

**This book is dedicated in loving memory to:**

**Jane Jacobs**

**(1916 - 2006)**

**shining star**

**and grandmother of the modern struggle for livable cities**

On the eve of the Village Building Convergence in May of 2004, we had the honor of introducing Jane to The City Repair Project. With a sparkle in her eye, she looked at photos of Intersection Repairs, smiled and asked all about our projects. She loved them, and understood how City Repair is building and evolving from the vision she set in her 1961 classic, *The Death And Life Of Great American Cities*. She recognized how we are today's caretakers of the future of our cities.

*In her spirit, may we continue to stand up for the people and  
life of our public places, be wildly creative and true to our natures  
and dance our days with smiles and love.*

The City Repair Project's Placemaking Guidebook  
Collectively authored and edited.

First edition, 2003; Second edition, 2006



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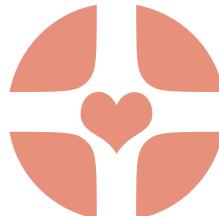
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# Preface



## WELCOME

In 1996, a group of neighbors in Portland, Oregon decided to create a place for community in one of their street intersections. Through paint and collective vision, they transformed their intersection into a public gathering place that felt truly their own and reflected the needs of the neighborhood. By designing a large, welcoming outdoor space to share information, food and drink, they not only put the “public” back into public streets, but also ignited a grassroots movement. The project was called “Intersection Repair,” and has since evolved into a defined community process, sanctioned by the City of Portland, and promoted and facilitated by The City Repair Project.

Intersection Repair accomplishes a number of things – it builds community, creates beauty, slows down traffic and encourages other neighborhood projects. It is also incredibly fun, requires a lot of work and plants strong seeds for the future. In short, Intersection Repair is a comprehensive strategy for rebuilding the heart of our communities, so we’ve made it the focus of City Repair’s Placemaking Guidebook.

Thanks for caring about your community; we are all caretakers of our collective future. Please let us know how you take these ideas and put them into action. We look forward to learning about your interpretation of Intersection Repair!



## FIRST AND SECOND EDITIONS

The Placemaking Guidebook is based on the Neighborhood Placemaking Handbook developed by the Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program for neighborhood associations in Portland, Oregon. In 2003, Southeast Uplift and The City Repair Project produced the Guidebook after collaborating on the Village Building Convergence and numerous Intersection Repairs.

After an additional three years of facilitating these projects, we have learned a lot about how to help neighbors recognize themselves as a community, and how they can begin taking their collective future into their own creative hands. As a result, the Second Edition includes more stories, photos and hands-on tools for communities interested in developing their sense of place.

### How to use this book

Every neighborhood – indeed, every street – is different in terms of history, environment, project possibilities and constraints. This Guidebook begins where most American communities find themselves: socially isolated, yet relatively stable. If you are fortunate enough to live in a neighborhood where people are already engaged in community building, then start wherever it makes sense. Keep in mind, however, that even the most socially active neighborhoods include people who feel disempowered and might benefit from the initial steps of the Intersection Repair process.



This guide is not a “recipe” for placemaking. These ideas are here for your reference and are meant to be a springboard for your imagination. The challenge and the beauty of these projects is that it is up to you and your community to create your own path forward. Enjoy!



## THE CITY REPAIR PROJECT

City Repair grew out of a grassroots initiative in 1996 that converted a Portland, Oregon street intersection into a neighborhood public square. We became a 501(c)(3) non-profit in 2001, and now pursue our mission by facilitating similar projects in Portland and promoting these ideas across the country.

The City Repair Project enables people to reclaim urban spaces and create community-oriented places. We host public gatherings and events and help people physically transform their neighborhoods into more community-centered, ecologically sustainable, beautiful places. Our work promotes localization of culture, economy and decision-making as a foundation for a more livable society.

Our projects are supported by an array of hundreds of volunteers, donors and activists. Our volunteer Coordinators Council collectively shares executive responsibilities in a consensus decision-making model.

Please refer to Chapter 6 for more information about The City Repair Project and our many programs and events.

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*Below: the City Repair T-Palas provides relaxing community space at Earth Day 2006.*





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*And of course, we thank and acknowledge the countless project participants and neighborhood activists who we've learned from.*

# Context



This resource serves to facilitate the creation of great places in the very center of our urban life: our neighborhoods.

