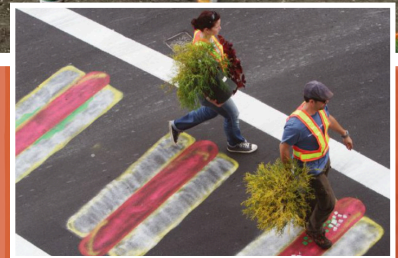


# BUILD A BETTER BLOCK



## A GUIDE TO PLANNING AND ORGANIZING A BETTER BLOCK

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# BUILD A BETTER BLOCK

## A Guide to Planning & Organizing a Better Block

There are downtowns and commercial corridors in almost every community that are in need of a jump start to help them become the great places they once were by transforming them into walkable communities and vibrant destinations for residents and visitors alike. Can you think of any neighborhoods that fit this bill in your community?

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® encourages REALTOR® Associations and REALTORS®, to become engaged in their communities to make them better places to live and work. The REALTOR® Party offers resources, funding, training and technical assistance to support our REALTOR® Associations in their community outreach efforts.

Better Block is one type of project in which REALTOR® Associations can become engaged in their communities and partner with others to initiate the revitalization of a downtown or commercial corridor. Your association can take the lead in your community to help turn things around.

NAR's [Smart Growth Action Grant](#) can be used to help fund a Better Block project. After the project is completed, the [Placemaking Micro-grant](#) can be used to create vibrant community gathering places like pocket parks and gardens followed by a [Housing Opportunity Grant](#) to address affordable housing challenges in the neighborhood.

Three local REALTOR® Associations—Hampton Roads Association of REALTORS® (VA), Greater South Bend-Mishawaka Association of REALTORS® (OR) and the New Orleans Metropolitan Association of REALTORS® (NOMAR) (LA)—have completed Better Block projects in their communities. And their efforts continue. The city of Norfolk, VA, has held a third Better Block project and has a [dedicated website page](#). The city of South Bend, OR, has asked the Greater South Bend-Mishawaka Association of REALTORS® to make a Better Block event an annual event. And NOMAR is planning a second Better Block.

*"Better Block is an excellent program and has the ability to jumpstart development and excite a community about the possibilities for underutilized areas."*

*Andrew Sinclair, former Government Affairs Director,  
Hampton Roads REALTORS® Association, VA.*

This document is an overview of Better Block to help you, along with your partners, to plan and organize a Better Block.



## WHAT IS BETTER BLOCK?

Better Block is a process that empowers communities and their leaders to reshape the built environments to promote the growth of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods.

It demonstrates the potential of an area with “temporary treatments” (i.e. painting, bike lanes and parklets) to vacant buildings, underused streets and public spaces. This temporary transformation provides a way for residents and community leaders to participate in the process. It also helps to convince public officials, stakeholders, lenders and property owners of the potential of an area. Think of it as a dress rehearsal for change.



Better Block is an alternative to traditional planning processes, which can be long and boring; involve endless public and committee meetings; and cause strife amongst stakeholders and residents.

Better Block has replaced the typical public meeting and architectural renderings process in more than 100 communities around the country and internationally.



Better Block projects have a positive impact on the real estate market. In Norfolk, VA more than \$20 million in real estate transactions have occurred since a Better Block in 2011. One of these transactions even occurred during the Better Block event itself.

*“Better Block is speed dating for future investors, developers and business proprietors to meet and test ideas out in real time.”*

Andrew Howard, Team Better Block.

Better Block is not a long, drawn-out process. It happens quickly:



Month One: Identify a one block location



Month Two: Develop a Concept Plan based on community input



Month Three: build out the concept plan with the community and demonstrate potential

## Better Block Case Study

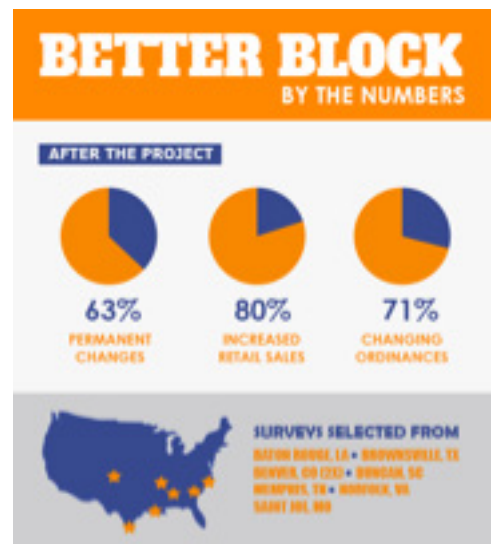
Binghamton, TN, is a neighborhood of Memphis. In recent years, Binghamton's population has declined 30 percent, 10 to 14 percent of its homes are vacant and it is undergoing an increase in neighborhood blight. Livable Memphis, a program of the Community Development Council of Greater Memphis, saw an opportunity to connect several great assets in the surrounding neighborhoods with a two-mile bicycle path, The Hampline, to bring traffic to the area. But first, revitalization efforts were needed to change Binghamton's image as a blighted and crime-ridden area. To jumpstart the pre-revitalization process and overcome perceptions, Livable Memphis joined forces with the Broad Avenue Arts District, the Binghamton Development Corporation, and the owner of an anchor business, T Clifton Arts, to utilize a tactical urbanism tool from Dallas, Texas called Build a Better Block. For a single weekend, the project transformed desolate Broad Avenue into a thriving commercial district, with protected bike lanes and cultural programming. Over the next year, the area saw \$2.5 million in private investment, and in the next three years, more than \$18 million. By the fourth year, the commercial district had a 95 percent occupancy.

Take a look at this [short video](#) of the Better Block in San Antonio, TX, to give you a better idea of what happens during a Better Block.

## WHY A BETTER BLOCK?

There are many reasons to have a Better Block. A few of these reasons as well as potential outcomes are outlined below. If you think a neighborhood in your community could benefit from one or more of these outcomes, you might want to consider a Better Block project.

- Improves and revitalizes underused properties
- Highlights the potential for creating great "complete streets" and "walkable communities"
- Creates pop-up retail opportunities
- Initiates infrastructure changes
- Creates parklets, green and open spaces
- Enhances pedestrian safety
- Updates and enhances zoning and land use policies
- Initiates new development: mixed-use, commercial and residential
- Enhances streetscapes
- Tests ideas: temporary to permanent
- Encourages people to visit area instead of avoiding
- Makes area a destination Introduces pedestrian & bike-friendly concepts
- Re-engineers and re-programs streets, sidewalks, properties, and spaces for safety, shared amenities and staying power
- Creates opportunities to sell and lease vacant properties
- Encourages vendors to open new businesses





*"A good start...worthy of repeating every year." Dan Blacharski, Marketing Vice President, Drewry's Brewing on the South Bend Better Block sponsored by the Greater South Bend-Mishawaka Association of REALTORS® (OR)*

*"We would really like to see local investment and the little things, like more people coming out here for dinner and knowing that the West Side is an option for them to come out and eat. We want Western Avenue to be a destination." Sam Centellas, Executive Director, LaCasa de Amistad on the South Bend Better Block sponsored by the Greater South Bend-Mishawaka Association of REALTORS®.*

## BETTER BLOCK COSTS

The costs of a Better Block will vary depending on how big your plans are; how many partners and volunteers you have; what type of activities and amenities you offer; how many donations and in-kind services you receive; and whether you are able to "do-it-yourself" or need to hire a consultant.

- **Basic Budget:** A simple Better Block project can be done with a budget of a few thousand dollars. But, remember, if there is a limit to funds, you will need more people who are available and ready to donate their time and resources. You will need to beg, borrow and build. And you'll need to get partner commitments and volunteer participation. Baseline costs of the project, such as permits, rentals and materials should cost around \$3,000.
- **A Step Up:** If you have access to additional funding via grants, donations and partner resources, you will be able to add more amenities and activities such as additional landscaping, building façade improvements & painting, music for entertainment, specialty pop-ups, video recording of event; evaluation and reporting. You may now be looking at a budget up to \$10,000 or more.

### What an \$8,000 Better Block Looks Like

[The Old Town/Chinatown Revitalization Better Block Project](#) in Portland, OR, built sidewalk cafe seating, protected bike lanes and a pedestrian plaza. A concept plan was created with the help of the Fat Pencil design team and Nick Falbo of Alta Planning, a bike lane designer. The group gave themselves a month to create four blocks worth of materials, including 150 planter boxes to carve out the protected bike lane and pedestrian plaza. The team cleaned out two Home Depot® stores worth of AstroTurf® for the project. With so many materials, the group still kept the project budget around \$8,000, which they covered with the help of sponsors who stepped up to support the project. Now that they have all the tools and props from this project, future projects will be cheaper. They also had a large number of volunteers donate their time, starting with three at the very beginning of the project and ending with more than 30. Volunteers worked every evening in the weeks leading up to the project to complete the planters in time for the demonstration this weekend.



# TEAM BETTER BLOCK CONSULTING

Team Better Block can assist REALTOR® Associations and their partners, including cities and community organizations, with the planning, organizing, community outreach, logistics and measuring the impacts of a Better Block. Depending on the services you need, consulting fees can range from \$3,000 to \$50,000. Team Better Block has a variety of services that will elevate the success of your project. Keynote and Community Presentation: Best practices from the more than 100 projects.

- **Community Walk:** Identifies the blocks with the best potential for a Better Block.
- **Site Selection:** Assists in the selection of locations bound to succeed.
- **Build Workshops:** Organizes short workshops for volunteers to meet and build together.
- **Concept Plan Development:** Designs a plan and placemaking elements that can be achieved in days not years.
- **Event Management:** Coordinates set-up and logistics from concept to completion.
- **Documentation and Evaluation:** Provides assistance to measure outcomes because if you do not count it and document the results, it is not worth doing.
- **Policy Development:** Translates the Better Block demonstration into policy for long term changes.

