



AARP Pop-Up Demonstration Tool Kit

Engaging the Community and Making a Plan

Part 2 of designing and implementing the pop-up project

by the [WALC Institute](#), [AARP Livable Communities](#)

The guidance detailed in this design and implementation phase of the [AARP Pop-Up Demonstration Tool Kit](#) is based on a three-month planning window. It can take longer to plan the event, but care should be taken not to over-analyze or delay. A short planning timeframe is important, and simply getting started is the key. In our tool kit the steps that follow are tasks for Month 1.

1. SELECT THE COMMUNITY

When choosing a community for the demonstration project, consider the likelihood of the community creating successful, long-term changes as a result of the project. Indicators of potential success are the presence of strong municipal leadership and a clearly expressed desire by the community to be a model project.

Two questions to ask and answer:

- **Which local organizations can be engaged as partners?**
The community or location should have at least one or two organizations that are already advocating for some of the goals of the project. Whether a nonprofit group, business association, school district, homeowners' association, government agency or an alliance of citizen advocates, the community will have better chances of succeeding if existing groups can be engaged as sustaining partners.
- **How will the project meet the needs of the community?**
The pop-up project is a temporary demonstration that can catalyze long-term change. The selected area should stand to benefit from the pop-up demonstration.

Planning a Pop-Up



AARP Livable Communities
Pop-Up Demonstration Tool Kit

Tool Kit Home Page

1. Getting Started
2. Engaging/Planning
3. Organizing/Marketing
4. Building/Launching
5. Next Steps

Success Stories

- [Parklet](#)
- [Plaza](#)
- [Streetscape](#)
- [Protected bike lane](#)
- [Protected intersection](#)
- [Road diet and plaza](#)

2. IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PARTNERS

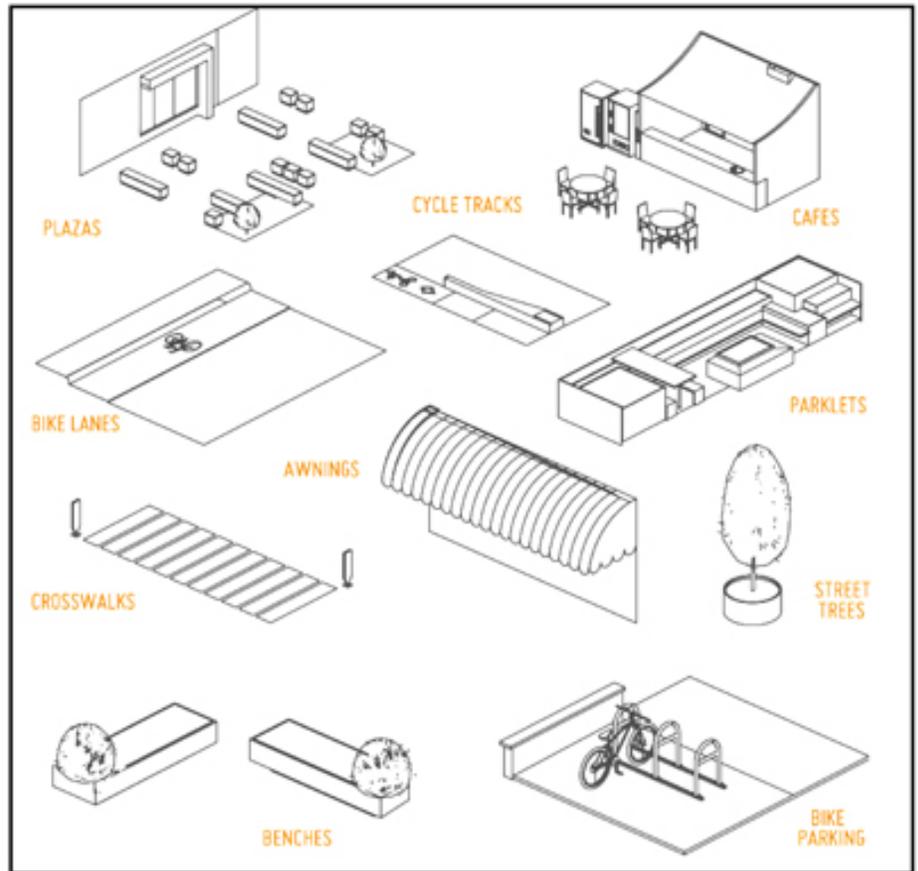
Once a community has been selected, work with major allies to determine possible project sites. Engaging community representatives from the following segments will contribute to the success:

Municipal staff and/or political leader(s): These people can help make the planning and permitting processes go smoothly. Such individuals may have access to equipment, materials and tools that will lower the project budget. Local leadership and involvement is essential to making the demonstration project's impact lasting and replicable.

