permanent signs, choose an installation method that won't damage the post or property. Plastic zip ties work well, though you may need more than one to reach around some poles. Drill or make two holes toward the center of your sign. Double check your list of locations and sign directions, hang up the signs and trim off extra zip tie ends. Bring a buddy—hanging signs is easier in pairs!

MONITOR, SHARE + PLAN

Check back on your signs to be sure they stay in place. Remove any damaged or fallen signs and take them all down at the end of your trial period. Find a way to measure impact—did people use them? Do people like them? What other destinations would they want? If you get a positive response, think about planning for more (or permanent) signs.



LEARN MORE.

Walk [Your City] has great online resources for planning and running a successful wayfinding project. Check out their toolkit for more detailed information on how to choose sites and destinations, create campaigns, gather walking or biking pledges and work with volunteers or local officials.

WALKYOURCITY.ORG

ON THE GROUND

DANVILLE, VERMONT.

Danville's Village to Village project looked at ways to connect multi-modal transportation and economic development strategies. A big piece was connecting Rail Trail users to the village center. The town used wayfinding from start to finish, starting with simple chalk markings and moving to semi-permanent signs.

PHOTOS: DUBOIS + KING



Danville started by getting the community involved in identifying destinations and routes.



In a pop-up event, they experimented with simple chalk messages to get trail users into the village.



Finally, they created semi-permanent signs to help people find and access top destinations.

BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT.

Brattleboro transformed its downtown Alley Lane in a pop-up event that combined art, activities, storytelling, seating and lights, ice cream and more. Simple wayfinding signs were an important tool, making it easy and fun for people to find out what was going on at the alley and to shine a light on attractions around town.

PHOTOS: EVIE LOVETT AND KELLY FLETCHER

The alley and parking garage had been an eyesore. The pop-up revitalized the space, with wayfinding from bottom to top.



Wayfinding signs called attention to organizers' priorities (such as connections to the river) and their visitors' (free ice cream floats).



Signs throughout the site helped create a uniform identity and point people toward local resources and amenities.





POP-UP THEATER

When this small, portable theater stage pops up in unexpected places, it creates an instant opportunity for play. Play spaces also offer major health benefits for kids and families while drawing people to an area and giving them a reason to stay. Pop-up play activities enliven and activate spaces and offer many other benefits. Plop a theater in a laundromat, on a street corner, in a doctor's office, at a festival, or anywhere kids are likely to be.

POP-UP THEATER

MULTIGENERATIONAL • PLAY • PUBLIC SPACES



moderate
planning



6-12 hours
active
2+ days total



intermediate
carpentry



see plans
for tool list



\$50-150

INGREDIENTS.

- indoor or outdoor theater site
- wood or cardboard theater (get free plans on our website to build your own wooden theater)
- signboard and paint
- stage (pallet stage, plywood, mat or carpet)
- activities (puppets, improv games, etc.)

PLAN AHEAD.

- Do you have a site in mind, or will the theater move around? Will it be indoors or outside?
- Do you want a cheap, temporary theater or a more expensive, durable wood version?
- Will your theater be left in a public space or used at a scheduled event?

RECIPE.

FIND THEATER SITES

Indoors or outdoors, private business or public space – almost any place will do. You'll want a spot that is relatively flat, has at least 5x5 feet of space, and is safe to access. Great locations are places where kids are likely to be or go and sites that need some energy and fun. Think about offices or businesses where kids do errands with their parents, bus stops or street corners where people often wait, vacant lots or spaces with no activities or interest. Also think about events like meetings or festivals, where a pop-up theater could add a critical activity for kids.

SCOPE OUT YOUR SITES

You can build a theater without a specific site in mind (in that case, skip ahead). If you do have a site, then scope it out and talk about logistics with the owner. Look around carefully and take some notes. Is it indoors or outdoors? Measure the space—how much room is available and what's the shape? Is the ground flat? Can you anchor the theater to the ground or do you need a base? Does the property owner have any requests or safety concerns? Is there seating or amenities nearby for grownups? Is the space visible from a road or entrance? How do

people typically use the space: Do they pass through or stop and stay awhile? Get formal permission to set it up.