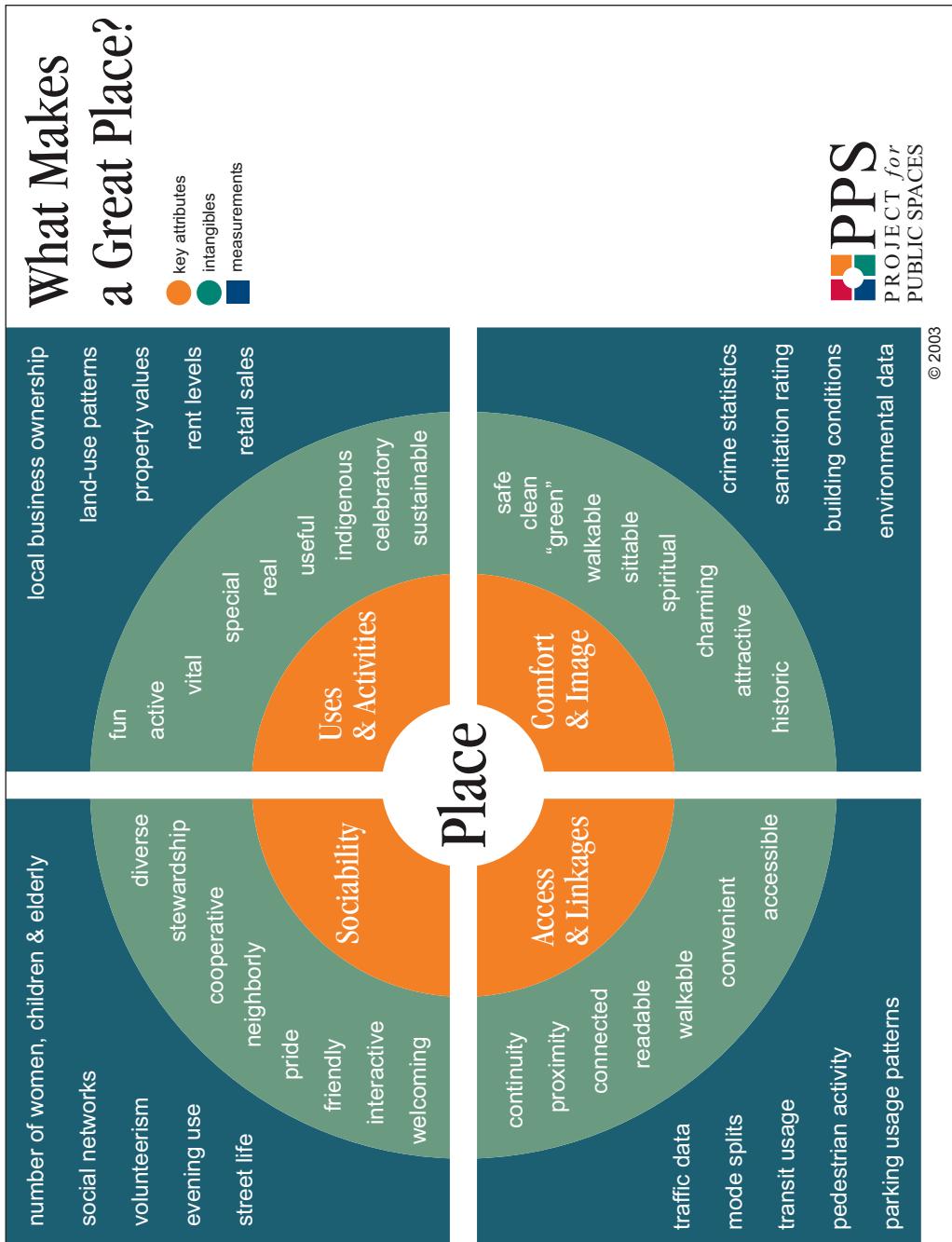
## WHAT MAKES A PLACE GREAT?

Public places are the geographical glue that binds a community together. These spaces are friendly, secure, distinctive and well-integrated into the community fabric; they are places for democracy, sociability, gathering, collective memory, communication, connection and local economic vitality. Enriching people's experience of public life and providing a platform for activities where people have a sense of community ownership, great places evoke a sense of identity and provide a focal point for cultural exchange and transformation.

Many people have examined the characteristics of such successful public places. As early as 1961, urban planner Jane Jacobs brought this awareness to the fore through her photographs of New York in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.<sup>1</sup> In 1977, designer Christopher Alexander masterfully dissected it in *A Pattern Language*.<sup>2</sup> More recently, the Project for Public Spaces (refer to page 151), an organization with 30 years of experience in placemaking across the world, has developed a number of studies, books and workshops for aiding communities in building better public spaces. Their "Great Places" diagram on the following page outlines the four major elements that characterize an outstanding public place.