Property owners and community-based liaisons: These two groups are critical to success, especially local property and business owners.

Opponents can break a pop-up project's success, and this is especially true of local business owners. However, public support from business owners who understand the value of the proposed change can counter any opposition and provide political cover for elected officials and municipal staff in helping promote the pop-up's success and advocating for permanent change.

Supportive property owners might be willing to partner in the effort. It's possible not all property owners will initially be supportive, but they are likely to come around. A community-based liaison with strong connections, such as the director of a local advocacy organization or a well-regarded activist, can be of enormous assistance. This person will be well positioned to mobilize volunteers and likely will help inject energy and a grassroots component into the initiative.



Pop-up techniques include (from top left and top to bottom) plazas, cycle tracks, cafes, bike lanes, parklets, crosswalks, awnings, street trees, benches, bike parking. — Image from the Better Block Foundation

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3. IDENTIFY POTENTIAL LOCATIONS

A struggling Main Street or an undervalued downtown boulevard can make the ideal location for a comprehensive [Better Block-style](#) demonstration project. Individual pop-up tools and treatments can be successfully applied in urban, suburban and rural contexts.

According to *Tactical Urbanism: Short-Term Action for Long-Term Change*, a guide produced in 2012 by the [Street Plans Collaborative](#), “the best examples of locations are consistently found in compact towns and cities featuring an undervalued/underutilized supply of walkable urban fabric.

”If working toward the makeover of a segment of a street, or block, [Team Better Block](#) identifies the following as important ingredients for a successful project location:

- A community that is motivated, with residents and merchants who are excited about change and are willing to be partners in the area’s revitalization
- Proximity to the neighborhood and its residents
- Buildings that are small and built to the sidewalk with no major gaps in between, much like a traditional downtown Main Street and not like a suburban strip mall or big box store front by a sea of asphalt parking
- Streets that are wide or otherwise offer opportunities to incorporate people and bikes. (Note: Project sites that include highways, overpasses or large swaths of vacant land can be tough to activate.)

4. GATHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND GO FOR A TOUR

Conduct a community walking tour to visit each potential project site. Help participants develop a shared language and set of expectations by introducing the project’s organizing principles and sharing a summary of tools and treatments that can serve as starter ideas. (See the illustration and sidebar links above.)

Pop-Up Teamwork

- During the site visit or walkabout, discuss each area’s history and identify opportunities for change. Talk about what the block needs, why people don’t currently visit it, and what would attract locals and others to the area.
- Use the [Better Block location survey](#) to grade the elements that will help the demonstration project succeed.

Popular Pop-Ups

This tool kit and the image above contain a sampling of pop-up projects a community can pursue. Among the other examples:

- [road diets](#)
- [pocket parks or parklets](#)
- [curb extensions](#)
- [wayfinding signage](#)
- [modern roundabouts](#)
- [mini roundabouts and traffic circles](#)
- [artistic treatments, such as painting murals, utility boxes, intersections and lightpoles](#)

Pop-Up Teamwork

“Aligning your trades together and giving them a block boundary to develop ideas and champion change creates a simple, understandable framework for people to begin working together.... Ownership now becomes shared by a community and the barn-building necessary to re-stitch a community together can begin.”

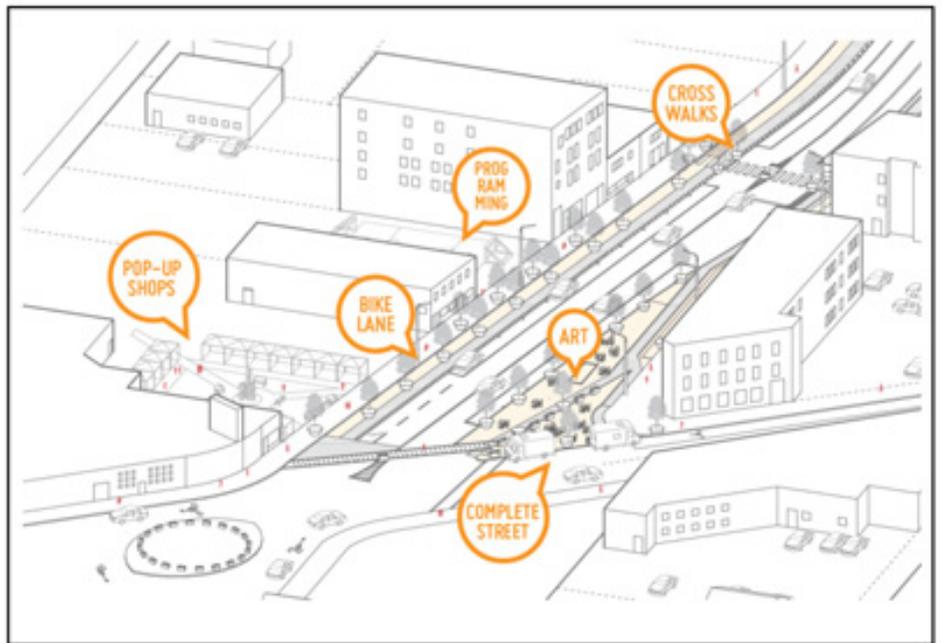
— from *“How to Build a Better Block,”* by [Team Better Block](#)

