POP-UP CAFES

FAST FACT
POP-UP CAFES ARE ESPECIALLY USEFUL ON STREETS WITH SIDEWALKS THAT ARE TOO NARROW TO ALLOW CAFE TABLES IN THE FURNISHING ZONE OF THE SIDEWALK.

LEADERS: Local Restaurant, Municipal DOT

SCALE: Block || Street

PURPOSE: To promote outdoor public seating in the parking lane (during the warm months) and to promote local businesses.

OVERVIEW: First seen in California, and now being applied in New York City, pop-up cafés serve to create public outdoor seating along city blocks that are home to one or several restaurants.

In New York City, a restaurant must agree to cover the design, construction and maintenance of the pop-up café in front of their business. If such agreement is reached, the City’s Department of Transportation provides technical assistance and may make street improvements, such as applying traffic markings or placing bollards.

In city’s with a short supply of space and a need for more publicly accessible seating, pop-up café’s are fast becoming a valued addition to the public realm. If successful, they can also prove the need for permanently expanding city sidewalks.
POPP-UP SHOPS

FAST FACT
THE TERM ‘POP-UP SHOP,’ WAS COINED IN LATE 2003 BY TRENDWATCHING.COM

LEADERS: Local Entrepreneurs, Artists, Corporations

SCALE: Street || Building

PURPOSE: To promote the temporary use of vacant retail space.

OVERVIEW: From big airlines and fashion companies to local neighborhood activists and vacant building owners, pop-up shops are used to temporarily activate vacant retail space or building lots. Most often, this is done to promote products or retail concepts. Yet, the primary beneficiaries are not always private interests, but the general public as formerly dead spaces becomes occupied, thereby creating a more active and safe street.

A rapidly spreading trend, pop-up locations are used strategically by a variety of interests, in a seemingly endless number of permutations. They are often associated with events, such as the World Cup or Tour de France, or holidays like Christmas or Halloween. They allow for a bit of surprise, and provide an opportunity for testing new retail concepts or products. And due to the fallout from the Great Recession, affordable retail space is not in short supply, which makes the proposition of trying new retail concepts, or simply activating vacant storefronts a smart option.

More than just marketing ploys for large retail corporations, pop-up stores genuinely bring vitality and help businesses transition to permanent spaces.
CH AIR BOMBING

FAST FACT

BY TAKING DISCARDED SHIPPING PALLET S AND CONVERTING THEM INTO QUALITY PUBLIC SEATING, THE URBAN WASTE STREAM CAN BE REDUCED, AND STREETS MADE MORE WELCOMING.

LEADERS: Community Activists, Local Property Owners, Small Businesses

SCALE: Street || Building

PURPOSE: To improve the social well-being of neighborhoods by salvaging waste materials and activating the public realm.

OVERVIEW: Chair bombing is the act of removing salvageable material from the local waste stream, and using it to build public seating. Chairs are placed strategically in areas that are either void of social activity, or conversely, those that are rich with life, but lack comfortable places to sit.

In general, chair bombing calls attention to the general lack of public seating in the urban environment. It also indicates locations where further physical improvements may be made by the municipality, or other change agents.

Chair placement begins by retrieving discarded materials, such as shipping pallets from dumpsters, construction sites, or other locations where solid waste is found.

DoTank: Brooklyn, an interdisciplinary collective comprised of neighborhood activists turn pallets into Adirondack chairs, which are then placed in public spaces. In the past year the group has placed chairs in six locations throughout northern Brooklyn.

The entire process of building and placing the chairs requires attention to the design and construction, but also a thoughtful approach as to where they are needed most, and where they would be able to support existing social activity, or serve as a catalyst for community gathering.

Whether to rest, socialize, or to simply watch the world go by, increasing the supply of seating almost always makes a street, and by extension, a neighborhood, more livable.
GUERRILLA GARDENING

FAST FACT

GUERRILLA GARDENING FIRST BEGAN IN 1973 WHEN NEW YORK CITY ACTIVISTS THREW CONDOMS WITH LOCAL SEEDS, WATER, AND FERTILIZER INTO VACANT LOTS.