1 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House Books, 1961.

2 Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, Murray Silverstein, *A Pattern Language : Towns, Buildings, Construction* (Center for Environmental Structure Series). USA: Oxford University Press, 1977.





## WHERE HAVE ALL THE PUBLIC PLACES GONE?

One would think that in our daily lives we would encounter great public places throughout our neighborhoods and cities – places that encourage interaction and engagement with another, or at least reflect the vitality of the city and its inhabitants. However, when you look around, many streets are desolate, uninspiring and torn apart by traffic. They are not made for social engagement. Indeed, people on the streets and in neighborhoods tend to be politely disengaged from one another. Between the private realm of our homes and the far-reaching world we encounter everyday, contemporary life fosters alienation and isolation. Where is our common ground? As journalist Mike Greenberg noted in the *Poetics of Cities*:

*...[T]elecommunications and air travel have knitted distant countries into a global village, and the automobile and expressway have made distant parts of the city accessible to us, but there's a hole in the middle. We have neglected to build or maintain neighborhood structures that encourage us to participate in exchange near our homes.*

As we bypass the neighborhood in our daily lives, we lose an important essence of being part of a greater society. Greenberg argues:

*...[W]ithout a center, a residential area may be a pleasant retreat from the world, the people may be friendly to each other, but some social glue is still missing, the glue of shared experience, of serendipitous meetings, of a common ground that is neither your home nor mine, but ours.<sup>1</sup>*

Most people in America crave deep interactions with those around them, but have either lost the ability to connect, or feel too busy or too tired to try. Yet people all over the world who live in towns and cities – some far more dense than American urban areas – feel extremely connected to their families, neighbors and cultural heritage. Indeed, hundreds of thousands of towns and cities across the globe are functioning in ways that American cities are simply unable to.

A look at these vibrant communities, untouched by the American

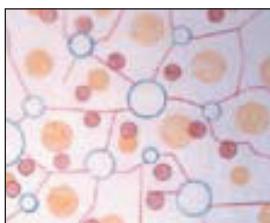
*"Lowly, unpurposeful and random as they may appear, sidewalk contacts are the small change from which a city's wealth of public life may grow."*

–Jane Jacobs,  
author, *The Death  
and Life of Great  
American Cities*

<sup>1</sup> Mike Greenberg, *The Poetics of Cities: Designing Neighborhoods that Work*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1995.



# Chapter 1



A village plan: clustered dwellings with gathering places at the crossroads

plague of social isolationism and detachment, suggests that Greenberg's missing "neighborhood structures" and "centers" might be the secret to their success. Communities that function for the public good tend to have places where the community can gather: public squares, pedestrian zones or commons. In these places, people can come together and share time and space with each other freely, without having to spend money or feeling they must move on to somewhere else. A sense of liveliness and connection emerges, rippling out into action and realizations in other realms of people's lives.

## The Grid

It is actually by design that urban America is largely at a loss of such places. From the earliest colonial settlements, towns and cities in the United States have predominately been planned, designed and built for the profit of landowners or to secure control of surrounding land and/or populations. Since the resulting towns were built on a foundation unconcerned with community interaction and cultural exchange beyond monetary gain, more often than not, public places, such as squares, were bypassed.

*"With a T-square and a triangle...the municipal engineer could...without the slightest training as either an architect or a sociologist, 'plan' a metropolis, with its standard lots, its standard blocks, its standard street widths, in short, with its standardized, comparable, and replaceable parts."*

—Lewis Mumford,  
The City in History,  
1961.

In fact, in 1785 the Continental Congress practically guaranteed that public squares would be absent from new American cities when it passed the National Land Ordinance, establishing a continental grid plan over all lands west of the Ohio River. Used since ancient Assyria for colonizing and establishing control over land, grid plans in antiquity generally included a provision for establishing some kind of public space to ensure that it would not get left out. (The Spanish Empire did this in the West with its Law of the Indies, which is why so many old colonial cities in Latin and South America have public squares in their centers – albeit purposely flanked by the institutions of government and religion.) The National Land Ordinance, however, contained no mandate for public squares. Attracted by its simplicity, efficiency and "rationality," cities in the eastern United States also adopted the grid plan, thus replacing their European legacy of the village green, the town common and the great urban public squares.

Twentieth-century planning further reinforced the lack of public common space by segregating residential areas from the work environment. Although this separation created cleaner and quieter neighborhoods,



it also produced a greater chasm between people and their neighbors and community. As suburbs burgeoned, communities became less reflective of their immediate environment and more defined by one's family and employment.