5. MEET, PICK A DATE AND SELECT A NAME

Immediately following the walkabout, gather all participants in a nearby meeting space to discuss and choose the project location.

During that meeting:

- Assemble a leadership team, or “Strike Team,” of five to 10 people who will work together and communicate throughout the project timeline and also serve as liaisons to the rest of the community. Ideally, such a team will include some skilled practitioners — such as a landscape architect, urban designer, engineer, architect, planner, plumber, general contractor, carpenter, electrician or web developer — who can develop technical elements of the project.
- Remember, the initial convener isn’t expected to be an urban design expert. That person or group should simply be able to enlist local professionals to be liaisons for the project and utilize the resources of this tool kit and others as educational and capacity-building materials.
- Set a date for the event, but don’t set it too far out. The longer the planning horizon, the more risk of “analysis by paralysis.” There can be a lot of value in scheduling the project in conjunction with another community event, such as an annual festival or public gathering.
- Come up with an initial list of tools and treatments to include in the concept plan.
- Identify specialties, resources and materials needed, and which of those can be provided by people who are present at the meeting. (Very important: take good notes, keep track of who can do what and collect all contact information.)
- Decide upon a project name and then establish names for social media accounts. The names might not be perfect, and there won’t be unanimous agreement about them, but it’s critical to pick the project’s name and any related names early. As [Jason Roberts, chair of the Better Block Foundation](#), points out in a [2015 TEDxOU talk](#), “Just naming something, that simple thing, creates an identity and builds pride.” Encourage everyone at the meeting to start following the project on social media and to share the links with their networks.
- Set a date for the team to reconvene within a week or two.



A concept map shows what’s already in the demonstration location and what will be added. — Image from the Better Block Foundation

6. GATHER THE LEADERSHIP TEAM AND DEVELOP A PLAN

One way to figure out what type of demonstration to do in a particular location is to research the history and character of the site. By understanding the area's history, the leadership team can find ways to incorporate and celebrate the community's culture and character in the project.

For example, during one Better Block project, the street in a historically Italian neighborhood was transformed to include a [bocce ball court](#) and Italian restaurant. "Treat it like it's a museum of the past," Roberts says.

- Sketch out the concept plan and create a map for the tools and treatments to be built, using a list created during the community walkabout as a starting point. A landscape architect, planner, engineer, urban designer or architect can create the concept plan. You could also use a simple tool such as [StreetMix.net](#) or hand drawings to illustrate the concepts.
- Set a short deadline for receiving team feedback, and immediately decide upon the final plan.
- Publicly publish and vet the concept plan for additional feedback and revisions.

7. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND DRAFT A SCHEDULE

A common pop-up activity is an open streets event, often called a "[ciclovía](#)," in which roads are closed to vehicles and open to only bicyclists and pedestrians. Other examples of public activities include live music, food trucks, farmers markets, art shows, group exercise classes, information booths, public dance floors, "open mic" sessions, stage performances and more.

8. CREATE THE BRAND

A project name and social media account have already been established. Now it's time to incorporate that information into a project brand that includes a logo, colors and "brand voice" or tone that is consistently applied throughout messages and communications. This is also an aspect of the project through which the area's history, culture and character can be celebrated.

9. SECURE A STAGING AREA

Space will be needed where materials and equipment can be stored, and where volunteers can assemble project elements such as furniture and pop-up walls. This space needs to be in close proximity to the project site. A vacant shop or a building facing the project site is ideal.

Recipe for Success

"The barn-building mentality of the Better Block project brings a community together to help rebuild their neighborhood. We take reclaimed wood, metals, and other local resources, and retrofit them into usable structures for the community. Sidewalk benches, parklets, pedestrian islands, and crosswalks are all developed locally by unskilled and skilled community members who collectively share ownership of their space. From sharing tools to donating time, this ownership transforms 'Them' to 'Us' and is vital for making a place feel loved and cared for."

