

Outreach Tactics: Tactical Urbanism Strategies as a Community Engagement Tool



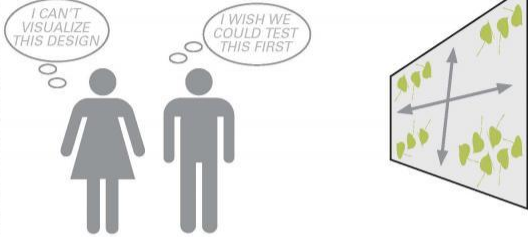
In 2016, the Town of Avon mobilized to rethink their public infrastructure with the goal of fostering a more multi-modal network. Emerging out of a decade-old comprehensive plan and a more recent walkability study, Beaver Creek Boulevard was selected as the first of many future public infrastructure investments in the town. The project had a simple goal to transform the existing auto-centric street into a pedestrian-friendly and round-the-clock activated, multi-modal public space corridor. Before construction began a temporary small-scale intervention provided valuable community engagement to build momentum around the catalytic project as well as a unique opportunity to evaluate the validity of design ideas in a real-life mock up. The result was a tactical approach to planning, design process, and public outreach.

A TACTICAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

IMMERSION STRATEGY VERSUS TRADITIONAL METHODS....

TYPICAL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: MEETINGS

Require community members to visualize abstract concepts and determine preferences without testing ideas.



...OR...
PRIMARY STRATEGY DEPLOYED

IMMERSIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: MOCK-UP INSTALLATION

Immerse community members in an experiential design idea in order to learn about end user preferences and site function.



Mock-up Plan
translate design concepts to a temporary installation

Immersion Strategy
experiential community engagement versus traditional methods

Gather Feedback
listen to user experiences



The original design process resulted in two strong conceptual schemes for the street, one of which was selected for the tactical urbanism installation during the summer of 2016, inviting the community to experience and evaluate the benefits and challenges of that design in a real-life mock-up. A wide audience of community members engaged with the design concept and provided valuable feedback about the project. This feedback was key to the early conceptual phases before design development and final built work

The project team approached community outreach and tactical urbanism in a fresh way. Typically, tactical urbanism efforts are focused on temporary public space advocacy and seeding project ideas to later be implemented permanently by the larger community. Instead, our team successfully deployed nimble and temporary tactical urbanism strategies as an integral step within the planning and design process. The streets were colorfully painted representing our design concept for all community members to evaluate, understand, and enjoy

The public was engaged throughout the installation with signage, walking tours, public meetings, public comment emails, and digital preference voting. The community was also invited to contribute comments and feedback via a project email. During a public meeting, community members enthusiastically participated in live polling voting when asked questions about the mock-up installation and their goals for a final built streetscape.

Some of the design strategies tested included: narrower drive lanes, dedicated bike lanes, pedestrian crossings, pedestrian bulb outs, diagonal back-in on-street parking, streetscape plantings, and access management.



The mock-up installation at Beaver Creek Boulevard proved to be not only an effective outreach tactic but an essential step within the planning and design process. Testing design ideas in the public right of way resulted in validation in the design team's decision to abandon the design scheme for a more widely-accepted community preference. The new design scheme featured favored elements, including on-street bike lanes and parallel on-street parking.

The feedback was not only valuable, but it came from a targeted audience throughout the Avon area. Mock up projects in public spaces provide an excellent way to reach many people who will be the end users of the site.