This lack of "place" and the reasons for it underlie our national fabric, and have established a basis of sameness across the land. Much of the source and nature of our isolation results from the fact that we have no commons, we have no place to go except into the imposed uniformity: turn left at the McDonald's, right at the Kinko's and meet me at the Starbucks.

The solution? Disrupt the uniformity and start making community places out of "public" spaces.

## WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

"Placemaking" has recently become such a popular idea precisely because we have few "places"—we just have lots of space. Placemaking is the act of creating a shared vision based on a community's needs and assets, culture and history, local climate and topography. Placemaking is as much about psychological ownership and reclamation of space as it is about physically building a place. In a context of isolation, placemaking is a reminder that we still share common interests and the power to manifest them. Great places are produced by the people who use them; the community is the expert while professionals are respected as resources.

Placemaking touches upon deeper societal issues and contributes to participatory democracy. As the process of creating a community place progresses, people develop deeper relationships and more momentum to create together because they have discovered a way to directly change the world in which they live. Solutions to many urban issues, including crime, unstable local economies, deteriorating educational systems, broken families, homelessness, discrimination, pollution and loss of green space seem unapproachable when we view them from a perspective of isolation. Establishing a common ground that transcends our differences powerfully addresses this disconnection and results in an environment where people feel like they can manifest anything.



Most of the United States has been overlaid with a grid





# Intersection Repair Overview



*“We can be grateful for what one person can create, but when we create together, it will baffle the intellect and arouse our spirits to celebrate the oneness of humanity and the need for cooperating in neighborhood community.”*

—Ken Norwood, Shared Living Resource Center

## OVERVIEW

Intersection Repair is the citizen-led transformation of a street intersection into a public square. It takes a crossing of pathways – the historical place of gathering – and turns it back from a place to move through to a place to stay.

While Intersection Repair often consists of external forms designed by the people that live in the community, much of the essence of an Intersection Repair is often unseen. Behind the community kiosks, benches, murals and other structural elements, is a neighborhood that has come together to converse, collaborate and celebrate. There is no set formula for what it should look like or how it should feel; it is simply a place where people have taken ownership. Each Intersection Repair is original; each is a loved, special place.

Throughout history it has taken the whole village to create and use great public places, and though we may not always realize it, today it still does. Many people assume that it is city government's responsibility to develop and maintain the public spaces (streets, sidewalks, parks, etc.), but if the people who use these places daily don't care about them and speak up about what they want and need, who will?



## Chapter 2



Thus, a neighborhood-led design and decision-making process is the foundation of Intersection Repair, and much of this guidebook is focused on guiding groups of neighbors through the elements of reaching out to other neighbors in a dynamic conversation about visions for the future of local common space.

There are many reasons why people choose to create an Intersection Repair:

- To get to know neighbors, bump into each other more often and provide a forum for communication
- To make a statement of neighborhood culture, bring respect for a process of community design and decision-making and participate in a meaningful project
- To slow traffic on neighborhood streets and create a healthy relationship between automobiles, bicyclists and pedestrians in our shared right-of-way
- To align our daily lives with local natural cycles and make our physical environment more ecologically friendly
- To reclaim public gathering spaces
- To provide a reason for kids to play in their own neighborhood
- To beautify and create a safer, more livable neighborhood
- To create stronger connections between local schools, businesses, organizations and neighbors
- To demonstrate the power of a small group of neighbors to create the place where they want to be living



# Intersection Repair Overview



In the process of creating an Intersection Repair, people also often find hidden benefits:

- An opportunity to learn or practice a new skill
- A chance to share a personal passion or interest with the world
- Strong personal connections with people who live around them
- Strong personal connection to the place where they live

*Intersection Repair is a transformation of internal as well as physical landscapes.*

## History of Intersection Repair

The idea of Intersection Repair developed in Portland, Oregon, out of a simple grassroots community-building project.

In the spring of 1996, neighbors in Portland's Sellwood neighborhood began holding neighborhood tea parties in a beautiful, temporary gathering space that a local architect built in his front yard. This special place, known as the "T-Hows," evolved from the basic premise that people will come together and start to build relationships given the opportunity to share time and drink with community members in a comfortable, free space.

It worked. Soon, hundreds of neighbors were coming to the "Moonday" gatherings. Music, dancing, poetry readings and tea flowed freely. Folks who had lived near each other for years but never met developed friendships.