Tool: [See budget details in the Appendix.](#)

## Team Better Block Budget Tips:

- Remember that if you want creativity, take away a zero from your budget. Often times groups get stifled by the lack of funds, but since the project is a demonstration, you can often borrow the majority of the items needed for the project.
- If more funding is required, use [indiegogo.com](https://www.indiegogo.com) or [lobby.org](https://www.lobby.org) to setup a crowdfunding to help with the effort.

## Better Block Budget Estimates:

- Right of Way event permitting with the City - \$50
- Traffic control and streetscape buffers - \$200
- Event insurance - \$150
- Marketing - \$100
- Site cleanup - \$50
- Volunteer lunch - \$100
- Material rental - \$500
- Video Recording - \$500
- Community engagement installation - \$100
- Protected streetscape buffers - \$100
- Signage and way-finding - \$100
- Lending library - \$100
- Public seating - \$100
- Pocket park - \$100



# BETTER BLOCK SCHEDULE & PLAN

**Timeline:** Planning to Event: 3 months or less

Here are the major tasks to conduct for a Better Block. You do not need to go in the order as listed below, and, may want to have teams work on some of the tasks at the same time.

## Month 1

- Identify and Outreach to Partners
- Define Project and Select Site
- Conduct a Community Meeting and Keynote
- Organize a Walking Tour and Brainstorming Session

## Month 2

- Sign-up Volunteers and Coordinate Teams
- Develop Concept Plan
- Outreach to Property Owners
- Secure Permits
- Promote & Market

## Month 3 and During/After

- Continue to Market and Promote
- Procure Materials, Prep and Prebuild
- Setup and Final Logistics
- Document, Measure and Evaluate
- Develop Policies and Update Zoning

## Identify & Outreach to Partners

You cannot conduct a Better Block alone. You will need the support, commitment, participation and resources of local stakeholders, residents, partners and volunteers.

You may want to start with a few key partners to see if there is any interest in a Better Block. At this time, you may or may not have a neighborhood in mind for the project. If not, partners can add valuable insight and history of an area. If you do have a neighborhood in mind, you may want to make sure you are able to get the support of at least two partners who have a vested interest in revitalizing the neighborhood before moving ahead with the project.

An important partner is usually a neighborhood-based non-profit organization who has a proven track record in the community. This organization will become the lead organization. Residents need to trust this organization and not look at them as “outsiders.” You may want to see if there is a local [Main Street®](#) organization, [NeighborWorks organization](#), [Community Development Corporation](#), or [Development Organization](#), that wants to take the lead.

*“Better Block will not be successful if it appears to be run by REALTORS® or any other outside group dictating their vision to the community.”*

*Andrew Sinclair, former Government Affairs Director, Hampton Roads REALTORS® Association (VA).*



Once the lead organization is selected, you will also need the support and resources of additional partners. Here are a few places to start:

- Universities and colleges especially those with urban planning and architect programs
- Organizers of existing events that happen in the area (fun runs, cyclovias, art crawls, food, art and music festivals)
- Cultural, civic, and historical organizations
- Local artists, musicians and art organizations
- Non-profit housing developers
- Faith-based organizations
- Event coordinators
- Bicycle advocacy organizations
- Urban farming groups
- Food truck purveyors
- Farm to market restaurants
- Local community markets (Etsy groups, farmers markets, etc.)
- Property owners
- Local businesses
- Chambers of Commerce
- Property owners: You cannot have a Better Block without property owner buy-in.
- Government officials: You will need to regularly meet with government officials and staff and get buy-in from them as the project progresses.

For a successful Better Block, you will need to rally and get buy-in from stakeholders, community residents and organizations and civic participation.

*"Community business associations and civic leagues make natural partners. There also needs to be an existing residential community within walking distance; it doesn't have to be large, but enough to establish a natural constituency. This local group should set the vision and challenge participants to look to the future, not just what the area used to be."*

*Andrew Sinclair, former Government Affairs Director, Hampton Roads REALTORS® Association (VA).*

Tool: [Use the Questionnaire in the Appendix to determine the type of commitment from a partner.](#)

## Define Project & Select a Site

You may already have identified a neighborhood to revitalize before you contacted any partners. That is fine as long as you are able to your partners' agreement, support and participation in the project.

However, if you and your partners have not identified a neighborhood for a Better Block, finding one or two locations is the next thing to do. If several neighborhoods are under consideration, or if you found a neighborhood, but are not quite sure of the exact location for a Better Block, you can use the information below to help you. You may also want to get the input of the community to help you decide.

Typically neighborhoods built pre-war are good possibilities. The central core should be in close proximity to residential housing as this will be the community who will benefit the most and will determine what they want their neighborhood to become.

You should also focus on areas where there are several buildings for lease or for sale. Ideally, there should be at least two spaces available in vacant buildings. One space will serve as a Better Block lab and build space. This is where the volunteers can meet, store materials and complete construction.

*"Sites should have empty storefronts, not just underutilized spaces, but also have a few key established, anchor businesses."*

*Andrew Sinclair, former Government Affairs Director,  
Hampton Roads REALTORS® Association (VA).*

The area should currently not be a "destination" where cafes, shops, green spaces, gathering spots, etc. already are present. These places are already on the way to making their vision happen.

Look for locations where the main activities could be contained to a block length somewhere between 200 and 400 feet and where both sides of the street could be utilized.

Team Better Block has found that it is best to address the following four factors when determining a location for a Better Block:

- Safety
- Shared Access
- Stay Power
- The 8 to 80 Rule: No task is less than 8 hours or more than 80 hours

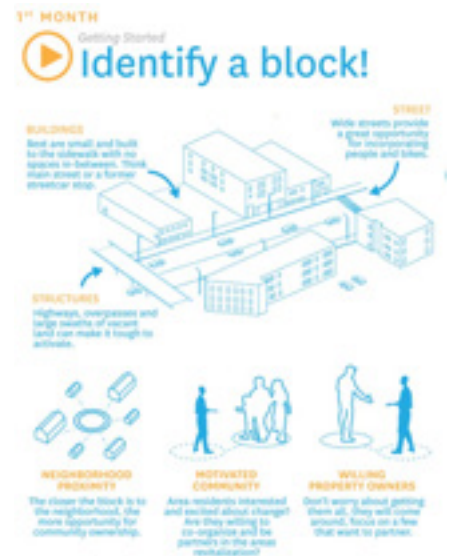
You should address each of the following related questions. If the answer is no, can you make temporary improvements during the Better Block to change things around? If you can, the area will be a good possibility for a Better Block. After the Better Block, the task will be to make the temporary changes permanent.

**Safety (real and perceived):** If an area feels unsafe, then everything breaks down. The key to changing a neighborhood is addressing its perceived safety. If a neighborhood is not perceived as safe, what can be done to change this?

- Does it feel safe to cross the street?
- Does it feel safe to stand on the sidewalk?
- Does it feel safe to linger in the area?
- Does the area have hidden corners or large obstacles that reduce open sightlines?
- Is the area filled with debris, graffiti, overgrown landscaping, etc.?
- Do the businesses have bars on the windows or opaque windows?

**Shared Access:** The area should be accessible via different modes of transportation and present opportunities to implement bike lanes, wide sidewalks and crosswalks and close to a lane of traffic.

- Is the area accessible via public transportation?
- Can people safely ride a bike to the area?
- Do cyclists feel welcome in the area?





- Do pedestrians have easy and clear access to the area?
- Is the area easily accessible from residential neighborhoods?
- Are there way finding signs that direct people in to and out of the area?
- What can be done to increase accessibility (bike lanes, signage, etc.)?

**Staying Power:** Can amenities and activities be part of the Better Block which will encourage people to visit the area and have them linger?

- Are there amenities that allow people to linger in the space (seating, tables, etc.)?
- Can the vacant spaces/properties be activated?
- Are there food options on the block?
- Is there a presence of local art and cultural organizations?
- Are there places to eat outdoors?
- Can games, entertainment, art and other amenities be accommodated?
- Are there open spaces?
- Are there places to window shop and purchase items?
- Is the identity of the area prominent (arts district, cultural district, historic area)?

**8 to 80:** Can amenities and activities be created for children, artists, seniors, cyclists, dog owners, etc. These groups tend to be indicators of a healthy environment that feels welcoming and attracts other people.

- Is the area safe for children?
- Is the area accessible to the elderly and those with disabilities?
- Are dogs welcomed?
- Is the neighborhood diversity-friendly?

**Team Better Block Tip:** Think small for the location.

## Better Block Survey

You can use the [Better Block Survey in the Appendix](#) to define a Better Block location. You and your partners will visit the area and score the following seven elements. You may want to rank several potential locations.

Rate each element from one to four (one being poor, four being strong):

1. **Leasable/Available Buildings:** These present opportunities for temporary business development (pop-ups) which can become permanent businesses. Who owns the properties and are the property owners willing to make space available? Do the buildings meet minimum code and have electricity?
2. **Building Edges that Define a Space (Form):** Does the area have well-formed building edges with very few gaps? Are there any parking lots or vacant lots in the area?
3. **Potential for Multi-modal Street Infrastructure:** Is there available street/sidewalk capacity? Is traffic under 20,000 ADT (street)? How many traffic lanes are there? What is the width of sidewalks? Is there room for bike lanes? Can you get the support of pedestrian/bike groups?

4. **Proximity to a Residential Neighborhood (Community):** where are the residential communities and where do people live who would come to the area?
5. **Placemaking Potential (Comfort):** is there a potential for creating a destination: pocket pocks, gardens, niche shops, galleries, public art in the area?
6. **Interest from Local Partners:** who are the potential partners? Are they willing to participate and lend their resources?
7. **Existing Special Events (People):** are there any festivals, fairs, local events, markets that take place in area?