CHOOSE A THEATER TYPE

Decide whether you want to purchase a theater, build your own wooden version, or build a temporary version out of cardboard or corrugated plastic. You can buy a simple kids' play theater if you have funding available. If you want to build your own portable wooden theater, a high-quality plywood version can pop up in place after place and last for many years. You'll need basic carpentry tools and skills and \$50-150 for materials. If you want to build a true pop-up (temporary) version, you can use a large sheet of cardboard or corrugated plastic.

BUILD OR BUY YOUR THEATER

A basic pop-up theater has a main panel, with either a stand or with hinged side panels to make it freestanding. You'll want it to be lightweight and portable enough to move it



RECIPE, CONT.

around and sized to fit in about a 5x5 foot space. If you'd like to build your own wooden theater, visit communityworkshopllc.com for the Pop-Up Theater plans. You can follow the general instructions and adjust if you are using cardboard.

DECORATE YOUR THEATER

When you're done making the theater structure, get creative and make it your own. If you're creating this project with kids, this is a great time to let them take over. The sky is the limit, but here are a few ideas:

- Decorate one side as a puppet theater and the other into a stage curtain or scenic backdrop
- Use chalkboard paint to create a marquee or signboard
- Give your theater a name and paint it on the top
- Make a curtain for the window
- Add some texture with fabric, wooden dowels or beads, ribbon, or any other materials

MAKE A STAND OR BASE

Be sure your theater will stand tall (and won't fall on kids!). Follow the instructions in our plans to make legs for your wooden theater. If you're trying a cardboard or plastic theater, you can place bricks, cinderblocks, crates, flower pots, or other heavy objects on each side of the theater (both ends) to hold it upright.

MAKE A STAGE

You can use a pop-up theater without a stage, but it's a lot more fun to have one. Choose one that will work best for the spaces you plan to use. Instructions for a wooden pallet stage are in our build plans. There are other options: buy or find a small rug (about 4x6' or 5x7'), section of artificial turf, beach mat, or simply lay down a sheet of plywood.

SET IT UP

When you're ready to go, set up your theater in your space and give it a try. Test it out for stability – give it a little push and be sure it won't fall. Be sure it's visible from roads or entrances, hang your signs, set up seating and install any other accessories. Don't forget to take some photos to help spread the word.

MAKE IT FUN

Kids will want to play as soon as they see it, but the theater can be even more fun and exciting with some simple activities. If you're leaving it in a space, then think about activities or props you can leave nearby. Here are a few ideas – check out the plans for details and more ideas.

- Visit a thrift store or raid your closet; then set up a coat rack with some funny hats, feather boas and other costumes
- Make an improv game wheel
- Leave simple sock or stuffed puppets in a basket next to the theater, or make wooden spoon puppets and attach them right to the window



MAKE IT COMFORTABLE

What's a theater without an audience? If you want kids to stay and get dramatic, then you need to create seating and a comfortable space for people to watch. You may be able to place your theater near existing seating (think benches in a doctor's office, or picnic tables at a park). If there's nothing around, then you'll need to make or bring your own. There are many options: create benches from boards and cinder blocks, use stumps to create a half circle of seats, or paint some old chairs you find at a thrift store.

MAKE A SIGN

You'll want people to know they're welcome—and you'll probably want to have a few rules. Make a small sign saying "pop-up theater" (or whatever



name you like). If the theater will be unattended, you may want to add a paragraph explaining what it is, who's welcome (everyone!) and how to use it safely (no climbing or pushing).

MONITOR, SHARE + REPEAT

If you're leaving your theater in place somewhere, check in often and be sure it is still safe and

undamaged. It's a good idea to stop in daily if you are leaving any kind of props or accessories and be sure the space stays tidy and well kept. Spread the word through social media, the newspaper and other channels. And when your theater has had a good run, take it down and let it pop up somewhere else.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN.

- Give your theater a personality of its own. Add colors or a name that resonate with your community or organization, or the site where you plan to install it.
- Plan an event. Having a kickoff or scheduled events can also be a great way to help people discover the theater and spread the word, as well as creating a fun and interactive experience.
- Activities could include anything from a drama workshop to a playwriting competition.
- Grow your followers. If your theater will move around, post its location and photos on social media. Invite local businesses or groups to host it. Invite fans to come to new locations for events and more play.

