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Pilot Projects
Pilot Projects in Columbus

The hundreds of comments shared at the Focus Area workshops helped identify opportunities for pilot projects to test out Columbus’ vision and support the long-term implementation of the Minimum Grid.

The Pilot Project

Pilot projects - which can be implemented and tested by the City, MidTown, Inc. and civic partners - can help to reduce barriers between citizens and decision makers and make the City’s goals to improve the public realm more tangible. Pilots vary in scale, time-frame and typology, but in all cases they are a way to test new solutions at a 1:1 scale out in the streets and public spaces. This 1:1 scale invites residents and business owners of Columbus to engage in the process of changing the City and to experience their streets as public spaces. Pilots help to continue building momentum and demonstrating how the project aims to improve quality of life for all in Columbus.

The type, time-frame and level of investment for a pilot depends on the project goals and success criteria. To ensure project success, a high level of maintenance should be provided throughout the test period. A pilot project with broken furniture and worn off paint can easily have the opposite of the intended effect and attract negative attention. Pilots can also be leveraged with City and other initiatives to improve connectivity.

Measure, Test, Refine

Pilot projects have proven to be strong political tools for decision making, as they directly show how changes to the public realm affect city life.

They start in areas where public life has been measured and baseline information has been gathered. This baseline information informs what the test should look like. The test then can be measured again, against the baseline, to understand impact. Findings from this analysis then inform how to refine the pilot for a second iteration or for a more permanent installation. Data collection should happen before and after pilot implementation.
Our Approach

1. **Collect baseline public life information**
   - Do before and after tests

2. **Test**
   - Reimagine the design, based on evaluation of tests

3. **Refine**
   - Reimagine the design, based on evaluation of tests
Different Approaches to Piloting Change

Varying levels of city and civic investment

This diagram describes six different types of pilot project interventions, from short- to long-term, from 'City Facilitated and User Generated' to 'City Led and Designed.' Each type has pros and cons, listed in short in the diagram, but what they each share is a prioritization of people. All the project types require a level of city and citizen engagement that varies from facilitation to leading design and implementation. Despite the simplicity of some of the pilot types, they all require elaborate pre-implementation planning.

City Facilitated / User Generated:
Community groups or residents generate a pilot project, which can help ensure a strong sense of ownership. This model requires an engaged community that can help with implementation and maintenance. For project types such as the Prototyping Festival and Open Streets, the long-term impact is less transparent.

City Led / City Designed:
The City leads the pilot project. Infrastructural changes, new uses of road space, and changes to intersections, for example, need to be studied, designed and carried out in a proper manner to prevent unsafe situations. The City can also take the lead on implementing new spaces and activities in an area. In both cases, informing the public is important, and both passive and active civic engagement can be a part of the project.

No matter which type of project - whether City facilitated or City led - the pilot can serve as a platform for citizen engagement and a more democratic approach to public space design.
**Parklet Program**
Parking spaces converted to people spaces.
- Bundle of permits to deliver parklet

Requirements
- Private funds
- Design approval, parklet manual
- Public outreach

Involved:
- Community organizations
- Local businesses
- DOT

- Open for all
- Simple, recognizable
- Applicable in variety of contexts
- Involvement, ownership, stewardship
- Small scale, but scalable
- Mostly business owners apply
- Space perceived as private
- Little diversity in program
- Formalized, restricted

**NYC Plaza Program**
Repurpose and redesign road bed as public space.
- City pays for initial implementation
- Community groups apply and manage maintenance

Requirements
- City funds
- Design / furnishing palette
- Public outreach
- Community funds

Involved:
- Community / Neighborhood groups
- Local businesses
- DOT

- Community engagement
- Recognizable
- Targeted
- Requires community capacity and money to maintain and operate
- Day to day management
- Only organizations can apply
- Application process
- Formalized, restricted

**Our City**
City identifies opportunities to quickly implement test projects.
- Identify quick wins

Requirements
- Open dialogue / Public outreach
- Open process / Informative
- Local stakeholder buy in
- City staff guidance

Involved:
- City led
- Carefully selected partners
- All citizens can test

- PS/PL synergy
- Lead the way to permanent change
- Showcase priority
- Ownership
- Public engagement
- Day to day management

**Pilot as Best Practice**
City identifies opportunities to make permanent changes and tests them with a pilot.
- Identify potential for long term change

Requirements
- City funds
- Open process / Inform
- Local stakeholder buy in
- City staff guidance
- Design team

Involved:
- City led
- DOT
- Carefully selected partners
- Designers

- PS/PL synergy
- Showcase priority
- Display best practice
- Ownership
- Public engagement
- Cost
- Time frame
Measuring the Impact of Pilot Projects

**Evaluate and Learn**

Pilots are tests to inform and support long-term planning and visions. Evaluation of the project and the process taken to get to implementation is essential. Questions organizers of pilots should ask include:

- How does it perform?
- Does it meet the project goals?
- Are adaptations necessary?