**Team Better Block Tip:** Give the area a name, i.e. Town Arts District, Town Cultural District

Tool: [See the Better Block Survey Template in the Appendix.](#)

## Conduct a Community Meeting & Keynote

You will need to introduce the Better Block concept and any draft plans to the community. So, another task to conduct early in the project is to schedule a public meeting for the community.

You should invite all local stakeholders including local officials, business and property owners, residents and potential partners as outlined above.

The keynote will introduce the community to the Better Block concept and hopefully get them excited about a Better Block project. It may provide local leaders and professionals reason to get it done.



At the meeting, you will give an overview of efforts and ideas to revitalize the area and describe Better Block and how the Better Block will be used to jumpstart revitalization efforts. You will also present the potential location(s) of the Better Block and seek input from citizens and business owners to determine the final site selection if that has not already been decided.

This is where you will get the needed buy-in from the community. You will hopefully experience excitement and enthusiasm from those at the meeting as well as recruit both partners and volunteers.

*"The most important thing from my perspective is having local community buy-in and support."*

*Andrew Sinclair, former Government Affairs Director, Hampton Roads REALTORS® Association (VA).*

*"I have pictured many, many times how awesome this city from West, East, North and South can look again. With blessings above and people like you, this city can return to its glory days."*

*South Bend Resident on the South Bend Better Block sponsored by the  
Greater South Bend-Mishawaka Association of REALTORS® (VA).*

### **Team Better Block Tip:**

- There needs to a desire for change by the community and the community needs to take ownership of the project.
- Do not forget to introduce any VIPs who attend the meeting.

**Optional:** Team Better Block is available to give a keynote at the community meeting. Their presentation includes how Better Block got started; why a Better Block; what can take place at a Better Block; participant case studies from projects from around the country in various city sizes; and outcomes of a Better Block. There is also a sharing portion that will get participants engaged with each other and thinking about solutions. One hour for a \$3,000 fee.

### **Keynote in New Orleans**

I had the pleasure of attending the community meeting for the Better Block in New Orleans sponsored by the New Orleans Metropolitan Association of REALTORS® (NOMAR). NOMAR received a REALTOR® Party Smart Growth Action Grant to help fund their Better Block. Part of the grant went to Team Better Block for consulting services including giving a keynote at the community meeting. Once introductions were made, Andrew Howard from Team Better Block gave the keynote and touched upon the following:

- o How it all got started: In his own neighborhood
- o Planning should be fun and not take years to implement
- o Better Block is a way for communities to take ownership of a community
- o Show what could be; people get to experience "it"
- o Recreate what the is dream for the community
- o Use instead of traditional planning processes
- o Ideas for activities and amenities
- o Can do a lot with partnerships
- o Find good deals, borrow and build for shoestring budgets
- o Playful tool with real outcomes
  - Better Block can lead to code changes
  - Pop-ups become permanent stores in the community
  - Sale/lease of properties
- o Set a date and publish it – blackmail yourself
- o Enhance the chaos and have fun with Better Block
- o Better Block Recipe: Clean it. Activate. Make it Permanent.

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## Organize a Walking Tour & Brainstorming Session

After the community meeting, a group of stakeholders and members of the community will need to take a walk of the potential Better Block site to identify opportunities for activities and amenities. A walk of the area gets participants onto the streets so they can start to think of ideas for pop-up shops, street treatments, public spaces, public art and beautification.

After the walk, everyone will get together to have a brainstorming session to discuss their findings and options; identify existing community assets; and suggest people who can be recruited to help with the Better Block.

### Community Walk in Richmond

The Church Hill North Better Block (Richmond, VA) was kicked off with a successful community walk that took place at the project site (25th Street and Venable Street). A group of nearly 100 residents, stakeholders and activists showed up to begin laying out the groundwork for the area's first Better Block. While walking through the site, property owners of vacant structures offered access to their buildings. These properties would be used for pop-up shops during the Better Block. Participants identified a handful of great, historic structures which had the potential to be quickly converted to cafes, markets or art galleries.



See a [video of a community walk in Norfolk, VA](#).

**Optional:** Team Better Block is available to lead, moderate and participate in the walk and provide feedback and suggestions on site selection choices and activities. Using a Better Block survey, they can help you identify potential pop-up shops, street improvements and public space amenities. One hour for \$1,000 fee.

**Team Better Block Tip:** At this time, do not overthink the details. The majority of the work and details are worked out in the weeks prior to the Better Block.

## Set a Date

You may want to coordinate the Better Block to an existing event, such as an art crawl, ciclovía, fun run, etc. Team Better Block has developed food events, bike rides and more that celebrate a community's identity while aligning the efforts of a Better Block project.

**Team Better Block Tip:** Set a date for the Better Block and publish it. This locks you in.

## Sign-up Volunteers & Coordinate Teams

A successful Better Block depends on volunteers. Volunteers are needed to help with planning, logistics, set up, tours, clean up, securing in-kind donations (paint, wood, A/V, etc.), prebuilds, entertainment, promotion and marketing and take down.

Volunteers could include local grassroots community activists, staff from non-profit organizations and civic groups, businesses, artists, musicians, college students, urban planning/architect firms, young business professionals, local Etsy groups and residents. A great place to solicit volunteers is at the community meeting.

Once you have a variety of volunteers signed up, you will need to create teams and designate tasks to each volunteer. Each team should have a team leader to make sure the tasks get completed.

**Team Better Block Tip:** Team Better Block has set up a [collaborative map](#) for anyone interested in developing a Better Block. Pin the location of your Better Block and provide links so others can take part.

Tool: The Appendix has a [sign-in sheet and discusses opportunities](#) for participation. You can use the responses to create volunteers teams. Also see the [Volunteer Form](#) used at the Better Block in Richmond, VA.

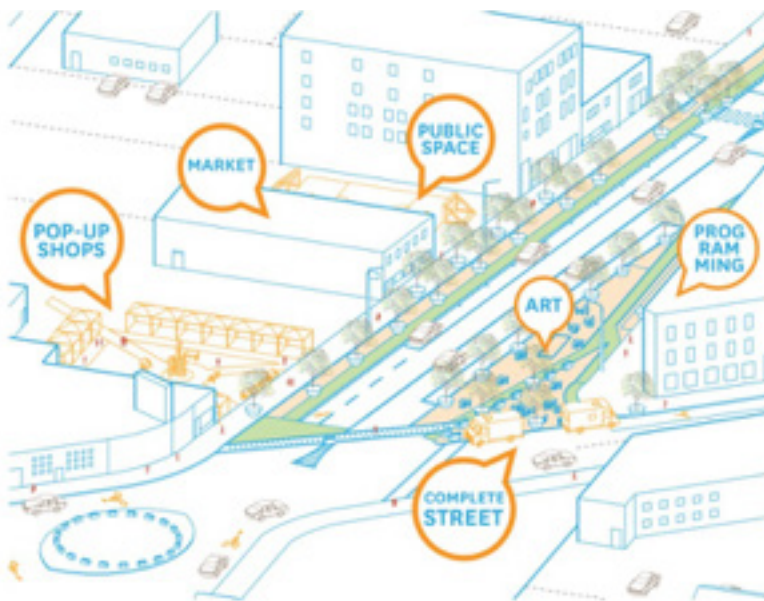
## Develop Concept Plan

As you sign up partners and volunteers, your next task is to create a concept plan. You need to draft a rough sketch of the streets and what types of activities and amenities you will have and where they will be located.

The concept plan will note all of the improvements you would like to accomplish. You'll want to think about pop-up shops, café tables/chairs, bike lanes, plants, landscaping, façade improvement/painting, Wi-Fi, food vendors, tours, activities, music, art and so on.



Begin with defining the focal points of the Better Block. Where will the pictures be taken, what spots will people gather and what makes this place different than others nearby?



All Better Blocks should focus on four elements: an edge, a sidewalk, a street and a lab space.

The edge should have small retail shops with a minimum of five shops that line both sides of the street to show how these edges can engage each other. Look at shopping malls as an analogy for creating a smartly scaled street with small retail spaces at 18 feet or less with strong edge detail, two-sided, common space which is shared and activated by food court.

The lab space will be where volunteer groups can meet, complete construction and store materials. You will need to identify a vacant property to set up the lab space.

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Sidewalks need to be safe for all. You should develop walking and biking connections to the sidewalks. Make these connections safe and appealing using as many of the techniques found in a [street design manual](#). Focus on scale. Work to create a 1:1 ratio on sidewalk to road space.

The street will accommodate cars, but you will need to find a way to slow down traffic with traffic calming measures so cyclists and pedestrians will feel safe. You can use [Streetmix](#) to profile the existing streetscape.

Include as many people-friendly aesthetics—lighting, plants, seating, etc.—as you can, especially seating as the area must be comfortable to encourage people to linger.

Be sure to provide for the weather. If it is hot, add shade. If it is cold, make sure heaters and blankets are on hand.

Remember that people want a reason to stay and be a part of a neighborhood. Make sure you have a variety of activities to create enough diversification of use to allow the area to sustain activity over a full day. Keep in mind all users: teens, children, elderly, adults, students, disabled, etc.



## Activities & Programming

The Better Block project should be thought of as a “hardware project.” The “software project” is the programming of the space itself. Partner with an outdoor market, or work with an event manager onsite to coordinate vendors, communication and marketing of programming and activities. Taking on both pieces can stretch resources if volunteer turnout is light.

Here are some ideas for amenities and activities for your Better Block:

**Reading & Information:** Create, distribute and post maps of the shops and amenities and a schedule of activities. Build a simple kiosk or [Little Free Library](#) to use as community bulletin board. Post the story of the block (its history, its present, its future as a neighborhood place). Distribute information and get local historians to volunteer to give tours and talks.