LEARN MORE.

The Pop-Up Theater was a 2016 award winner in the national Play Everywhere Challenge. You can download plans to build a theater on Community Workshop's website.

COMMUNITYWORKSHOP.LLC.COM/GOODSTUFF/POPUP-THEATER

The Play Everywhere Challenge is a project of KaBOOM! The national effort includes grants, resources and dozens of examples of creative projects that bring play to unexpected places.

KABOOM.ORG/PLAY_EVERYWHERE

ON THE GROUND

BETHEL, VT.

Community Workshop worked with Living Edge Woodworking to design, build and test the pop-up theater model in a small pocket park, Vermont. This site demonstrated how the theater could be a focal concept for a fun and surprising outdoor space. The theater was also designed to fold flat and be portable, so it could pop-up at many other events, in businesses, schools and even street corners.

PHOTOS: COMMUNITY WORKSHOP LLC

The theater's first location was a small pocket park that had been a vacant lot. Once in place and set up, it gave kids—and adults—a chance to play for a few minutes while doing laundry or grabbing a pizza.



The installation included an improv activity wheel, seating, signage and scheduled play events. Activities like puppet making drew in families and encouraged them to play together. The improv wheel made it easy for kids to come up with theater scenarios on their own.



The theater has spent time at community events, in downtown businesses, at the recreation center and in towns around the region.



POP-UP ADVENTURE PLAYGROUNDS.

You don't need a custom theater to see drama pop up in your community. Pop-up Adventure Playgrounds are a low-key way to let kids create theaters, cities, ships, or whatever they please. Just put out a stash of cardboard boxes, tubes, bottles, craft supplies and anything you have around. Sign up parents or volunteers to supervise. Then let kids get creative.



POP-UP ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND







CHALLENGING RECIPES.

PARKLETS

ACTIVITY TRAILS

PARKLETS + POCKET PARKS

Parklets are small parks or public spaces built in parking spaces. Pocket parks are created in small, vacant lots. They may be quick and temporary, or they may be semi-permanent installations that are designed to last. Parklets often add greenery (turf or plants), benches or seating, and activities or art. Temporary parklets and pocket parks are a great way to test locations or designs for permanent parks or green spaces while quickly creating public space.

CHALLENGING

PARKLETS

PUBLIC SPACES • BEAUTIFICATION • ACCESSIBILITY



significant
planning



varies with
design



design and
construction
skills as
needed



as needed,
based on
design



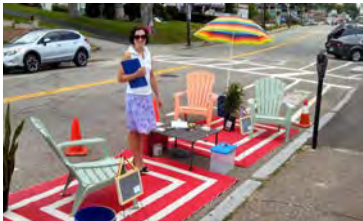
varies
with
design

INGREDIENTS.

- 1-2 parking spaces or other flat site
- seating (benches, chairs and table, etc.)
- platform or floor covering
- fence or divider
- flowers, art, or other decorations
- games and activities
- sign

PARKLET OPTIONS.

ONE-DAY



LACONIA, NH | LACONIA PARKS + REC

Parklets can be incredibly simple, fast and inexpensive. PARK(ing) Day is an annual event where people build parklets in parking spaces just for a day. You can probably put together a great one-day parklet just using furniture and materials from around your house. You can be part of the global PARK(ing) Day movement by setting up a parklet on the third Friday in September, or choose your own day. Build a parklet as part of a festival, event, or any other time that works for your community.

SHORT-TERM



WINOOSKI, VT PARKLET | CHANNEL 5 NEWS

Short-term parklets might be in place for anywhere from a weekend to a few weeks. They can help test a location or design or engage people in brainstorming possibilities for a site. Local leaders and neighbors may be skeptical of parklets (particularly when they take away parking). Short-term parklets are a great way to show people what a parklet is, how it's used and how it can work on a street. When you hear what people like or don't like, you can change the design before investing permanently.

