



# STREETS AS PLACES ACTION PACK

Are you an active member of your community trying to improve streets for people? Does your community have more “through” streets than “to” streets? If so, look through these proven tactics to tackle common roadblocks!



## NUTS & BOLTS

This guide is intended for community members who see an opportunity to create better streets, but may be struggling to get their neighbors on board or spur government officials into action.



The information included in this deck came from a scan of 20 community advocates who shared their successes, failures, and big ideas for making change happen. We stacked the deck with their comments.

Every card in this deck corresponds to a theme and has advice on how to tackle common roadblocks.

Each theme is grouped into four action categories: vision, support, consensus, and momentum.

Check out the resources listed on each card. They come from renowned experts as well as advocates like you, and were hand-picked to help you along the way.



## A COMMON LANGUAGE

Having a consistent vocabulary among all players helps to communicate your vision effectively, build trust and confidence, and leads to a more efficient process of physical and policy change.

Resource: Seattle’s Streets Illustrated Guide explores street design possibilities—from the bustling urban core to quiet neighborhoods—and explains what works, where, and why. ([www.pps.org/streetsactionpack](http://www.pps.org/streetsactionpack))

VISION

### COMPLETE STREETS

A concept that ensures that a road should serve all users including bicyclists, public transportation vehicles and riders, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

### TRAFFIC CALMING

A system of design and management strategies that aim to balance traffic on streets with other uses.

### RIGHTSIZING/ROAD DIETS/SHARED STREETS

The process of reallocating a street’s space to better serve its full range of users, reduce speed, and improve traffic flow.

### URBAN PLANNERS

Professionals who create programs and land-use plans for cities and regions.

### key words

### PLACEMAKING

A collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value for spaces like our streets.

### LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS)

A system for measuring congestion, using the letter “A” to represent the least amount of congestion and “F” to refer to the greatest amount.

### TRAFFIC/TRANSPORTATION ENGINEER

A professional, often employed by cities or a consulting firm, who uses engineering tools to evaluate and design a street’s ability to safely and efficiently move people and goods.



## COMMUNICATION

Better understanding yields greater support. To get people on board and reach your desired outcome, help your neighbors and officials develop a shared vision and build consensus on how it will impact them.

Resource: StreetMix is a free, online tool which allows anyone to experiment with street design and share their vision with the community. ([www.pps.org/streetsactionpack](http://www.pps.org/streetsactionpack))

VISION

### GET THE WORD OUT

Property/Neighborhood Association Newsletters

Word of Mouth + Social Media + Community Forums (i.e. Nextdoor)

Presentations at School/Scout/Faith meetings

Stories in the Local Press

Business Improvement Districts and Chambers of Commerce



### FLIP THE SCRIPT: SHARED VISIONING

**ASK:** What do you want to see? What do you want to do?

**THINK:** How can this be a place-led, community-driven approach?

**INVESTIGATE:** How are other nearby communities dealing with the same challenges? What could they be doing better?

**EXPERIMENT:** What might a short-term project look like, and how could you leverage it to build buy-in and get the pulse of your community?



## LEVERAGING CONSTITUENTS

Recognizing the skills and power you have as an engaged member of the community is the first step in leveraging your ability to create change.

Resource: The URBACT II Local Support Group Toolkit is an excellent resource for advice on engaging with local stakeholders and action planning. ([www.pps.org/streetsactionpack](http://www.pps.org/streetsactionpack))

SUPPORT

### COLLECT SHARED VALUES

Writing a community vision is crucial for understanding what your group believes in, what changes you want, and what values you share.

### FIND YOUR PEOPLE

The more the merrier! Reach out to retirees, students, and other interest groups like cyclists to grow support around your goals.

With more people on board, your network of resources (time, materials, connections, and ideas) grows. Link up with your local paint shop, or hold a bike and helmet drive to get the materials you need.

### USE THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE

City officials want to do the best for their communities. Speak up, and leverage your voice!

By speaking up, you legitimize their desire to do the work that needs to be done.





## INVOLVING SCHOOLS

Engaging students of all ages is one of the best ways to enrich their educational experience while building place attachment and creating bridges between communities, government, and the streets they share.

Resource: Y-PLAN is a program out of Berkeley, CA that equips high school students with the tools and confidence to work with city officials to reform the way our cities and schools run. ([www.pps.org/streetsactionpack](http://www.pps.org/streetsactionpack))

## MUTUAL ADVANTAGES IN INVOLVING SCHOOLS

Engaging schools means new opportunities for students to learn and become engaged citizens.