By the end of that summer, the T-Hows was ordered to be dismantled, due to City building codes. The neighborhood once again found itself without a gathering place, and plans soon formed to create a new one—but this time in the street intersection. A group of residents generated a design plan to claim the street intersection as shared space by painting the asphalt. When they approached the Portland Office of Transportation (PDOT) about the project, PDOT rejected the idea, ironically telling some of the neighbors, "That's public space—you can't use it!"

Later, some individuals from within PDOT approached the residents and told them that the only way to get the City to even consider such an untried idea was to force their hand. The neighbors refined the design and decided to create the "Intersection Repair" without City



## Chapter 2



Tea Station at Share-It Square

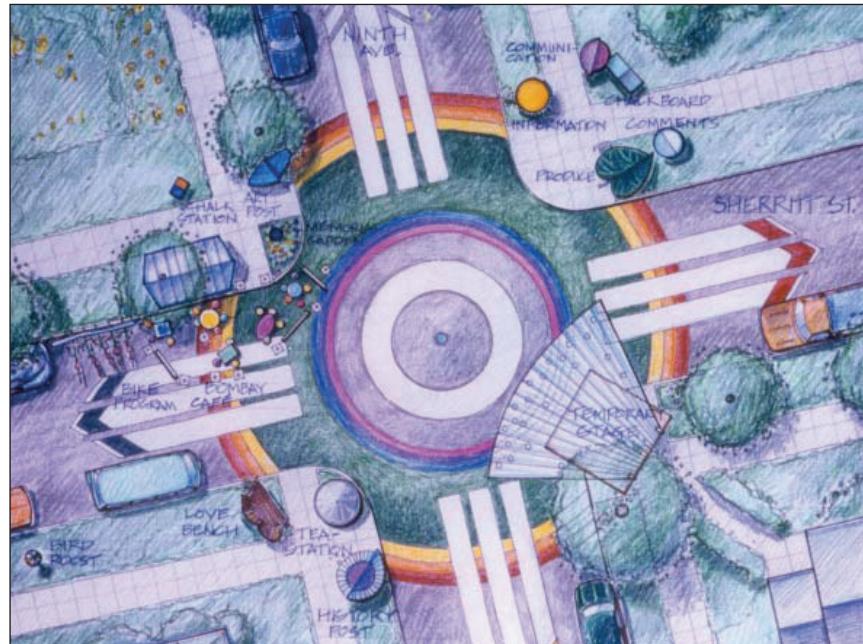


"Welcome to the Book Station! Take a book, read a book, bring a book to share — try reading instead of homework. Teach a cat to read. The Share-It Square librarian never says 'Shush'!"

approval. In September 1996, they arranged for a legal block party street closure on all four radiating streets of the intersection of SE 9th and Sherrett, and they installed the first phase of "Share-It Square."

Share-It Square began as a colorful painted circle, connecting the four corners of the intersection. The intention was to mark the crossroads as shared space. With an eye towards the intersection becoming a permanent public square in the future, they included prototypes of such things as an information kiosk and community watering hole (tea serving station) to represent characteristics of traditional public squares.

Immediately, PDOT sent notification to remove the installation, and threatened to fine the folks involved. The neighborhood group then engaged PDOT and City Council members in dialogue about the project, and set out to prove its value by surveying the neighborhood and observing behavior at the intersection. The resulting survey showed that the vast majority of respondents perceived increases in neighborhood communication and safety and decreases in crime, both



Original design for Share-It Square in the Sellwood neighborhood of Portland, Oregon

## Intersection Repair Overview



important benchmarks for the City of Portland.

The neighbors made a presentation to City Council, presenting their survey findings as well as a plan for the management and development of Share-It Square. It wasn't until City officials realized that the project was meeting a host of City livability goals without spending any tax dollars that the project finally won City backing. The Council began issuing a series of City ordinances that granted permits to the project, and set out guidelines for similar undertakings to be installed throughout Portland.

Over the next few years, the residents refined and added elements to their Intersection Repair: the 24-hour tea station was rebuilt with steel, concrete and mosaic. The bulletin board expanded with a plexiglass roof and chalkboards. A produce-sharing station and a sidewalk chalk dispenser appeared, as did two benches made from cob (an adobe-like natural building material made of clay, straw, sand and water; refer to page 161). The idea of raising the center of the intersection with a semi-permeable surface of bricks and flagstones was proposed to and approved by PDOT for its traffic calming and place-making potential. The intersection mural itself has been redesigned and repainted annually.

Since the inception of Intersection Repair in Sellwood, the idea has expanded exponentially. As of May 2006, there are now roughly 40 such manifestations of community power in neighborhoods across all quadrants of Portland. In addition, the concept is also developing in at least a dozen cities nationwide (refer to Chapter 6 for details).