LEADERS: Neighborhood Advocates

SCALE: Block || Lot

PURPOSE: To introduce more greenery and gardening into the urban environment.

OVERVIEW: First coined by Liz Christy and her Green Guerrilla group in 1973, guerilla gardening is now an international movement. Although there are many permutations, guerilla gardening is the act of gardening on public or private land without permission. Typically, the sites chosen are vacant or underutilized properties in urban areas. The direct re-purposing of the land is often intended to raise awareness for a myriad of social and environmental issues, including sustainable food systems, improving neighborhood aesthetics, and the power of short-term, collaborative local action.

When applied to contested land, guerilla gardeners often take action under the cover of night, where vegetables may be sowed, or flower gardens planted and cared for without running the risk of being caught.

Guerilla gardening is an excellent tactic for instantly improve an urban neighborhood. Often times, gardens are cared for years after they are first created, illegally. Indeed, the first garden started in a vacant New York City lot by the Green Guerilla’s became so loved that it is now maintained by volunteers and the New York City Parks Department. This exemplifies how tactical urbanism is intended to work.
STREET FAIRS

FAST FACT

IF WELL ORGANIZED, STREET FAIRS HIGHLIGHT THE BEST CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS IN WHICH THEY ARE HELD.

LEADERS: Municipality, Local Businesses (ideally), Community Groups, Non-Profits

SCALE: Neighborhood || Street || Block

PURPOSE: To showcase the products and services of local community businesses, activate public open space and offer opportunities for socializing and interaction among citizens.

OVERVIEW: Street Fairs are a traditional aspect of community life in many American cities. Typically organized as annual events, these initiatives bring together a wide variety of organizations and institutions from the local community and allow them the opportunity to showcase their products and services.

Street Fairs are the type of event where people become familiar with each other’s skills and learn what their community has to offer. Often, street fairs take place within a community’s main street, or at larger sites, such as the village green or a centrally located plaza. This can raise the visibility of the city’s premier public space and offer entertainment to citizens of all ages: many well-programmed street fairs feature musical performances, art exhibitions, interactive entertainment, and local food vendors. Street fairs can also provide the opportunity for communities to organize political support for local improvement initiatives.
**FOOD CARTS/TRUCKS**

**FAST FACT**

PORTLAND’S FOOD CARTS ARE REGULATED LIKE NORMAL RESTAURANTS.

**LEADERS:** Micro-Entrepreneurs

**SCALE:** Block || Street || Building

**PURPOSE:** To activate public spaces and offer small business opportunities for entrepreneurs.

**OVERVIEW:** From construction sites to industrial parks, hospitals to local neighborhood centers, cities large and small continue to witness a surge in gourmet street food vending activity.

Long before the Twitter-induced food truck craze, noted urbanist William H. Whyte acknowledged that street food serves as a people magnet. Food carts and trucks not only stimulate entrepreneurial activity, they serve a critical role in the activation of the public realm. Indeed, few people know where people tend to congregate as well as a good food vendor, as his or her success relies upon high pedestrian volumes. In turn, a good food vendor, or groups of vendors quickly become an additional destination within already successful places of congregation.

In Portland, Oregon, food carts take on a unique character. Typically housed in stationary trailers, RVs, or self-made shacks, the City encourages vendors to cluster their fare. With each new arrival, each food vendor’s prosperity increases. And because they mask surface parking lots, they activate otherwise harsh street edges typically devoid of human activity. In many cases, porches, bar stools and garden seating is added, resulting in an even more inviting streetscape. Interestingly, Portland’s food carts are regulated as normal restaurants, including semi-annual inspections. They also pay rent for the off-street parking spots they occupy. Today, the city’s most successful food cart entrepreneurs are able to move into more permanent locations, which allows opportunity for the next entrepreneur.