— from the [Akron, Ohio, Better Block Project Report](#)

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10. CREATE A WORKPLAN AND TIMELINE

Develop a simple workplan and timeline that lists tasks, dates by which they need to be completed, and the people responsible for each task. Share this document with team members, major allies, volunteers and anyone else named as being responsible for a task. Include in the workplan the schedule of team meetings. Since every team member might not make it to every meeting, keep meeting notes that highlight action items or changes, and share the notes with the entire team after each meeting.

11. DETERMINE HOW THE PROJECT WILL BE ASSESSED AND EVALUATED

What are the metrics — both quantitative and qualitative — by which the pop-up demonstration's success will be measured?

- Begin by revisiting the discussion that was held during the community walkabout regarding what needs to change in the area and what is needed in order to become more livable.
- Then, identify measurable and reportable metrics. Examples include a survey of the event participants as well as data related to existing building vacancy rates, vehicle speeds, sales tax revenue, noise levels, etc.
- News coverage of the effort can be an important indicator of success.
- Note any new policies, streetscape improvements, new businesses and other long-term changes that followed the pop-up project.

Remember that it isn't feasible to measure every possible metric, so keep the assessment plan manageable and focus on the measurements that will be the most meaningful when working to make the change long-term. If available, engage the pro bono services of a research company or public opinion polling firm to develop, design and administer the assessment.

Next: [Organizing and Marketing the Project or Event](#) »

Engaging the Community and Making a Plan: (Website Links)

Engaging the Community and Making a Plan: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-tool-kit-engaging-the-community-making-plans.html>

WALC Institute: <http://www.walklive.org/>

AARP Livable Communities: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/>

The AARP Pop-Up Demonstration Tool Kit: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-demonstration-tool-kit.html>

Tactical Urbanism: Short-Term Action for Long-Term Change: <http://www.street-plans.com/research-writing/>

Street Plans Collaborative: <http://www.street-plans.com/our-firm/people/>

Team Better Block and

“How to Build a Better Block,” by Team Better Block: <http://teambetterblock.com/>

Better Block location survey: <http://betterblock.org/how-to-build-a-better-block/>

Jason Roberts, chair of the Better Block Foundation: <http://betterblock.org/about/board-of-directors/>

2015 TEDxOU talk: <http://betterblock.org/blog/2015/07/28/better-block-at-tedx/>

bocce ball court: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/livable-in-action/info-2016/shuffleboard-is-so-yesterday.html>

StreetMix.net: <http://streetmix.net/-/419364>

ciclovía: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/getting-around/info-2015/how-to-organize-a-ciclovía-open-streets-event.html>

Popular Pop-Ups (Box)

road diets: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/info-2014/road-diets-fact-sheet.html>

pocket parks or parklets: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/livable-in-action/info-2015/how-to-create-a-parklet.html>

**curb extensions and
wayfinding signage;**

<http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2015/13-short-range-livability-solutions.html>

modern roundabouts: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/info-2014/livability-factsheet-modern-roundabouts.html>

Continued

mini roundabouts and traffic circles: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2015/mid-range-solutions.html>

artistic treatments, such as painting murals, utility boxes, intersections and lightpoles: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2015/backstreets-and-underused-places.html>

Pop-Up Teamwork (Box)

How to Build a Better Block,” by Team Better Block: <http://teambetterblock.com/>

Recipe for Success (Box)

Akron, Ohio, Better Block Project Report: <http://betterblock.org/?s=Akron>

Next: Organizing and Marketing the Project or Event: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-tool-kit-organizing-and-marketing.html>

Planning a Pop-Up (Box):

Tool Kit Home Page: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-demonstration-tool-kit.html>

- 1. Getting Started:** <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/getting-started-pop-up-demonstration-tool-kit.html>
- 2. Engaging the Community and Making a Plan:** <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-tool-kit-engaging-the-community-making-plans.html>
- 3. Organizing and Marketing the Project or Event:** <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-tool-kit-organizing-and-marketing.html>
- 4. Building and Launching the Project or Event:** <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-tool-kit-build-and-launch.html>
- 5. Next Steps and Maintaining the Momentum:** <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-momentum.html>

Success Stories

Parklet: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-parklet.html>

Plaza: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-plaza.html>

Streetscape: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-streetscape.html>

Protected Bike Lane: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-protected-bike-lane.html>

Protected Intersection: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-protected-intersection.html>

Road Diet and Plaza: <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2016/pop-up-road-diet-and-plaza.html>