Interventions should be evaluated from two different perspectives:

1. **City perspective:**
   - Focus on learning: What works and what doesn’t?
   - What issues (positive and negative) arise from implementation? Which stem from the planning process? Are they design or program related?
   - What opportunities (partners, usage of space, spin-off activities) popped-up that weren’t expected?

2. **User perspective:**
   - Focus on experience: How does this impact my everyday routine? What’s in it for me? How can I better see that the public sector has my interest in mind? Where/How/When is it possible for me to have a say in these pilots?

The evaluation findings can then be used to adapt the pilot interventions, as well as to inform other projects in the city.

Evaluation can be done in close partnership with civic and educational organizations, such as the local university.
Indicators: Performance Metrics and Evaluation Tools

Statistics
• Reduction of traffic injuries
• More public transportation user

Observational analysis
• Increase in pedestrian activity?
• Increase in people on bikes?
• More people lingering?
• Greater variety of activities?

Qualitative analysis
• Quality Criteria Improvements?
• More active frontages?
• New functions?

Intercept survey
• New social encounters?
• Stronger sense of community?
• Higher feeling of safety?
• New ‘Favorite Places’ emerged?

Engagement
• Spontaneous programs happen?
• Social media increase?

Use the Columbus Quality Criteria to assess and evaluate existing places subject for change as well as future projects to come.

Columbus Quality Criteria

Location:
+ = YES  # = IN-BETWEEN  - = NO

#1 Micro-Climate & Shade

#2 Active, Built Edges & Human Scale

#3 Spontaneous & Fun

#4 Scenic & Active Open Space

#5 Comfort & Safety

#6 Family-Friendly

#7 People Watching & Social Space

#8 Peaceful, Quiet & Relaxing

#9 Access for People Walking, Cycling & Taking Transit

#10 Cultural Offer & Local Identity

#11 Inviting - With Places to Sit

#12 People & Activities
Pilot Projects

1. From Woods to Water on 13th Street

2. Connecting neighborhood assets around 13th Avenue

3. Connecting civic assets at the Civic Commons
Create a safe, inviting environment for people to walk and bike on 13th Street and that enhances connectivity between the RiverWalk, Uptown, the Village on 13th and Lakebottom Park - with the possibility of extending all the way to Civic Commons.

Key elements for safety and enjoyment:

- Protected bike lane with buffer
- Wider sidewalk
- Narrowed intersections
- Shade
- Green
- Invitations to sit
- Art
- Lighting
- Vista points on bridge
- Activations of dead facades

**A more enjoyable trip for all!**

Traffic volumes today - a study conducted by URS for the City of Columbus in 2014 found that the city streets, overall, have a capacity ratio that exceeds the traffic volumes. *The segment between 10th and 11th Ave could potentially become a critical point if a lane is removed. Here we suggest narrowing the existing lanes and adding a narrow bike lane. On the rest of the street we suggest testing the removal of a full lane on either side, or one lane and re-striping, allowing space for central turning lanes. Source: Alternative Transportation Study page 13.*
**Corner extensions.** Shorten pedestrian street crossings; mark area clearly, such as with bollards.

**Bike lanes.** Mark bike lane through intersection to enhance safety.

**Activate facade.** Add art / info-graphics to wall to enhance experience.

**Opportunity area.** Outdoor seating near restaurant.

**Extend treatment to 13th Avenue.**

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Re-striping* - to not take out two full lanes, a road re-striping is suggested on this segment, still allowing for bike lanes with a buffer stone. Place trees in planters on sidewalks instead of in buffer zone.
From Woods to Water on 13th Street - The Pilot

How to start? Open Streets
• Kick start the process with an ‘Open Streets’ program, that changes the street layout with moveable items and wash-away paint.
• Help people see the street differently, even if just on a temporary basis.
• Get started right away, without all investment needed for long-term change, to allow for a faster process and one that helps people visualize future changes.

The Open Streets should be accompanied by positive campaigning that:
• Encourages people to share the road; and
• Creates opportunities for people to engage in the design and planning process

13th Street becomes a space for all!
Next Steps and Pilot Projects

From Woods to Water on 13th Street - The Pilot

Short term changes lead to long term changes. The pilot project serves as a test for how a permanent street redesign could function.

Space division can be scaled accordingly and adapted to the road width available in the different sections of 13th street.

13th Street Bridge - A Place!
From Woods to Water on 13th Street - The Village

The Village on 13th is a Favorite Place in Columbus. Many functions are in close proximity, but are not convenient to walk between.

Changes to the street surface can visually and physically enhance connecting the two sides of the street, slow traffic speeds and invite for cycling and walking. In addition, providing safer street crossings, places to sit, and places to wait for the bus can encourage businesses to open up towards the street and further enhance the area as a place.

At this particular segment of 13th street the road can become a shared surface area, with a safe zone for pedestrians. Or another option is to remove a lane, and re-stripe and add bike lanes - see yellow line on plan.

A neighborhood meeting place!
Bike lanes and re-striping. Another option for this segment of 13th Street is to remove a lane and re-stripe e.g. yellow lines on diagram. This will provide traffic calming without creating a shared surface.