Produce Sharing Station in Share-It Square





# Share-It Square Celebrations!!!

At the Sellwood Intersection of SE 9th & Sherrett

**May 22nd through May 30th**  
**Every Single Day!**



Just like last year, this May the Share-It Square will be a project site of Portland's Annual Village Building Convergence(VBC)! This year, 14 communities across the city will be participating in building public gathering places, transforming street intersections into public squares, and developing new community organizations!

Come join the fun at the Share-It Square!

**May 22-** Paint the street, followed by music, massage, and a potluck dinner!

**May 23-29-** Ecological building and art projects will go on all week, with public artist and teacher Josho Somine here to guide the process! These works will include a bee hive-shaped structure, a bamboo fence, a short wave radio installation, special decorative plaster projects, and permeable paving!

**May 30-** The overall tour of VBC projects will begin at the Share-It Square at 9am, and at 3pm there will be one more block party, when we'll join with neighborhoods across the city for a World Record number of block parties in one city!

Friends of Share-It Square 2004, call 503-234-1919 for more information!



## INTERSECTION REPAIR AT A GLANCE

The following basic steps are drawn from projects undertaken in Portland, Oregon, and may vary depending on project type, the willingness of your local government to help make it happen and unforeseeable issues and opportunities that may arise in your neighborhood as you go through this community-building process. All of these steps are discussed in detail in the rest of this book.

### 1. Start Conversations

Straightforward yet profound, initiating conversations with your neighbors is a significant gesture, and the foundation for any community project. Remember that social isolation is one of the key issues that Intersection Repair addresses; therefore, you will want to reach out to a broad cross-section of your neighbors in a welcoming, compassionate way. Getting to know one another in a comfortable setting will invite people to relax, share and inspire—setting the tone for the entire project and for the future.



### 2. Widen the Circle

As conversations develop, it is important to make continuous efforts to include and engage every part of the neighborhood. Reaching out across unspoken borders and widening the circles of participation in a collaborative effort is the essence of Intersection Repair. Offer a variety of events and employ an assortment of communication methods (phone, email, door knocking, bulletin board, etc.) throughout the process. Joy emanates from a community that opens itself to meaningful participation from its constituents.



### 3. Build Partnerships

Our cities are full of people and organizations that are already working to build community, strengthen our neighborhood fabric and address various social, ecological, political and cultural matters. Build upon this abundance! Collaborating with non-profits, government bureaus, schools, businesses and individuals can bring extensive resources, technical support and unexpected gifts to your project. Remember, everyone loves a neighborhood effort—you are giving people the opportunity to join in the fun!



## Chapter 2



### 4. Explore Possibilities

Once a sense of community is established among your neighbors, you can begin to envision potential projects or events that can serve your residential area. You should take the time to observe the neighborhood, learn what assets you have in your community and research what it means to “create place.” There are many fun activities you can do to get to know each other better as you discover the ins and outs of your neighborhood.

### 5. Develop a Vision



The design process is an exciting time of possibility. Initial brainstorming and visioning activities can build a broad base of ideas, which you can expand and refine over a series of community workshops. You will have to choose which projects to start with, and how these projects serve your community’s needs and interests. In this community design process, you will want to engage people regardless of their attendance at workshops—a lot of conversations will happen between meetings as you keep in touch with the full spectrum of your neighborhood. Expect this step to take anywhere from two to six months. The rewards of a project collectively envisioned are immeasurable.



### 6. Create

It can bring a smile to anyone’s face to witness a community out in the streets, working for the public good. Whether it’s a block party, a street painting or a building project, the creation phase of your undertaking will draw out scores of people. Enjoy this sense of accomplishment! This time of co-manifestation can solidify and grow your neighborhood’s relationships as you admire your work and celebrate your sense of togetherness.

### 7. Steward Your Place

Foster your long-term sense of community and accomplishments by continuing conversations, programming events and discussing future projects, as well as maintaining what you have already built. As you get to know your new and improved neighborhood, you and your neighbors will discover a variety of ways to connect and appreciate your local community place together.