SEMI-PERMANENT



MONTPELIER, VT | WARD JOYCE DESIGN

Semi-permanent parklets are often designed to stay out for a season or even a year. Invest in a good design and construction and it can last weeks or months. It can still be experimental, allowing you to do a longer-term test of a location or design while people are using and enjoying it. Well-designed and built parklets can run into the thousands of dollars, but you may find students to help design or build it or ask businesses to share the cost. When planning, consider whether you will leave it out for the winter, move it, or just use it for one season.

PLAN AHEAD.

- Does your community have guidelines or require permits for parklets?
- How long will your parklet be in place? Do you have funding, materials and skilled volunteers?
- Are neighbors and stakeholders supportive of a parklet, concerned, or both?
- Will your parklet change or disrupt traffic (either during construction or while in place)?
- What community needs could a parklet help to meet?

RECIPE.

EXPLORE POTENTIAL SITES

Parklets work best in certain situations and types of sites. Take a walk around your community and look for good spots. Traditional parklets are built in parking spaces, but you can also create “pocket parks” in small plazas or triangles, gaps between buildings, or other underutilized nooks.

The best parklet locations are:

- Close to shops, restaurants, businesses, or other busy areas with foot traffic
- Areas that lack other green spaces or seating
- Sites that are accessible, safe and pleasant (or could become pleasant)
- Areas that need beautification or activation

Once you have a site or two in mind, approach the town or property owner to explore the idea.

IDENTIFY GOALS, DURATION + TYPE

Parklets vary tremendously, from daylong pop-ups to expensive, beautifully designed spaces that cost thousands of dollars and last a full season (or more). Decide early on what your goals are. If you're trying to activate a particular space and show potential, you may want to create a quick, fun, temporary pop-up. If you're trying to create a functional, needed public space, then consider investing more. Even if you have long-term goals, a pop-up may still be the right approach if you have a limited budget or the idea is controversial.

GET PERMISSION

Before you start designing and building, be sure to get formal permission for your parklet. You may need an official permit. In other cases, a quick MOU will work. Find out whether you will also need insurance, traffic control, signage and other permits. Property owners or towns may have other requests or limitations. You may need to show a quick sketch or plan to get approval.

CREATE A CONCEPT

Whichever type of parklet you choose, you can get creative. Most great public spaces have

a few key ingredients: somewhere to sit, something to do, edges or clearly defined boundaries and beauty or visual interest. Most parklets are designed to feel like particular spaces that have these elements: think living room, mini-golf course, or backyard patio. Look for unusual materials or objects that can tie into your theme. Then think about what's missing near your site, who will be using the parklet and what they might want or use. Does the street need a bike rack or tourist information? Will the parklet need shade? Would users want kids' activities? Can you add public art?

DESIGN YOUR PARKLET

Measure your site and do a quick sketch, marking in any major elements (curbs, walls, posts or trees, etc.). Then block out where you would place major elements like tables and chairs and any additional elements you want to add. If you are using a parking space along a busy road, you may want a sturdy wall or fence to keep people safe. If you are in a safer spot, you can use a rope, a row of planters, or a low garden fence to define the edge. “Floors” also help to set the space apart. If you are using a parking space with a curb, you may want to build a raised platform at sidewalk level. If not, think about using a carpet, artificial turf, or game mat as a design element.

PLAN + GATHER MATERIALS

Once you have a design, start making a list of materials and where you will get them. Make a timeline and build in dates for planning, ordering supplies, building, setting up and taking down. If your parklet will be in place for a while, make a plan for maintaining it too. Recruit any helpers or volunteers you need and seek funding if necessary.

BUILD + SET UP

When you're ready to build, get your crew together and get to work. Setup will be easiest and fastest if pieces are assembled offsite. If you need to be working in the street, be sure to have safety vests and cones. Test out any elements like platforms and chairs to be sure they are stable and splinter-free. If you're building a platform level with the sidewalk, measure several times to be sure it's the



right height.

PROGRAM + PUBLICIZE YOUR PARKLET

If you build it they *might* come. But your parklet has a better chance of success if you program and publicize it. Plan an activity or launch to draw people in, put an article in the paper or spread the news on social media. Don't forget a sign near the parklet, explaining it and encouraging people to use it.

