

Bringing Community Engagement to the Street



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Merit Award: Community Engagement

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“Pop-up” or “guerilla” urbanism have been growing forces in our cities over the last several years. People expect to be engaged in many ways in their daily lives, and they want to

see, touch and experience things – not just read or hear about them. The typical workshop forum, week-long charrette or even online surveys are still valuable tools but, simply put, community members want more as they describe the future of their city or neighborhood.

It is this intersection between the substantive and surprising that made Triangle Transformations so original and innovative. The significant analysis, data and consideration of potential transformative improvements – all while people were having fun – made Triangle Transformations a real success. Undertaken early in the planning process, the Triangle Transformations pop-up workshop directly impacted development of the Golden Triangle Neighborhood Plan, and it ushered in strong momentum and public support for the plan even before it was completed. The event took something that can be very abstract for people – planning – and made it tangible and engaging.

Perhaps the greatest aspect of Triangle Transformations is its transferability to practically any process or environment. Community plans, neighborhood plans, streetscapes, parks, plazas, transit-oriented development, site development – all kinds of planning and design endeavors can integrate such a pop-up workshop. The methodology of identifying the space or street; coordinating with public works on the necessary permits and closures; collaborating and communicating with local businesses; securing materials, supplies, food and entertainment; and shaping the pilot demonstrations and activities is all transferable and teachable. The City and County of Denver now has a rich template by which it can employ this hands-on workshop technique throughout the City. In addition, the framework is flexible, allowing for future demonstrations and methods to be illustrated and interacted with right in the street, park or vacant lot, or even in a building targeted for re-use or redevelopment.



Triangle Transformations was tremendously successful in attracting people who don't normally participate. The street setting and exciting atmosphere drew a broad range of attendees, from individuals who had seen a posting and specifically attended the event, to people passing by and stopping on their commute home, to nearby property owners who wouldn't typically be bothered to attend a workshop at a local school or other city venue. This hands-on input simply could not have been obtained from a traditional workshop, charrette, or online survey.

The community is seeing that good planning – combining technical fundamentals, broader policy application, and truly engaging community feedback – can lead to dramatic near-term change while setting the course for a long-term, stable future. They are excited about the future and envisioning how more blocks and streets can take on the character of that special evening.