# Intersection Repair Overview

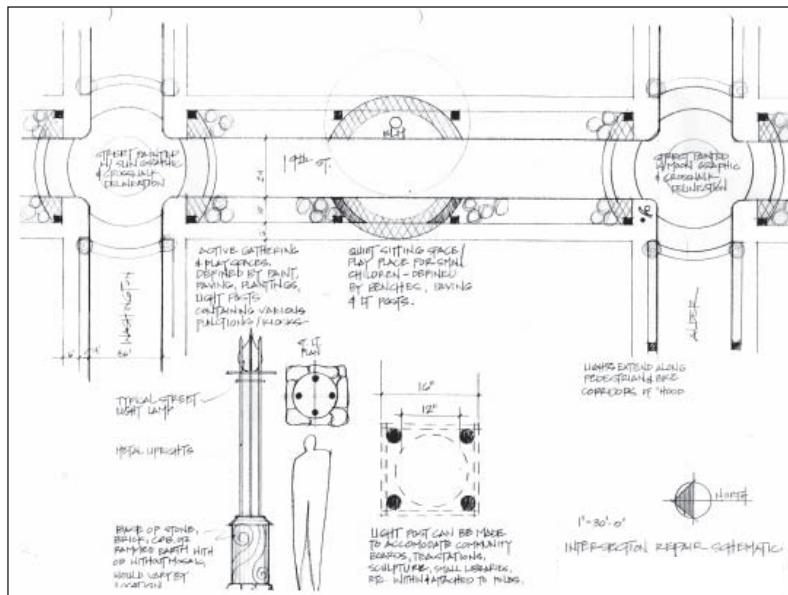


## INTERSECTION REPAIR CITY ORDINANCE

In Portland, Oregon, Intersection Repairs are governed by the most recent applicable ordinance (#175937, approved by Portland City Council on September 19, 2001). This ordinance was passed as a reflection of the stewardship that groups of neighbors can demonstrate. It serves as an affirmation of the work and cooperation of the neighborhood, and as such, it outlines a basic set of conditions required for building elements in the public right-of-way.

In the City of Portland, you must have consent from 80% of the households within two standard city blocks of the proposed project, and 100% of the residences adjacent to the site in order to get a permit. A petition of signatures as well as documentation of a broad outreach and decision-making effort will serve to prove neighborhood support. You will also have to provide a written description of the proposed changes and detailed diagrams depicting how the intersection will look when completed. In addition, you will have to demonstrate how the project will improve, or at least maintain, traffic safety and the safety of individuals at or in the vicinity of the intersection.

Please refer to page 127 for details on permitting.



*Designs like this one might be helpful to use in your discussions with City officials. For more information on working with your municipality, refer to Chapter 5.*



### **CITY ORDINANCE NO. 175937: CONDITIONS OF REVOCABLE PERMIT TO MODIFY CITY INTERSECTIONS**

(Passed by Portland, Oregon City Council 09/19/01)

(1) The permittee shall hold the City of Portland, its officers, agents, and employees free and harmless from any claims for damages to persons or property, including legal fees and costs of defending any actions or suits, including any appeals, which may result from permitted activity.

(2) The intent of a proposed project and the likely outcome of such project shall be consistent with the goals of the Portland City Council.

(3) The two streets must be classified as Local Service Streets and carry less than a combined 2,500 vehicles on an average day.

(4) The applicant for a permit must provide to the City Traffic Engineer a petition of support for the proposed intersection modifications. The support petition must have signatures from each of the adjacent residents and at least 80 percent of the residents on the project street frontage(s) within two standard city blocks of the proposed project. The City Traffic Engineer shall have the authority to modify the petition boundaries when considered appropriate. The City Traffic Engineer shall certify the accuracy of the petition.

(5) The applicant for a permit must provide the City Traffic Engineer with a written description of the proposed changes, including diagrams depicting how the intersection will look when completed. The applicant must demonstrate how the project will improve, or at least maintain, traffic safety and the safety of individuals at or in the vicinity of the intersection.

(6) The City Traffic Engineer may approve a revocable permit authorizing construction and maintenance of the project as described and shown in the submitted diagrams, subject to any changes that may be required by the City Traffic Engineer.

(7) The permit shall be for use of the public right-of-way only, and does not exempt the permittee from obtaining any license or permit required by the City Code or Ordinances for any act to be performed under this permit. Nor shall the permit waive the provisions of any City Code, Ordinance, or the City Charter, except as stated herein.

# Intersection Repair Overview



(8) The permit shall not exempt any party from complying with all applicable traffic laws, including laws regarding pedestrians.

(9) The permittee is not authorized to do any excavation, except as specifically identified in the project plans. The permittee shall be responsible for protecting all public and private facilities placed in the public right-of-way, including underground utilities.

(10) The permittee shall notify all households and businesses within four standard city blocks of the proposed project at least 30 days before the project installation date.