MONITOR + MAINTAIN YOUR PARKLET

Nothing will kill your long-term plans faster than an unsafe or unkept parklet. Stop in regularly to make sure the parklet is safe and clean, pick up

trash or make repairs. Check in with businesses or stakeholders to see what they think and address any concerns. If your parklet is an experiment, make a plan to collect data and feedback from users.

PACK UP + PLAN AGAIN

When your parklet is done, dismantle everything and leave the space better than you found it. Go over your data and feedback and decide what's next. Will you set it up again? Move it somewhere else? Change the design? If you don't plan to continue, consider donating it to a local group.



MAKE IT YOUR OWN.

- The best parklets have a fun or surprising concept that draws people in. Get creative with seating and design elements and connect it to your community culture. How about a parklet made out of a boat in a coastal community? Or benches made out of skis in a mountain town?
- Most parklets share some elements (like seating). But your parklet will be most successful if it's designed to meet local needs. Ask what people wish the street had and make it happen.
- Break out of the parking space. Pocket parks are tiny parks built into small lots or spaces between buildings. You could also convert an empty plaza or lawn. Pocket parks can be temporary or permanent, simple or complex. It's often easier to get support or permission when you're not taking over a parking space.
- Be flexible. Rather than design your parklet for a single space or single use, think about creating elements that could be moved or repurposed.

LEARN MORE.

The PARK(ing) day movement has launched thousands of parklets worldwide. Visit their site or Facebook page to see example parklets and get ideas, along with resources for planning and building your own.

PARKINGDAY.ORG

WINOOSKI, VERMONT.

The City of Winooski had a new strategic vision, a new form-based zoning code and a new Main Street revitalization project. It still needed a chance to test revitalization techniques and build public support for long-term change. City partners worked to build a summer-long parklet and mid-block crosswalk, allowing them to test potential permanent improvements.

PHOTOS: JESSIE BAKER, CITY OF WINOOSKI VT



Winooski identified a site from the start. Local plans identified the block as a priority. Planners just weren't sure whether people would use a parklet and how businesses would feel about losing two parking spaces.

Winooski repurposed donated materials to build a summer-long parklet. But it wasn't enough just to build a parklet. Winooski advertised a series of events to draw people in.



The space didn't look or work quite the way planners intended. But that meant the experiment *did* work. They learned what people liked, what they'd like to change and what to do next.

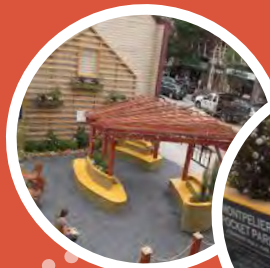
ON THE GROUND

MONTPELIER, VERMONT.

When residents of Montpelier wanted more downtown public space, architect Ward Joyce set out to design an experimental parklet for Main Street. People flocked to it as soon as it was installed, but the city decided not to permanently remove the high profile parking spots. The flexible, modular design allowed Joyce to move the parklet around the corner to a vacant lot, where he reconfigured it into a pocket park. It's now in its third life, outside Montpelier's senior center, where it has become a key outdoor gathering space in front of the building.

PHOTOS: WARD JOYCE DESIGN (LEFT AND MIDDLE); COMMUNITY WORKSHOP (RIGHT)

The parklet's first summer installation helped the city see that parklets could be a valuable tool for downtown development and that there was a big demand for public space.



Now at the senior center, the parklet is set up to offer convenient seating and shade on the street. And it paved the way for other parklets on Main Street.



When it moved around the corner, the original parklet elements became a larger, semi-permanent pocket park and a small on-street parklet for bike parking.





ACTIVITY TRAILS



Activity trails are walking or biking routes (or occasionally driving) that connect a series of themed stations or activities. Trails are a simple, inexpensive way to create attractions and things to do. At the same time, they are a great way to encourage people to be more physically active or get out and explore. And they can showcase history or local art, or support local businesses.

CHALLENGING

ACTIVITY TRAILS

ACTIVE LIFESTYLES • MULTIGENERATIONAL • PUBLIC SPACES



significant planning and lead time



2+ hours to design and install



design and construction skills as needed



as needed, based on design



\$50 and up, based on design

INGREDIENTS.

