

# Tactical Urbanism Handbook

## Improving the livability of towns and cities starts at the scale of the street : a Handbook now gathers short-term actions

While large-scale planning schemes definitely have their role, Mike Lydon and his colleagues at the Street Plans Collaborative believe that the work of improving the livability of towns and cities starts at the scale of the street. They saw small-scale, short-term projects happening all over the country, and decided to create a resource for would-be interventionists. The Tactical Urbanism Handbook, now in its second volume, gathers examples of low-cost incremental improvements that spotlight specific problems and generate support for more substantial investments in the future. From guerrilla gardens and weed-bombing (tagging overgrown weeds with eyepopping colors) to food trucks and pop-up town halls, the Handbook documents dozens of useful and replicable tactics. Available free online, volumes one and two have each been downloaded nearly 30,000 times.

### PAVEMENT TO PLAZAS

**KEY FACT:** Following the implementation of the New Times Square pedestrian plaza, injuries to motorists and their passengers declined by 45%, bicyclist injuries declined 33%, even while pedestrian injuries increased.

**LEADERS:** Municipalities  
**Business Improvement Districts**  
**Scale:** Three (1) Block  
**Purpose:** To reclaim underutilized asphalt as public space without large capital expenditure

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

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

By taking this experimental, "lighter, quicker, cheaper" approach, the City and public-at-large are able to test the performance of each new plaza without using up scarce public resources. If successful, the intervention can then transition into a more permanent design and construction phase, as is happening currently in several of New York City's new plazas and sustainable street "pilot" projects.



TACTICAL URBANISM

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