**Landscaping:** You will need to beautify the area and make it welcoming. Volunteers can build planters from old pallets. Team Better Block has worked with local props warehouses to bring in planters to help divide the street. They have also asked local landscapers if they could borrow potted trees and plants they will be using for other projects.





**Lighting:** Lighting creates ambiance and makes the area safe. Team Better Block has strung simple bailing wire between buildings at 15 feet high (above a semi-trucks lowest clearance) and attached recycled Christmas lights to help provide more ambiance.

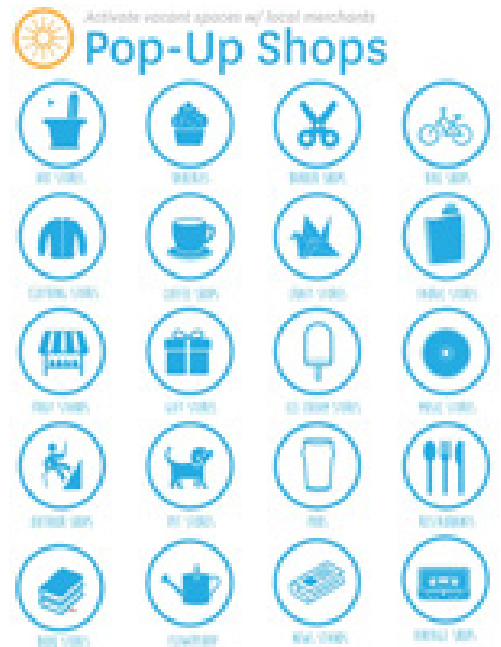
**Pop-up Shops:** The shops should have a morning beverage option (coffee, tea, etc.), a restaurant, and include locally-made products. You do not have to get overly elaborate with your product offerings. For coffee shops, you could brew the coffee off-site and use urns to pour it onsite. This still creates an inviting experience.

If possible, work with existing local businesses to help fill the storefronts with products. The goal should be to place as many local products as possible in each of the shops. Other options include a flower shop, bike shop, music store, book shop, etc. Team Better Block created a kids' art studio so families could be involved. Another idea is to organize a book drive and then create a small bookstore.

If there are not enough vacant properties for pop-ups, rent scaffolding and/or used billboard vinyl to create a new street edge. Install small pop-up retail in these spaces.

Some other ideas:

- **Pop-up Real Estate Office:** Your association may be able to set up a pop-up real estate office and use members to staff the office. You then could offer a tour of open houses in the area.
- **Arts and Crafts Pop-up:** Pop-ups are a great way for local start-ups and artists to show and sell their wares.

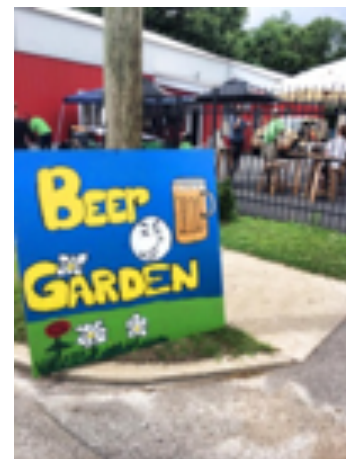


In Richmond, VA, vendors interested in developing a shop at their Better Block had to submit an application form. They conducted a tour of the area for pop-up shop participants.

And in Norfolk, VA, where a Better Block was held over two days, totaling 10 hours of business operation, more than \$13,000 in revenue was generated. One pop-up shop has set up a permanent business.

**Beer Garden:** If a project is at night, build a beer garden. Do not forget to pull an alcohol permit. String lights around the garden which can help create a social gathering space that can be the center of the Better Block.

**Health Screening Clinic:** Offer free blood pressure checks, heart monitoring, etc. A local hospital or clinic could be the sponsor. This may get the elderly to attend and others and may encourage a health care provider to develop a health clinic in the neighborhood.



**Parklets:** These are temporary spaces for the community to sit and linger. Line two sides of the street with these if possible. They give the semblance of a front porch, which acts as a social gathering space and street activator. Also, make sure one includes shade if folks need a place to cool down.

**Bike Lanes, Crosswalks & Sidewalks:** Work with your city to test the viability of temporary bike lanes, crosswalks, dedicated transit lanes or expanded sidewalks. White duct tape works extremely well as a replacement for paint. Spray chalk is also an alternative.



**Team Better Block Tip:** Mix your own removable paint using equal parts flour, corn starch and water which quickly dissolves at the end of the project.





**Music:** Music is a key component to having activating a street. Invite local musicians, DJs, drum circles, etc. to perform at the Better Block. Or use a guitar amplifier and play tracks from an iPod as a simple way to bring music to the block.

**History & Cultural Activities:** Scheduling activities that reflect the local culture and/or gives a historical perspective of the neighborhood will help attendees better understand the community. At a Better Block in San Antonio, Team Better Block strategically organized several cultural interpretations to focus on the vast history and importance of Alamo Plaza to San Antonio and Texas history. Coahuiltecan/Apache story teller Isaac Cardenas was paired with Texas Native songwriter KR Wood and special guest Carolyn Cotton Crockett, third granddaughter of Davy Crockett for a moment to remember.



**Games & Activities:** Smaller details can include setting up games, such as a bean bag toss or areas to play hop scotch, which can appeal to families, especially children. Board games, like chess, are another option to consider.



**Open Houses:** Organize an open house of all residential properties in and around the area for sale. As people attending the event envision what the neighborhood could be, they may want to think about living in the area too.

*“Open Houses are a natural way for REALTORS® to participate by coordinating the scheduling for nearby properties, both residential and commercial. The Better Block activities should elevate interest in the area and bring a large crowd, providing the perfect opportunity to showcase available properties.”*

*Andrew Sinclair, former Government Affairs Director, Hampton Roads REALTORS® Association (VA).*

**Tour of Vacant Buildings:** If there are commercial properties for sale/lease in a 10-block square area of where the event will be held, there may be potential for a walking tour of these buildings to be held during the same time of the Better Block. The event may encourage potential businesses to become interested in renting or leasing these buildings if they know there are plans for the area to be revitalized. The Better Block will enable them to see the potential and the interest in locals in supporting local businesses.

This might be a project for your Commercial members to consider. See an example of a tour: <http://smallbizsurvival.com/2013/05/small-town-economic-development-idea-tour-empty-buildings.html>.

## Promote & Market

Promote. Promote. Promote. During every step of the Better Block planning, you should be getting the word out on the Better Block event. This is a great opportunity for a volunteer who has marketing skills and experience.

In addition to using traditional media—newspapers, radio, local news stations—you will also want to take advantage of social media—Facebook, Twitter, etc.—which can also be used to solicit volunteers, sponsors and partners as well as encourage residents to attend the Better Block.

Creating a Facebook page is an easy way to get things started. See an example: <https://www.facebook.com/BetterBlockLawrence>

Do not forget about to create fliers and distribute them throughout the community including at businesses, schools, churches, events and arts/cultural organizations.





You may also want to promote the Better Block throughout the city. More than likely, the area you are revitalizing has been "offline" and most residents do not know to return to the area.

*"We came to Better Block to get familiar with another part of town."*

*Molly Busser, South Bend resident attending the South Bend Better Block sponsored by the Greater South Bend-Mishawaka Association of REALTORS® (OR)*

*"The goal wasn't about selling property. It was to find a part of the community that people had forgotten about and say, 'Look what's here.'"*

*Eddie Niziolek, Communications Coordinator, Greater South Bend-Mishawaka Association of REALTORS® (OR)*

Make sure to invite your mayor, council members and other elected officials as well the staff of government agencies, so they can see the possibilities of change for themselves.

You will need to develop a map and schedule of activities for the day (music, performances,



et cetera) and then distribute the schedule to the media, public officials, businesses and attendees.

## Outreach to Property Owners



The empty and vacant buildings in the area will serve as locations for the pop-ups and prebuild workshops. You will need to identify, contact and work with the property owners to get their permission to gain access to the properties. You should explain a Better Block to property owners and let them know of potential outcomes including the lease or sale of their properties.

Team Better Block pitched one event as a giant “art installation,” so the vacant spaces become defacto art galleries. The property owners were excited to freely allow access because their properties were being actively marketed. And after this Better Block, several of the properties were leased.

## Codes & Insurance

The properties will need to be up to code and safe for people to enter them. They should also have access to electricity. Walk through the pop-up shops with a building inspector and the fire chief to check for hazards.

You should also take out an event insurance policy. Often times, property owners will ask for insurance to protect them against lawsuits; claims made related to bodily injury of others; and property damage to the premise before allowing access to their buildings. You may need to take out a simple “Block Party event” insurance policy and add property owners as “additional insured” for the Better Block.

## Secure Permits

More than likely, a Better Block will need a permit. You will need to work with your city to permit the Better Block using either a block party permit or assembly permit. Start this process at least 60 days prior to your date. Build into your special event permit two hours for set-up and take down.

If you will be selling alcohol, you will need to pull an alcohol permit.

You'll more than likely need a permit to close a portion of the street. Team Better Block asks to allow one lane of vehicle traffic so that residents could see that a "complete street" that allowed all modes of transit was a viable solution.

In some Better Block projects, city staffs were also advised on the creation of outdoor cafe seating, pedestrian bulb-outs and improved landscaping. You may want to work with a traffic control contractor to provide safety cones and warning signs.

The City of Norfolk has a checklist that must be followed and an in-person meeting is needed to clarify event details.

