

3 Steps to Building a Third Place Through Tactical Urbanism

What is a third place?

A space outside of your home or workplace where you can gather with neighbors and enjoy time together. It could be a coffee shop, park, library or public square.

What is tactical urbanism?

A set of low-cost, temporary changes to the built environment, intended to improve neighborhoods, streets and gathering places. It's about making small, incremental improvements that show residents and local leaders the potential of a place and can eventually lead to long-term change.

Think about a place in your neighborhood that could use more life and become a community gathering spot. Then, use the steps below to start building.

01

Build Relationships First.

- Consider walking the space you want to transform or activate with your neighbors.
- Get to know stakeholders, leaders and nearby business owners by meeting with them, visiting their businesses, etc.
- Build an understanding of the local dynamics and politics that might impact your work in the space.
- Talk through potential ideas with everyone you encounter.

02

Propose, Don't Impose.

- Once you have an idea of what you could do with the space, conduct outreach and gather feedback from the community. You could knock on doors, set up a table in a highly trafficked area or create an online space for people to submit feedback.
- Think about hosting a design charrette — a chance for people to get together, see design options visualized and give feedback in person.
- Remember that planning documents are living, breathing documents. Be ready to modify your designs in response to feedback.
- Once you're ready, bring the community together to work on the project. Have a work day where anyone can help paint, assemble signage, arrange furniture, etc.

03

Use Temporary Means To Disarm Fear.

- Paint and tape go a long way. Consider taping out and then painting a mural on the ground or a wall (with permission from the building's owner).
- Cones are your best friend. Consider using them to mark out intersections and make them easier to cross.
- Temporary installations allow for quick adjustments and real-time feedback. Put in benches, tables, planters, signs, artwork, toys and anything that might encourage people to gather. Consider inviting food trucks or local businesses to set up temporary tents.