- trail, path or route
- map and trail info
- activities for stations (art, history, play, fitness)
- signs or station markers
- posts (as needed)
- trail markings (as needed)

TRAIL OPTIONS.

PLAN AHEAD.

- Who will use the trail and what types of activities would they enjoy?
- What type of activity do you want to highlight or encourage?
- Will your trail highlight existing stops or features, or will you create them?
- How long will your trail stay in place?
- Will your trail be on a public road, on private property, or in a park?
- How long is the route and how many stops will it include?

PLAY OR FITNESS



CONNECT HYDE PARK COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Physical activity trails get people moving and playing in public spaces. Fitness trails have exercise stations. Play trails have a series of play activities or games, or even pavement markings to encourage play along the way.

HISTORY



CONNECT HYDE PARK COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

History trails tell the stories of historic buildings or sites. They often include signs with photos and information. Trails can also feature landmarks like covered bridges or waterfalls, or tell the natural history of a place.

ART OR STORY



CHELMSFORD (MA) STORYWALK
FLICKR | BRIAN HERZOG

Art trails connect art or cultural installations in a community, or create art installations along an existing path. Story trails post pages of a children's book along a trail, letting families read as they go.

REGIONAL



COMMUNITY BARN QUILT PROJECT
CHELSEA ARTS COLLECTIVE

Local food or local economy trails are usually larger scale, creating a map or network of businesses, restaurants or other attractions such as cheese, beer, chocolate, pottery, waterfalls or covered bridges.



ZILKER FAIRY TRAIL, AUSTIN, TX
FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS | F.D. RICHARDS

RECIPE.

CHOOSE A TRAIL + TOPIC

Think through your goals. Are you trying to create a reason for people to walk or explore an existing trail or neighborhood? Or are you trying to highlight assets or activities that are disconnected or under-utilized? If you're starting with a site, such as a downtown or a nature trail, think about who you'd like to attract and what types of trails or activities would appeal. If you're starting with an activity, such as art or local history, then take a walk and check out some potential routes or sites. Think about whether you're connecting fixed sites (like historic buildings) or whether you can place stations where you choose. Also decide whether you are planning a temporary, semi-permanent, or permanent trail.

MAP IT

Once you have a concept and site in mind, plot out a route. Be sure it's either a public space where you can gain permission or a concept that property owners will likely support. Use a paper or digital map to measure and mark an overall route or path and note whose property each stop is on. Plot out stops or activity locations and think about distance. A walking trail for kids or seniors might be about 1/2 mile to 1 mile. Biking trails can be longer.

GET PERMISSION – AND HELP

Approach property owners or local government early on about hosting a trail or a stop. And approach potential partners who would be excited to build it with you. Find out about restrictions or challenges at your potential sites. If you're planning to post signs, find out whether owners are okay

with signs and foot traffic and what concerns they might have. If you're planning to mark a sidewalk or pavement, what's allowed? Will lawn mowing, winter weather, or building maintenance change your plans? Be clear with site owners about how long you plan to leave it up, how you will handle damage or problems and whom to contact if they see a problem.

WALK IT

If you're set on a general site, get on the ground

and walk or bike it. As you walk along, take detailed notes and watch for several things:

- **Safety.** Check for sidewalks, crosswalks and bike lanes. Note places where people would need to cross or leave a sidewalk and ways to minimize crossings. Look for any hazards and unsafe areas.
- **Accessibility.** Note whether the trail and site are accessible for a range of people, including those with mobility challenges, wheelchairs, strollers, or other differences.
- **Access and flow.** Think about where the trail would stop and start, where people typically go and how they would access it. Is there parking? Are restrooms available? Where should you post information?

PLAN YOUR STOPS

Firm up the planned stations, stops or activities along your trail. If you're planning a history trail, think about where you will get photos and historic information. If it's an art trail, think about who will create the art or where you will get it. For a story trail, find a great book and look at the page count to determine number of stops. Decide on a manageable number of stops or activities and what each one will be. Decide what content or materials will be at the stops. Think about whether you will use signs, kiosks, or some other way to mark your sites. And consider how you will protect your stops, signage or equipment from weather, damage, theft or vandalism.