*"Look to the local government planning and economic development departments for support. If they see the value in promoting private sector growth (which they should), they can expedite some of the permitting needed and prevent other obstacles. "*

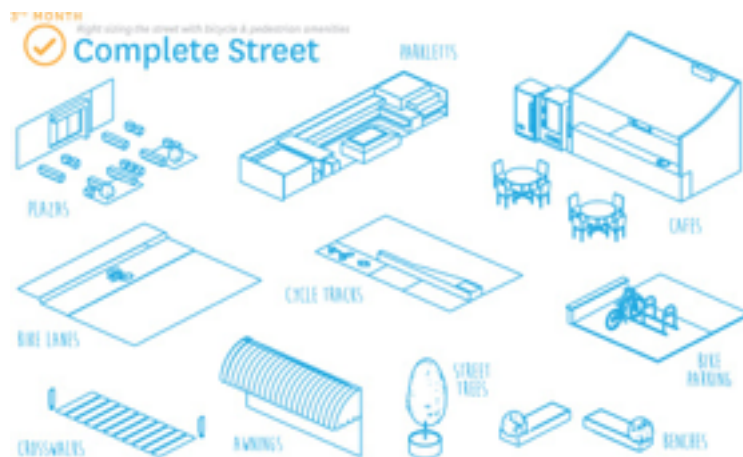
*Andrew Sinclair, former Government Affairs Director, Hampton Roads REALTORS® Association (VA)*

## Procure Materials, Prep & Pre-Build

As the date of the Better Block approaches, you will need to think about all, and create a list, for all the items that to buy, borrow and build as part of your concept plan. Ask for each team to submit a list of what they need to coordinate efforts. To keep costs in line, borrow and build as much as you can.

Items to buy, build or borrow can include chairs, tables, plants, paints, lights, trash cans, tools, nails, duct tape, spray chalk, signage, markers, fencing, hay bales and pallet wood.

Set a small budget for buying essential items. Retailers will often offer discounts for community projects. Just ask.



**Team Better Block Tip:** Make sure you have the basic tools required for all projects: 4 automatic screwdrivers (1 with drill bit), extra batteries, 2 circular saws, 3 hammers, 1 crow bar and as many pallets as you can acquire.



You will also need to gather volunteers for one, or more, pre-build workshop one to two weeks prior to the Better Block. The workshop allows volunteers to gather and assemble materials, gain access to vacant properties and build items needed for the Better Block. Be sure to have all materials assembled and ready to install prior to a workshop. Provide snacks and beverages to the volunteers.

**Team Better Block Tip:** Do not create more than two workshops per day.

[Watch volunteers in Richmond, VA build parklets and furniture.](#)

**Optional:** Team Better Block can conduct a pre-build session on-site of the Better Block.

You will also need to get access to the vacant buildings, which will be painted and spruced up for the pop-up shops. This is the time to clean up public spaces and add landscaping amenities. These small changes can make a big difference in the ambiance of the neighborhood.



## Set-up & Final Logistics

It is finally the day of your Better Block.

Make note of any last minute logistics and set up that needs to be done. Is everything built, installed and in place?

Make sure all hands are on deck. Assemble all your volunteers and give them their assignments and make sure everything is ready and in place.

Are all the vendors set up and have what they need? Allow vendors access at least one hour prior to start of the Better Block.

If there are VIPs coming, make sure you have volunteers to greet them and show them around. The same goes for any media that attends.

Make sure you have some volunteers for take-down and clean-up.



## Document, Measure & Evaluate

Since you went through a lot of effort to plan and organize the Better Block, you should take some time to document your efforts and what took place.

Evaluation efforts can include cataloguing vacant properties and their usage during a Better Block. If any of these properties are leased or sold after Better Block, you can indicate that and compare vacancy rates before/after Better Block.

Be sure to track sales to show the increase in area business (potential for increased tax revenue is a city's largest motivator for change), and spotlight how traffic slows but people still have easy access and come out.

You should also keep track of retail and food sales to show the increase in area business and the potential for increased tax revenue which could be a city's largest motivator for change and action.

Another evaluation activity to consider is conducting baseline metrics to show existing vehicle counts and speeds and pedestrian use. These can be used to compare traffic speeds before and during a Better Block which included pedestrian safety features.

**Tool:** [You can use the surveys in the Appendix to follow up with volunteers, participants and attendees.](#)

- Better Block Qualitative Survey – conducted before a Better Block
- Better Block Qualitative Survey – conducted during a Better Block
- Better Block Quantitative Metrics Activity Sheet

Volunteers can help to photograph, video and document the Better Block before and during the event.

You can then publish all your findings in print and online. The photos can be used to post on your Facebook page and for reports and presentations in any efforts to make permanent changes.



## Develop Policies & Update Zoning for Permanent Changes

The work does not stop once the Better Block is over. It is now time to make the temporary changes permanent by working to change policy and fast-track infrastructure improvements.

You can use the findings from your measurements, surveys and evaluations to see what worked and what did not. For the activities and projects that worked, these will be the areas to focus on for your advocacy efforts.

Neighborhoods thrive when people can live, work, shop, dine and relax all in the same place, as demonstrated by Better Blocks. However, there are barriers that prohibit things like stores mixed with residences, a diversity of housing types in the same development and pedestrian-first design, such as lending practices that favor conventional suburban development and outdated federal, state and local transportation, tax, zoning and other policies.

*"In 95% of the jurisdictions of this country, building mixed-use, high density WalkUP urban development is not legal. It does not meet the zoning,"*

*Mark Falcone., Denver developer.*

*"Most current zoning ordinances are a combination of good intentions producing bad outcomes for most places."*

*Eric Bethany, Atlanta architect.*

You may find that the zoning in your community needs to be changed or updated to implement permanent changes, including the following:

- Allow a ground floor storefront and residential in the upper floors
- Permit increased density
- Allow or eliminate fees for outside café areas
- Reduce parking requirements
- Facilitate a mix of uses

If your local government is proposing changes to the zoning code, the [REALTOR® Party's Land Use Initiative](#) can review the proposed zoning to assess the impact on real estate.

# APPENDIX

## Team Better Block Tools & Resources

- I. Budget: Typical Scope of Team Better Block Services
- II. Site Selection: Better Block Site Survey
- III. Partner Outreach: Partner Questionnaire
- IV. Volunteer Outreach: Team Assignment & Volunteer Sign Up
- V. Concept Plan Example
- VI. Better Block Workshops: Prep & Pre-Build
  - a. Parklet Workshop
  - b. Storefront Workshop
  - c. Street Crossing Workshop
  - d. Furniture Workshop
  - e. Metrics Workshop
- VII. Set Up & Logistics: Schedule of Events & Maps Example
- VIII. Set Up & Logistics: Traffic Control Plan Example
- IX. Measurement
  - a. Better Block Qualitative Survey - Before
  - b. Better Block Qualitative Survey - During
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  - d. Better Block Quantitative Metrics
  - e. Catalogue
- X. Evaluate
  - a. Survey for Volunteers
  - b. Survey for Participants
  - c. Survey for Attendees
- XI. Complete Streets Design Example
- XII. Better Block Resources

## Budget: Typical Scope of Team Better Block Services

### Public & Private Space Survey (PPSS): \$5,000

*Survey of the site's public and private spaces, quality of these spaces and identification of rapid redevelopment potential.*

Team Better Block's PPSS Survey provides a detailed analysis of a community's assets, potential stakeholders (property owners, activists, non-profits, businesses, artists) and quick win opportunities that allow a jumping-off point for a Better Block demonstration. The PPSS tool also identifies local materials and resources that can best be utilized to rebuild a community while showcasing the area's natural character.

#### Deliverables:

- Keynote presentation to stakeholders and leaders on Better Block approach at a public meeting
- PPSS Survey of five potential Better Block sites
- Survey of participants to assess potential locations and interest in a Better Block
- Memo detailing findings and recommendations for Better Block site

### Community Walk, Workshop and Concept Plan: \$10,000

Gather leaders, activists and general public for a walk of the potential Better Block site to identify opportunities and constraints. Create a list of potential pop up shops, transportation improvements, public spaces enhancements, public art opportunities and other changes. Facilitate dividing the large group into smaller teams to address project goals.

#### Deliverables:

- Community walk-through of potential Better Block site
- Concept plan
- Needs list
- Summary memo of next steps
- Go or no-go decision on having a Better Block

### Community Organization: \$3,000

*Organizing volunteers to execute pop-up shops, public spaces, traffic calming, complete streets and other elements of the Better Block.*

Create a volunteer plan, better block guide and assist with follow-up to generate volunteer commitments and success.

#### Deliverables:

- Assist with volunteer plan
- Create a Better Block Guide
- Email and phone coordination with locals, city leaders and volunteers



### Private Sector Organization: \$3,000

In coordination with local property owners, non-profits and private businesses, solicit participation in the Better Block. Approach and negotiate access to vacant property in the Better Block area. Provide information on benefits, risks and offer legal agreements to mitigate liability. Offer success agreements between pop-up shops and property owners/agents.

#### Deliverables:

- Assist with private sector outreach
- Provide legal documents when needed
- Provide success agreements when needed

### Public Sector Organization: \$3,000

Present the concept plan to city staff and refine based on comments and concerns. Assist with needs for permitting of special event, food and business licenses. Negotiate with traffic engineer's consideration of the street plan.

#### Deliverables:

- Assist with internal city staff coordination
- Present concept plan and refine based on comments from staff
- Apply for permits

### Build Plan (BP): \$9,000

Create a plan view rendering of the block, materials list, street cross section, cost estimates and PowerPoint describing the Better Block.

#### Deliverables:

- Street and traffic control build plan for Better Block
- List of materials, rentals and vendors necessary to complete the Better Block
- Public space program with descriptions of temporary facilities
- Workshop instructions

### Better Block Pre-Build: \$10,000

Assist in organizing a pre-build time (4 to 6 hours) where the community gathers to build elements of the better block prior to the event date. Typically the build includes planters, plants, bollards, temporary painted surface, bicycle lanes and parking, street furniture and lighting. We will identify as many as possible local sources, define opportunities for local craftsman, artist and DIYers to participate, build-out ourselves or rent the needed materials if necessary. Team Better Block will assure safety procedures are followed and will document with video, pictures and personal interviews the community build.