From Los Angeles to Miami, smart cities not only lower the barriers to entry, but also nurture such businesses, as they they contribute to the city’s local economy and enhance its sense of place.
MOBILE VENDORS

FAST FACTS

STREET VENDORS SELL A VARIETY OF GOODS BESIDES FOOD, INCLUDING ART, PHOTOGRAPHS, CLOTHING AND VARIOUS OTHER MERCHANDISE. VENDING IS OFTEN A SECOND SOURCE OF INCOME FOR URBAN HOUSEHOLDS.

LEADERS: Micro-Entrepreneurs

SCALE: Street | Block

PURPOSE: To promote entrepreneurship, offer needed commercial services, and to temporarily activate public spaces.

OVERVIEW: As with food carts, small-scale street vendors attract people and help activate public spaces. Overseas, and increasingly in North American cities, inventive street vendors use a variety of low-cost mobile means to transport and hawk their wares. Bicycles in particular have become quite popular in some cities. Hiroyuki Shinohara, a Japanese architect has conducted a study of the various roles bicycle-based vending play in the streets of Chinese cities. He found that bicycles were being used as mobile bookshops, ice cream vending stations, mobile garbage collectors, and even as mobile water tanks.

According to Shinohara, vendors play a key role in animating the various spaces of a city. This “Custom Bike Urbanism […]” suggests a possibility of constructing urban spaces that are individualistic and dispersed, yet able to accommodate a multitude of dynamic forms. With the inherent characteristics of mobility and ephemerality, it brings vibrancy to redundant urban space and enhances the function of the existing city.”
CONCLUSION
Short-term livability improvements demonstrate that improving the built environment is possible, and sometimes, only requires proactive policies and a little gumption. When executed well, such efforts help generate demand for even more substantial livability improvements.

In the case of mobile vending or food carts, the municipality only needs to allow such activity to take place. In others, like the Better Block project, the identification and activation of local social capital is the only “investment” needed. But whether top-down, bottom-up, or both, tactical urbanism is just another way we urbanists can help make a more pleasant, varied, and dynamic human habitat.

SHARE YOUR TACTICS!
The tactical urbanism survey includes several strategies employed by individuals, local community groups, and municipalities. However, it’s by no means exhaustive. The Tactical Urbanism Project is only going to get better through reader contributions.

If you or someone you know has an addition to make, please email info@streetplans.org with a write-up that includes all the pertinent information included in each description, as well as any/all images, citations, and credits.
**Sources**

**Tactical Urbanism**
The Interventionists Toolkit
http://www.places.designobserver.com/entry.html?entry=24308

**Build a Better Block**
Dallas Better Block Project
http://www.betterblock.org

Fort Worth Better Block Project

A New Face for Old Broad

**Park(ing) Day**
http://www.parkingday.org

**Play Streets**
Play Street Becomes a Sanctuary

Summer Play Streets
http://www.palnyc.org/800-PAL-4KIDS/Program.aspx?id=30

Reclaiming The Residential Street As Play Space
http://www.ecoplan.org/children/general/tranter.htm

**Open Streets**
Streetfilms
http://bit.ly/33nTam

**Pavement to Plazas**
NYC Plaza Program

When Design Gets in the Way
http://observatory.designobserver.com/entry.html?entry=8767

**San Francisco Pavement to Parks**

**Pop-Up Cafes**
NYC DOT Pop-UP Cafes

**Pop-Up Shops**
http://www.trendwatching/trends/POPUP_RETAIL.htm

**Chair Bombing**
DoTank:Brooklyn
http://www.dotankbrooklyn.org

**Guerrilla Gardening**
Guerilla Gardening.org
http://www.guerrillagardening.org

Wikipedia
http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/guerrilla_gardening.org

**Street Fairs**
New York City Street Fairs
http://www.nyctourist.com_fairs_calendar.htm

Seattle Street Fairs

**Food Carts**
Portland Food Carts
http://www.foodcartsportland.com

The Architectural Maturation of Portland Food Carts

**Street Vendors**
The Street Vendor Project
http://streetvendor.org/

Custom Bike Urbanism
http://popupcity.net/2010/11/custom-bike-urbanism/