It's harder to say "no" when kids become advocates for local change!

It is often easier to gain support for a new project when it is educational, experimental, or short-term.

Teachers and professors can become powerful, connected allies for taking projects from pop-up to permanent.



Young people see the city from a different angle. Use their insights in your plans, and harness their creativity to experiment with unexpected solutions!

Project-oriented classes have the advantage of learning to implement projects in a real-world context.



## THE ROLE OF THE EXPERT

Technical experts can help locals imagine design possibilities and opportunities for policy change while being a needed "reality check" for what is feasible.

Resource: PPS's A Citizen's Guide to Better Streets details how you can influence the final outcome of road projects, and includes a 10-Step Checklist of Positive Actions. ([www.pps.org/streetsactionpack](http://www.pps.org/streetsactionpack))

### HOW TO WORK TOGETHER AND GET THINGS DONE

In every meeting, make sure to have an agenda. Maintain a clear idea of the priorities and challenges you want to address, and keep pushing!

Understand that traffic engineers and urban planners have technical and political insight that can supplement and support your vision. Working collaboratively will get you further than jockeying for influence.



### RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Make time to bring experts to your own turf — maybe even take them on a walking tour of the area on which you are working!

Aim to introduce experts when you're in the Goldilocks Zone. The time is "just right" after you've had time to create a clear, unified vision, but not so late that that vision has been completely solidified and there is no room for flexibility.

### ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

In order to best tap into the know-how of experts, as questions such as:

What is the context? What do the guidelines say? How flexible are the rules? Can design be tailored to prioritize people?



## TALKING WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS

Build a collaborative, not adversarial relationship with your city officials; they are often your most important allies.

Resources: In PPS's A Citizen's Guide to Better Streets, Chapter 9 is all about navigating government bureaucracies. Wikihow has a general guide on how to offer comments at a city council meeting. ([www.pps.org/streetsactionpack](http://www.pps.org/streetsactionpack))

### FIND SOMEONE IN GOVERNMENT TO CHAMPION YOUR IDEAS.

Start out by completing an online "contact us" form or calling the traffic/transportation engineer about your concern.

### GET AHEAD OF THE CRITICISM. TRY TO SEE THINGS FROM ALL PERSPECTIVES.

Anticipate the questions and comments by preparing talking points.

### MAKING IT HAPPEN

#### COFFEE COUNTS.

Never underestimate the relationship-building effects of a shared cup!

#### POLITICS OFTEN COMES BEFORE POLICY.

Even the most significant policy change starts with a grassroots movement. Don't be discouraged if politics get in the way. It's a hurdle, not the end of the race!

#### KNOW YOUR ROLE AS A CITIZEN. WHAT SPECIFIC CAPACITIES DO YOU HAVE?

City officials are spread thin and can't do all of the legwork for pilot projects, no matter how much they might want to.

#### REMEMBER TO DO YOUR HOMEWORK!

Unless it is a fact-finding call, be sure you've defined the problem and rounded up your allies before engaging the local officials.



## BUILDING & SUSTAINING A MOVEMENT

You're engaged and excited — now, how can you get your community to become part of the momentum?

Resource: The Ikea Effect explains why we care more about the things that we choose, touch, and create. The PPS Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper (LQC) resource has many ideas to help sustain momentum. ([www.pps.org/streetsactionpack](http://www.pps.org/streetsactionpack))

## BUILDING BUY-IN

### INVOLVE PEOPLE FROM ALL SECTORS.

Streets and transportation impact everyone, so all voices must be heard!

### SMALL CHANGES WITH BIG IMPACT!

Paint planters and intersections or plant new trees, shrubs, and flowers along the street, and watch your neighbors enjoy the results!

### CREATE INTERGENERATIONAL INTEREST

in building a better neighborhood. Let excitement trickle up from students to their teachers, to their parents, and even grandparents.

NEWSLETTERS AND BLOGS can showcase your work to new audiences, and allow people the chance to weigh in. Pitch your ideas to outlets far and wide!

Placemaking efforts allow community members to add color and warmth to a place, leave their mark, and build ownership over their public spaces. With ownership and responsibility come higher chances for volunteerism or stewardship — key ingredients for making your ideas last.