**Deliverables:**

- Volunteer waiver of liability
- Property owner waiver of liability
- Code of safe practices and procedures
- On-site monitoring and assisting
- Listing of materials from Team Better Block
- Listing of materials needed from Partners
- Photo, video and personal documentation

**Better Block On-site Coordination: \$15,000**

Creates a staging plan and installation check list that guides everyone's roles in mobilizing, setting up and tearing down. Team Better Block will have at least two staff members present during the Better Block for on-site management and operation of the project.

**Deliverables:**

- Staging plan and installation check-list
- Mobilization and installation
- On-site management and operation

**Better Block Metrics and Report: \$5,000**

Creates a metrics chart to be collected during the project that gauges success in terms of business, infrastructure and social aspects of the project. Works with the city staff to develop recommendations for changes to zoning overlays and development guidelines. Works with locals to offer suggestions for further activating the area with programming and business development programs. A next steps report will document the project and outline these recommendations.

**Deliverables:**

- List of metrics
- Written account of interviews
- Summary memo
- Blog post
- Next steps report

## Site Selection: Better Block Site Survey

Element	Rate 1 to 4 (1 being poor, 4 being strong)	Photo	Recommendation for Better Block
1. Building edges that define space (form)			
2. Leasable/available buildings which present opportunities for temporary business development (pop-ups)			
3. Potential for multi-modal street infrastructure, available capacity (complete streets)			
4. Proximity to a neighborhood (community)			
5. Placemaking potential (comfort)			
6. Interest from local partners, existing organizations (partners)			
7. Existing Special Events (people)			

Overall Rating: \_\_\_\_ out of 28

## Partner Outreach: Partner Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Block: \_\_\_\_\_

Vision for the area: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The Better Block typically takes 3 months of planning and execution. Which months/dates are best for you for a project? \_\_\_\_\_

How much time per week can you dedicate to the Better Block? \_\_\_\_\_

How many people/organizations do you have contacts for that could assist in this project? \_\_\_\_\_

How many property owners do you have contact with which would give the project access to vacant storefronts? \_\_\_\_\_

Who do you have in mind for leading elements of the Better Block?

- Street Team: \_\_\_\_\_
- Pop-Up Business Team: \_\_\_\_\_
- Marketing/Programming Team: \_\_\_\_\_

Can you attend meetings to reach agreement on event plan? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to solicit borrowing materials, such as landscaping, for the project from area businesses? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you able to file for an event permit from the city? \_\_\_\_\_





## Volunteer Outreach: Team Assignments & Volunteer Sign-Up

**Street Team:** Focuses on complete street, right sizing, bicycle and pedestrian amenities such as bike lanes, cross-walks, lane closures and lighting.

- Designers to work with CADD and/or Photoshop
- Number crunchers to track vehicle speed, pedestrian and bicycle counts and other livability indicators
- Streetscape doers to help implement concept plant such as installing cross walks, lighting, planters and café furniture
- Landscape doers to buy, borrow and acquire plants and materials and place them

Name	Skills

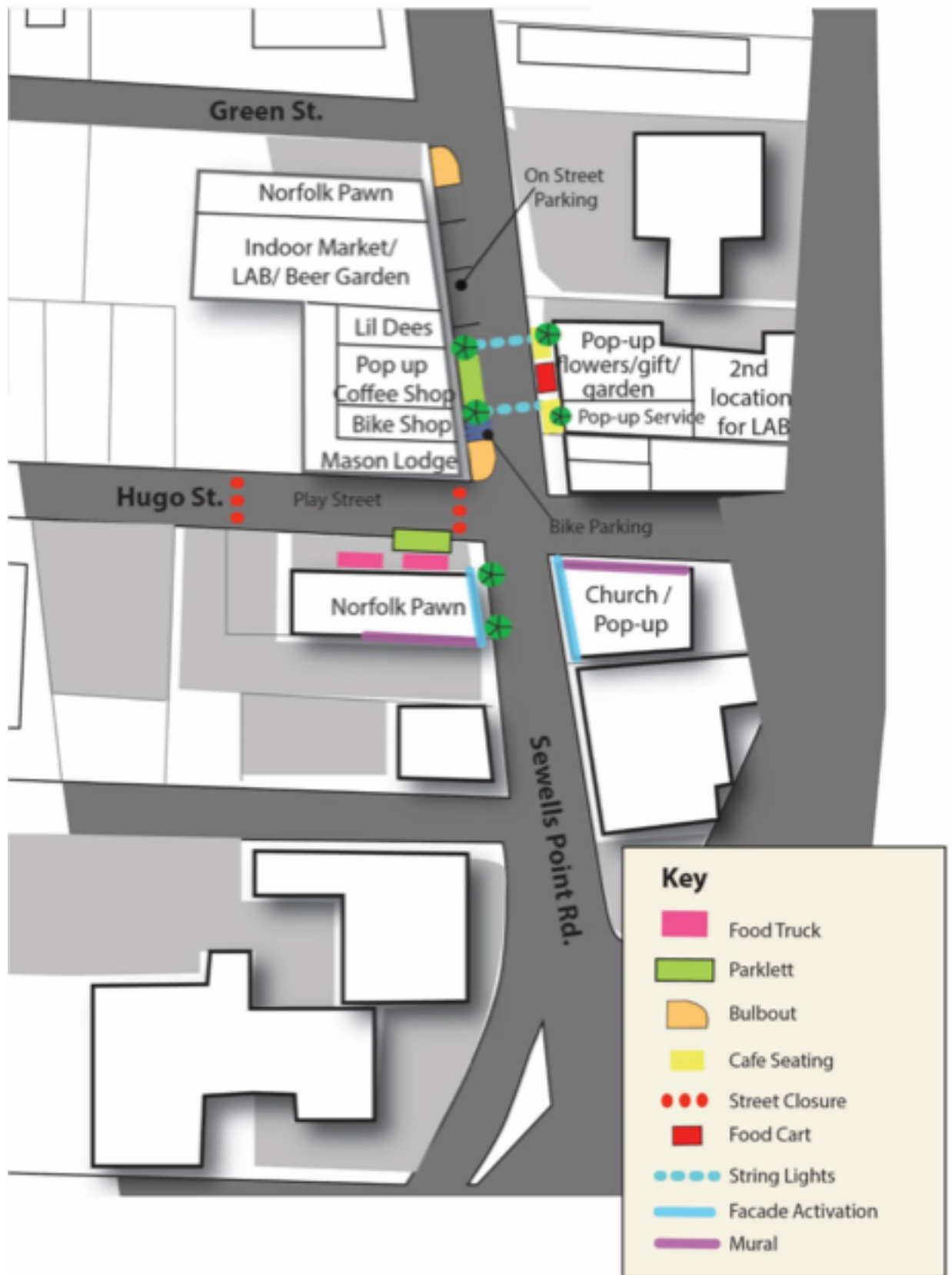
**Marketing and Documentation Team:** To help get the word out and get people to attend the better block and/or to help document the event. Volunteer roles needed include an outreach manager, photographers and videographers, web manager, copy editor and reporter/writer.

Name	Role

**Signage and Wayfinding Team:** To help create signage and wayfinding.

Name	Role

## Concept Plan



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## Better Block Workshops: Prep & Pre-Build

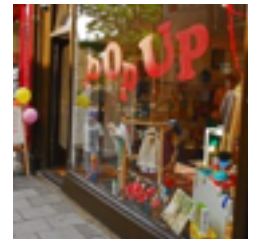
Instructions for some of these projects follow this listing.

**How to build Parklets** – Parklets are mini-parks created by extending existing sidewalks into a parking spots, yes, actual parking spots. We'll introduce the concept and work with reclaimed material to build parklets for a Better Block project.



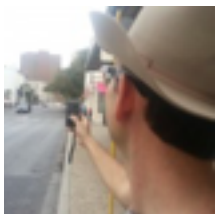
**How to build pallet furniture** – This workshop focuses on how to transform pallet wood into public benches, tables and planters. The furniture will be displayed the following day and can be picked up after the Better Block.

**How to create a pop-up shop** – The movement to transform vacant building spaces into cafes, retail shops, and service centers is helping kick new businesses off and create a more vibrant streetscape. We will outline best practices for getting your own shop off the ground.



**How to make a street more bike/pedestrian friendly** – Two-day course with classroom fundamentals describing a roadway segment and alternatives and materials that can make it more pedestrian friendly. We will implement those ideas using temporary materials.

**How to create wayfinding signage** – One of the simplest ways to educate a community about walking and bicycling is creating simple signs that communicate distances to local amenities. We will walk through that process to focus on areas to measure, and end by creating signs in an existing area that will be displayed during the Better Block.



**How to gather metrics on a Better Block** – In this 2 day course, we will start by identifying areas that should be measured to push for permanent. We will also gather baseline measurements to compare with for the measurements taken on the day of the Better Block.

## Better Block Parklet Workshop

### Overview:

Create the semblance of a front porch with shade using Parklets. To create additional café seating and calm traffic.

### Needs (must be gathered and onsite prior to assembly):

- 20 pallets (8 for base, 6 for walls/bar, 6 for furniture)
- 5 sheets of 4x8 plywood (for base and furniture surfaces)
- 4 – 8-foot 2x4s
- 2 packages of eye hooks
- 6 L Brackets
- Rope
- Paint and brushes
- 2 crowbars
- 1 circular saw
- 2 handsaws
- Straight line
- Box cutter
- 2 measuring tape
- Construction pencils
- Chalk line
- 2 Hammers
- Goggles
- Gloves

6 volunteers, 2 hours

### Directions:

1. Layout foundation with pallets. 12 total to make up the base
2. Attach particle board and fit to foundation
3. Attach pallets to create walls at front, sides, and portions of back. Arrange planks vertically (ref: picture above). Leave small openings to allow pedestrian access
4. Attach 2x4's as columns to each end of the foundation. Use L brackets to support
5. Create frame at top of 2x4 columns using 1x's
6. Attach shade cloth with staple guns
7. At a minimum, paint outside edges
8. Add flower boxes, and furniture





## Better Block Storefront Workshop

**Overview** Some storefronts may not be very interesting especially ones with one paint color and not much edge detail. Highly walkable places have color variation and attention to details. This workshop focusses on ways to quickly change storefronts using simple materials.