PREP THE STOPS OR ACTIVITIES

Work with your partners to create the materials for the stops, such as artwork, interpretive signs, story trail posts, or fitness or play equipment. Leave enough time for property owners or decision-makers to review and approve what you're making.

PLAN FOR SIGNAGE + MAPS

Think about how people will navigate along your trail, learn about sites, and find it in the first place. If you're placing stops along an



existing nature trail, you may not need much signage to keep people on the right path. But you will need visible stations so they know where to stop. If you're highlighting art or historic buildings in your town, people may discover them on their own. But you'll want signage so that people know that it's part of a larger trail. Maps and info kiosks can help people find the start of a trail, orient themselves and follow along.

INSTALL YOUR TRAIL

Test your installation methods beforehand to make sure they show up, stay up and work well. Then install your trail and test it again. Depending on the type of trail, installation could be very quick (an hour or two for a simple story trail or temporary signs), or could take days (for permanent signage or infrastructure). Make sure signs will hold up to wind and weather and be sure any fixed equipment is sturdy and safe. (See Wayfinding for ideas around signage.) Recruit "testers" with fresh eyes to walk

MAKE IT YOUR OWN.

- Plan events or recruit others to get out on the trail and make it active. Do a launch celebration, schedule guided walks or tours, or ask partners or sites along the way to host special events.
- Add amenities. Think about what your trail users will need along the way. That might be benches or places to rest, shade, bathrooms, or a cold drink. If you can't provide these on your own, look for a local partner or business that would welcome trail visitors.
- Pilot first. Planning a long-term trail? Try a cheap, temporary version for a week or two first. Be sure you've got the content and concept down, and then you can make it longer-term.
- Crowdfund it. Some trails (like history stops or story walks) need to be planned and cohesive. Others (like art or fairy trails) can be even more vibrant when you invite others to contribute. Create an online map or way for others to share their stops.

the trail and identify problems or confusing sections.
SPREAD THE WORD

People may find your trail on their own, but it's best to publicize it and build up excitement. Let people know that it's coming, take photos, announce a grand opening, and share pictures of happy visitors using the trail.

MONITOR + MEASURE

Monitor the trail regularly to be sure stations and signage stay in place, people are using it respectfully and it is working as planned. If your trail is designed to meet a certain goal (such as encouraging people to walk, or beautifying a downtown) then find a way to measure outcomes. You could do visitor or user counts, ask for feedback at a kiosk or on the signage, or create a reward for people who complete the trail. If your trail is designed to be temporary, be sure to take it down promptly and restore the sites to their original condition.



- Think big. Many trails are pedestrian scale – in downtowns, parks, forests, or small loops. But activity trails can work at many scales. Plan a longer route along a bike path. Or create a driving trail that connects key landmarks or sites in your region and draws visitors.
- Trails can also have big goals – local food or craft trails (such as cheese or chocolate) can be a big boost for the local economy. Grow your followers.

LEARN MORE.

StoryWalk® is a literacy and activity program that gets families moving while enjoying books together. Anne Ferguson created the program in Montpelier, VT, with the help of Rachel Senechal and the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. They offer free instructions online and Vermonters can borrow StoryWalk® books for free.

KELLOGGHUBBARD.ORG/STORYWALK

ON THE GROUND

HYDE PARK, VERMONT.

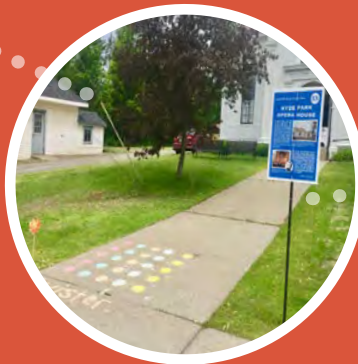
Hyde Park has a stately, historic village Main Street, but residents wanted more things to do. It also has a popular new Rail Trail passing through the outskirts of town, but little reason for cyclists or visitors to stop and go into the village. Hyde Park decided to try a pop-up history trail for a summer, creating a loop from the Rail Trail through the village. It created an instant family activity and tested a potential long-term improvement while building pride in Hyde Park's rich history.