### Needs

- 4 Gallons of Latex Paint (see colors above) for main building fronts
- 2 quarts black for window trim
- 2 quarts grey for window trim
- 2 quarts bright colors for doors
- Paint brushes, buckets, pans, rollers and extension poles.
- 2 extension ladders

10 volunteers, 2 hours

**Directions:** Working with a local designer, such as ReVision Norfolk or Alchemy NFK, to create a review team to administer a Storefront Reimbursement Grant. Existing businesses and pop-up shops may apply for reimbursement of up to \$1,500 for: construction services, repair, paint, building materials and labor to improve the storefront. Details to be worked out by committee, but in general the improvements should provide a gift to the street.

## Better Block Street Crossing Workshop



Needs (must be gathered and onsite prior to assembly):

- 8 – 25-foot straw wattles
- Skinz wrap material
- Bicycle stencil
- White duct tape
- 8 Dollar store trash cans (for planters)
- Spray paint
- Cardboard boxes to set plants on inside trash cans
- Gloves
- Miscellaneous: cushions from Ikea, plants for trim, string lights

6 volunteers, 1 hour

1. Have A group cut skinz material to size
2. Have B group lay out wattles for bulb outs/ped islands
3. Have C group paint trash cans
4. Have A group lay out cross walks
5. Have B and C groups set plants out
6. Clean up

## Better Block Furniture Workshop

Needs (must be gathered and onsite prior to assembly):

- 20 pallets
- 2 sheets of 4x8 plywood (for surfaces)
- Paint and brushes
- 2 crowbars
- 1 circular saw
- 2 handsaws
- 2 measuring tape
- Construction pencils
- 2 Hammers
- Goggles
- Gloves



15 volunteers, 2 hours

- 1) Instructor creates example pallet bench
- 2) 2 people per group develop each chair
- 3) All groups paint at end
- 4) Clean-Up



## Better Block Metrics Workshop

Needs (must be gathered and onsite prior to assembly):

- 8 Clipboards
- Printout before Qualitative Surveys
- Printout after Qualitative Surveys
- Printout Quantitative Worksheets
- 2 Speed guns
- 2 Decibel meters (download phone app if available)
- 20 Pens
- Camera

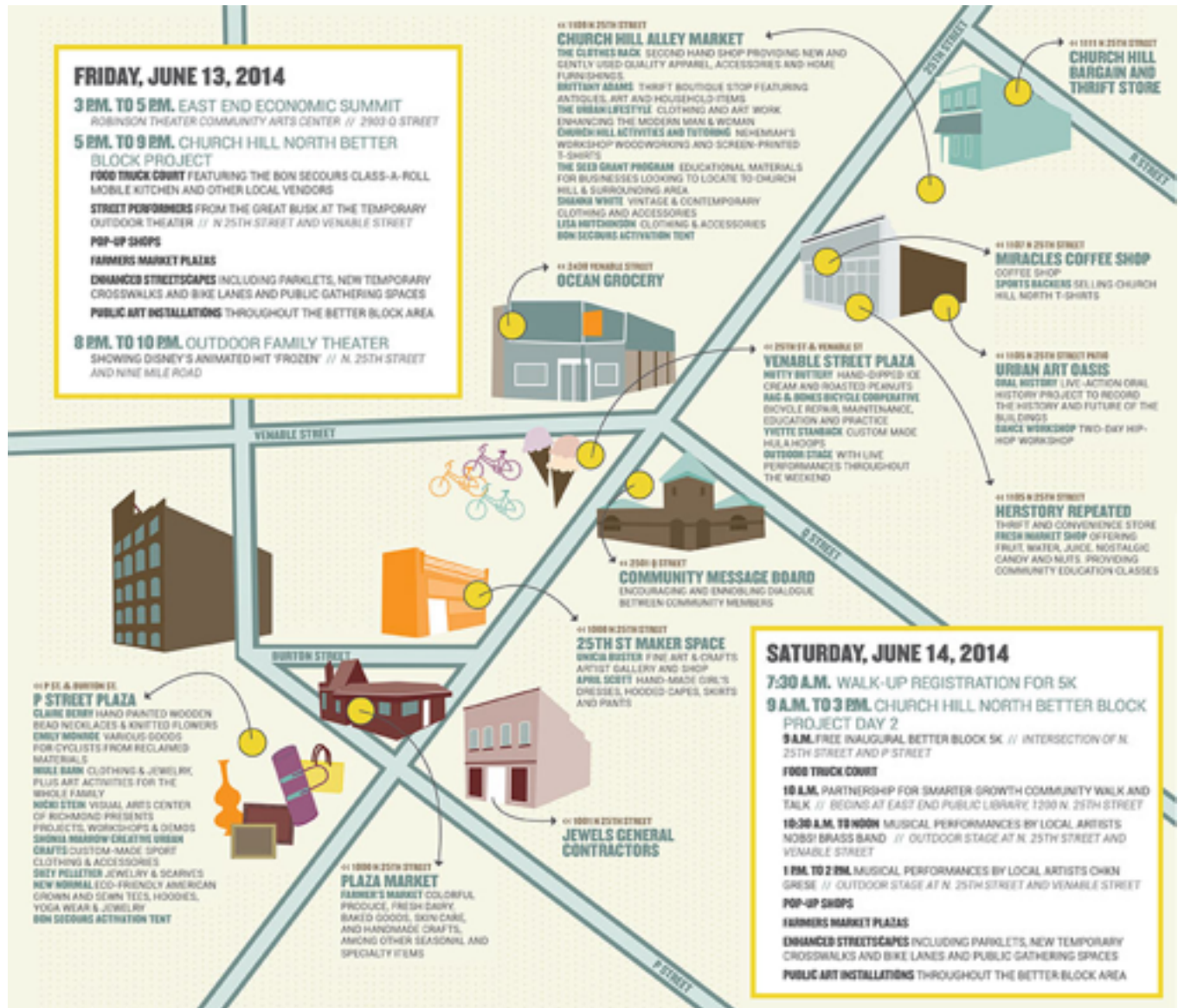
6 volunteers, 1 hour for each survey

1. Have A group (2 people) gather quantitative metrics
2. Have B group perform surveys

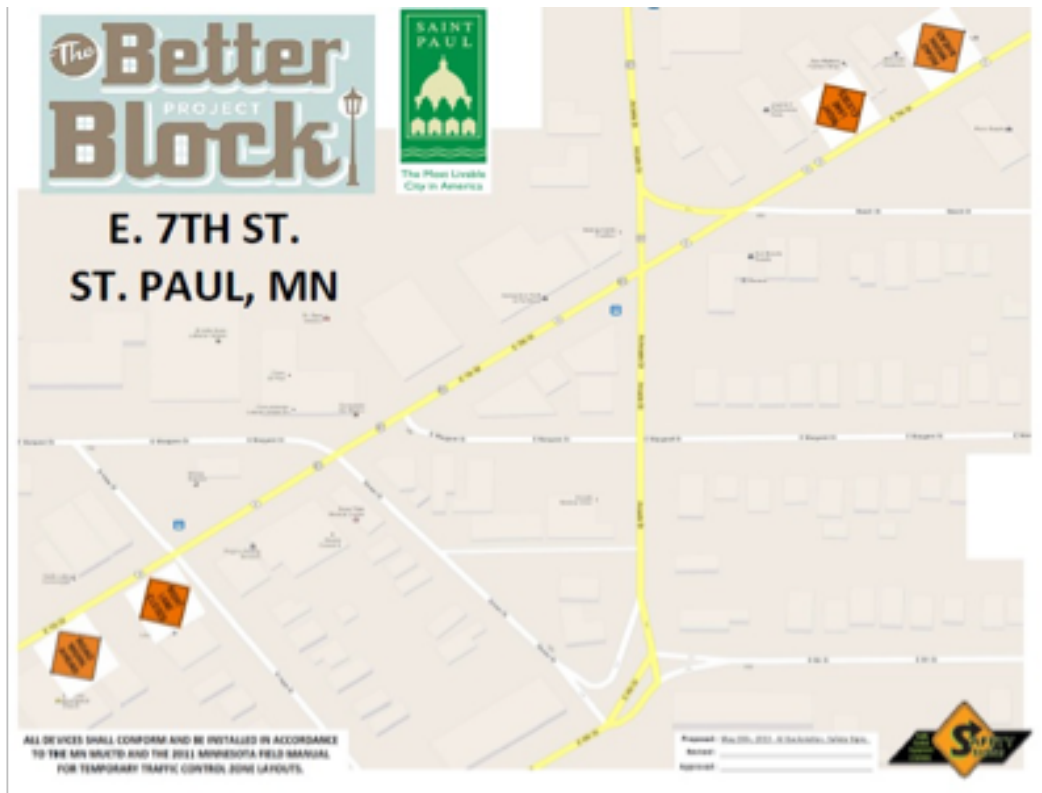




## Set-up & Logistics: Schedule of Events & Maps



## Set-up & Logistics: Traffic Control Plan Example



## Measurement

### *Better Block Qualitative Survey – Before*

Gender:

Neighborhood:

What do you like about this area?

---

---

Does it feel safe? Yes / NO

If no, how would you improve?

---

---

What do you feel is missing and would bring more people here?

---

---

What would entice you to walk or bicycle more here?

---

---

How would you like to be involved?

Builder \_\_\_\_\_ Pop-Up Shop Proprietor \_\_\_\_\_

Entertainer \_\_\_\_\_ Artist \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_

## *Better Block Qualitative Survey – During*

Gender:

Resident or Visitor:

What do you like about this area?

Does it feel safer than before?

If moderate or low safety, how would you improve?

What do you feel is missing and would bring more people here?

What would entice you to walk or bicycle more here?

Of the Better Block elements added (pop-up stores, café seating, bike lanes, landscaping, etc.) what, if any, would you like to see continue?





## Better Block Quantitative Metrics Activity Sheet

### Auto Speeds (before Better Block)

Date/Time:

Direction A:

Speeds:


Direction B:

Speeds:


### Auto Speeds (during Better Block)

Date/Time:

Direction A:

Speeds:


Direction B:

Speeds:


### Decibel Levels (before Better Block)

Date/Time:

- Direction A:
- Decibels:


- Direction B:
- Speeds:
- Decibels:


### Decibel Levels (during Better Block)

Date/Time:

- Direction A:
- Speeds:


- Direction B:
- Speeds:


Catalogue

Before Better Block

- Number of outdoor café seating:
- Number of people lingering:
- Number of on street parking spaces:

During Better Block

- Number of outdoor café seating:
- Number of people lingering:
- Number of on street parking spaces:

Retail Sales (After Better Block)

Increased/Decreased business sales % for existing businesses:

Business Name	% Increase / Decrease



## Evaluate

### *Survey for Volunteers*

1. How did you FIRST learn about volunteer opportunities for the Better Block? SELECT ONE.
  - a. Team Better Block Website
  - b. Another organization or group. Please provide name
  - c. Personal (family, friend, neighbor)
  - d. Personal experience with Team Better Block
  - e. TV, newspaper or radio (Please provide name)
2. For what areas did you volunteer/donate?
3. Were you given adequate information and training for the Better Block?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. A little, but not all I needed
4. Tell us about your volunteer experience.
  - a. Did you feel the effectiveness of your participation was?
    - i. Helpful and necessary
    - ii. Somewhat helpful but not necessary
    - iii. Not helpful
  - b. Ease of volunteer process
    - i. Clear and simple
    - ii. Too complicated
    - iii. Manageable
  - c. Was the number of volunteers
    - i. Too many
    - ii. Too few
    - iii. Adequate
5. Would you volunteer for another Better Block?
  - a. Definitely will
  - b. Probably will
  - c. Undecided
  - d. Probably will not why?
  - e. Definitely will not why?



## Survey for Participants

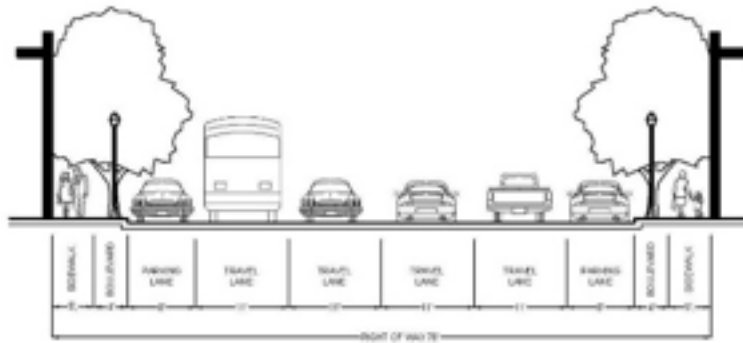
1. How did you FIRST learn about participating in the Better Block? SELECT ONE.
  - a. Team Better Block Website
  - b. Another organization or group (Please provide name)
  - c. Personal (family, friend, Neighbor)
  - d. Another organization or group (Please provide name)
  - e. Personal (family, friend, neighbor)
  - f. Personal experience with Team Better Block
  - g. TV, Newspaper or radio (Please provide name)
  - h. City staff
2. What area did you participate in?
3. Which day did you participate?
  - a. Friday
  - b. Saturday
  - c. Both Friday and Saturday
4. If you were a vendor, please tell us how much revenue you generated?
5. Was this above or below your expectations?
6. Would you participate in a Better Block Project again?
  - a. Why or why not?
7. Were you given adequate information for the Better Block?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. A little, but not all I needed
8. What was your overall impression of the Better Block?
  - a. Excellent
  - b. Good
  - c. No opinion
  - d. Needs some work
  - e. Not good at all
9. What could have been done to improve the Better Block?
10. Of the demonstrations, which would you like to see more of on the plaza?
  - a. Seating
  - b. Shade
  - c. Plantings
  - d. Street narrowing
  - e. Activities
  - f. Bicycle lanes
  - g. Angle Parking
11. If you could recommend one physical change for the area, what would it be?



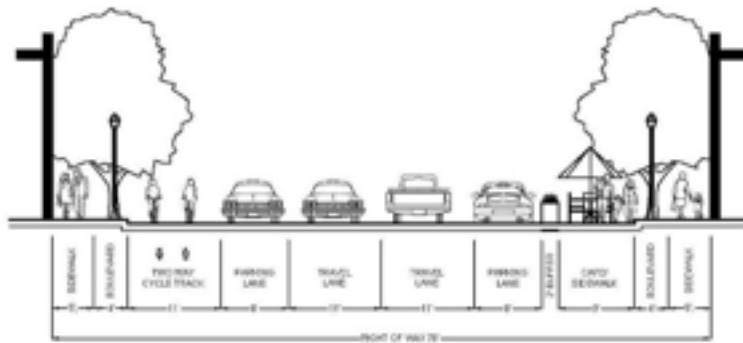
## Survey for Attendees

12. How did you FIRST learn about the Better Block? SELECT ONE.
- a. Team Better Block Website
  - b. Another organization or group (Please provide name)
  - c. Personal (family, friend, neighbor)
  - d. Personal experience with Team Better Block
  - e. Flier
  - f. Facebook
  - g. TV, newspaper or radio (Please provide name)
  - h. Other (Please explain)
13. Did you attend the Better Block?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
14. Which day did you attend?
- a. Friday
  - b. Saturday
  - c. Both Friday and Saturday
15. Of the demonstrations, which would you like to see more of on the plaza?
- a. Seating
  - b. Shade
  - c. Plantings
  - d. Street narrowing
  - e. Activities
  - f. Bicycle lanes
  - g. Angle parking
16. If you could recommend one physical change for the area, what would it be?
17. What was your overall impression of the Alamo Plaza Better Block?
- h. Excellent
  - i. Good
  - j. No opinion
  - k. Needs some work
  - l. Not good at all
18. What could have been done to improve the Better Block?

## Complete Streets Design Example



EXISTING STREET  
SECTION



STREET SECTION  
OPTION 1

## Better Block Resources

### REALTOR® Association Better Blocks:

- [Hampton Roads REALTORS®](#)
- Greater South Bend - Mishawaka Association of REALTORS®
- [New Orleans Metropolitan Association of REALTORS®](#)

### Better Block and Similar Organizations

- [The Better Block](#)
- [Team Better Block](#)
- [Pop Up Hood](#)

### Articles, Videos, Interviews, etc. on Better Block

- [Better Block Movement Shows Potential in Struggling Neighborhoods](#)
- [Neighborhood Volunteers Hope to Revive State Street with a Better Block Project](#)
- [G-sync: Gentrification's Step-Brother is Equitable Planning](#)
- [MCLA students unveil 'Eagle Street Rising' project to show how to revitalize city blocks](#)
- [Crowdsourcing a Better Block in Memphis](#)
- [48x48x48: An Intervention in Oyster Bay](#)
- [Q&A with The Better Block's Jason Roberts](#)
- [Building a Better Block Demo is Changing a Dallas Neighborhood](#)
- [Creating a 'Better Block': Muskegon's Third Street business district focus of grassroots effort](#)
- [How to Fix that Ugly Strip](#)
- [Webinar recording on Pop Up Retail and Community Revitalization](#)
- Article about work in one neighborhood in New Haven, CT: <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/neighborhoods/2013/08/practical-lessons-turning-around-neighborhood-decline/6394/>

## Better Block Events

- [La Alma Action](#) (Denver, CO)
- [Better Block Montgomery](#) (Montgomery, AL)
- [Better Block KC](#)
- [Better Block Clovelly](#) (Sydney, Australia)
- [Better Block Middleborough](#) (Middlesboro, KY)
- [Better Block BR](#) (Baton Rouge, LA)
- [Better Block OKC](#) (Oklahoma City, OK)
- Better Block Brownsville (Brownsville, TX)
- [Better Block Indy](#) (Indianapolis, IN)

- [Coburg Better Block](#)
- [Better Block re:State](#) (Grand Rapids, MI)
- Eagle Street Rising (North Adams, MA)
- [Better Block St. Joe](#) (St. Joseph, MO)
- [Better Block Five Points](#) (Denver, CO)
- [Better Block Ft. Lauderdale](#) (Ft. Lauderdale, FL)
- [Better Block Jefferson Park](#) (Denver, CO)
- [Better Block Race Street Fort Worth](#) (Fort Worth, TX)
- [Geelong Better Block](#) (Australia)
- [Better Block Houston](#) (Houston, TX)
- [Building a Better Block - Third Street Edition Muskegon](#)
- [Better Blocks Philly](#)
- [Alamo Plaza](#) (San Antonio, TX)
- [Oyster Bay](#) (Long Island, NY)
- [St. Paul Better Block](#) (St. Paul, MN)
- [Better Block #1](#) (Dallas, TX)
- [A New Face for Old Broad](#) (Memphis, TN)
- [Norfolk Better Block](#) (Norfolk, VA)
- [Better Block - Mt. Rainier](#) (Mt. Rainier, MD)
- [Pop Up Pearl Better Block](#) (Cleveland, OH)
- Steer FW (Fort Worth, TX)