PHOTOS: COMMUNITY WORKSHOP



Hyde Park used simple, durable and temporary step-in posts and corrugated plastic signs that were easy to install.

In addition to the signs themselves, Hyde Park experimented with chalk games to make it more family-friendly. Caregivers found it easier to explore the signs when kids had something to do.



While plenty of people found the trail on their own, Hyde Park held a "Family Fun Day" to launch the project. Free cookies, a scavenger hunt and small incentives gave the trail an early boost.

HARDWICK, VERMONT.

Hardwick community volunteers created a robust, 11-mile community trail system in a forest behind the high school. But creating the trails wasn't enough—they wanted to make them appealing to many users. They've since added diverse activity trails that draw more users, including a poetry walk and fitness loop.

PHOTOS: COMMUNITY WORKSHOP



The poetry walk features poems written by local students and adults. But the trail includes extra features that make it fun to explore and take a break. A bench and free "little library" by a stream offer a relaxing place to sit and rest.

The 1/2 mile fitness loop appeals to a different set. it has six exercise stations and steep sections, making it a tough physical challenge and great workout space.



Hardwick's trails start with a kiosk that hosts trail maps, safety info and scheduled events.

RESOURCES

AARP LIVABILITY LIBRARY

AARP.ORG/LIVABLECOMMUNITIES
AARP.ORG/VERMONT

Free digital and print publications for building livable communities like:

- *AARP Walk Audit Toolkits*
- *AARP Roadmap to Livability*
- *Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages*
- *Engaging the Community to Create Community*



COMMUNITY WORKSHOP KITS + RESOURCES

COMMUNITYWORKSHOPLLC.COM/
GOODSTUFF

Free digital kits, printables, plans, and resources for DIY Community projects like:

- *Pop-Up Theater Kit*
- *Street Stencil Kits*
- *Community Bingo Game Kit*
- *Local Heroes Clothesline Kit*



VERMONT SUCCESS STORIES

ACCD.VERMONT.GOV/COMMUNITY-
DEVELOPMENT/SUCCESS-STORIES

Case studies and success stories from Vermont's Agency of Commerce + Community Development

CULTIVATING CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

VERMONTARTSCOUNCIL.ORG/ABOUT-US/
CULTIVATING-CREATIVE-PLACEMAKING

Grants, project examples and resources for arts-based placemaking projects

BURLINGTON COMMUNITY-LED DEMONSTRATION PROJECT POLICY + GUIDE

BURLINGTONVT.GOV/DPW/TACTICAL-
URBANISM-AND-DEMONSTRATION-
PROJECTS

City policy and guide for

BETTER BLOCK RECIPES + GUIDES

BETTERBLOCK.COM/RECIPES
BETTERBLOCK.ORG/RESOURCES

How-to guides for Better Block projects, bike lanes, pop-up stands, wiki furniture and more from Team Better Block

TACTICAL URBANISM GUIDES

TACTICALURBANISMGUIDE.COM/GUIDES

Series of guides on tactical urbanism projects and materials, open streets and public spaces from the Street Plans Collaborative

LIGHTER, QUICKER, CHEAPER CASE STUDIES

PPS.ORG/GPS/LQC

International database of low-cost, high-impact placemaking projects from Project for Public Spaces

ASPHALT ART GUIDE

ASPHALTART.BLOOMBERG.ORG/GUIDE/

Projects, examples and instructions for vibrant plaza, road and sidewalk art from The Bloomberg Associates and Street Plans Collaborative

GRASSROOTS PROJECTS MAP + STORIES

GRASSROOTSFUND.ORG/STORIES

Stories and examples of grassroots community building and social change projects from New England Grassroots Environment Fund

IOBY COMMUNITY PROJECTS GUIDES

IOBY.ORG/RESOURCES/FREEGUIDES

How-to guides and instructions for neighborhood and community projects, community organizing, crowdfunding and other skills from ioby



AARPSM

**COMMUNITY
WORKSHOP**

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