(11) The permittee shall obtain a Block Party Permit to close all legs of an intersection, for up to one block distance, in order to install the intersection modifications. Permittee shall use Type III barricades and STREET CLOSED signs as provided in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. No street shall be blocked for more than 12 hours in any 24-hour period unless specifically allowed by the City Traffic Engineer.

(12) Repair, maintenance, or installation of existing or future utility facilities in the right-of-way may require the permittee to reconstruct, move, or remove the project, or portions of the project, with all costs borne by the permittee.

(13) The permittee shall work with all affected neighbors to resolve any concerns that may arise regarding the project. The inability to resolve such concerns may be grounds for revocation of this permit by the City Traffic Engineer.

(14) The permittee shall maintain, at no cost to the City, all aspects of the project during the term of the permit. If any nuisance condition is allowed to exist in the area of the project, the City may summarily abate such nuisance. The existence of a nuisance in the area of the project may be grounds for revocation of the permit.

(15) All permits shall be revocable by the City Traffic Engineer. The City Traffic Engineer may revoke a permit for any cause. The City Traffic Engineer shall immediately revoke a permitted project no longer meeting the intent of City Council goals.

(16) The permittee shall, at no cost to the City, remove all aspects and/or features of a project when either the permit expires or is revoked.



### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **How do you build a public square out of a street?**

Simply by working together to make the intersection special, your community can turn even a sea of asphalt into a place where people want to go and feel safe and welcome. Make it beautiful, interesting and meaningful. It is an expression of your community's local culture.

#### **Does this close the street to cars?**

No. Many public squares throughout the world are shared by cars and pedestrians. These spaces are designed in ways that make drivers slow down and expect pedestrians. There have been no reported incidents between pedestrians and automobiles at Intersection Repair locations. Lessening traffic speeds is one of the goals of the project.



A small touch of local color in Ottawa, Canada

#### **Why would a neighborhood want an Intersection Repair?**

It depends—each one is different. Many people want a focal point for their neighborhood, a place for community interaction and seasonal celebrations. Others want to slow traffic and let pedestrians share the public space of the road equally with cars. And others simply want to beautify their neighborhood, making it a reflection of their unique local culture.

#### **Who makes a project happen?**

You and your neighbors do! You start the idea, get your community involved, create a design and install it at your intersection. City Repair can help navigate the process, work with neighbors, connect with skilled people in your community and meet City requirements.

#### **How does it affect property values?**

Home values within the two-block radius around the first two Intersection Repairs (Sunnyside Piazza in Sunnyside Neighborhood and Share-It Square in Sellwood) have risen commensurate with the rest of their neighborhoods. It has been noted that areas near Intersection Repairs have attracted more families with children, both homeowners and renters, who want to live near a place where people are working together to build stronger community.

# Intersection Repair Overview



## Has there been any vandalism?

Due to the creative involvement of residents, a sense of local ownership and pride has emerged to take care of the installations. Pedestrians tend to respect the projects because it's obvious that a community has created and cared for the area. To date, there have been no major incidents of vandalism at Intersection Repairs. When vandalism has occurred (minor graffiti, damage to cob structures or tire marks on street paintings), neighbors quickly re-painted and fixed these areas.



Involve kids in your project when they're young, and they won't vandalize it when they're older!

## How about safety and kids?

By making each location distinct, with designs and signage customized to each neighborhood, people using and moving through the intersection are aware of activity in and around the area. From the experience of the current Intersection Repairs, kids have wanted to stay closer to home to play. Increased pedestrian usage of sidewalks and streets makes the area feel safer.



### CASE STUDY OF AN INTERSECTION REPAIR PROJECT: THE SUNNYSIDE PIAZZA

*By Jan Semenza, Intersection Repair Coordinator and City Repair Board Member*

In 2000 the Sunnyside neighborhood in SE Portland, OR suffered from a number of urban problems including heroin, crack and alcohol abuse, social disorder and crime. A number of residents started discussing creative approaches to neighborhood stewardship and connected with The City Repair Project.

During nine months of meetings, discussions, workshops, design plans, outreach and block parties, the community conceived a plan to paint an intersection. While the benefits to the community of painting the streets seemed obvious to some, others pointed out that the street's main function is to be driven on. With continued outreach and conversation, skeptics gradually agreed to the value of this community project.

The community painted a large sunflower in the middle of the intersection and created what is arguably the most beautiful intersection in town. The pattern resembles two spirals, mirror images of each other, and mathematically represents a Fibonacci series. The Sunnyside Piazza was inaugurated on September 22, 2001, with a celebratory party of residents and homeless alike.



Cob art wall



Solar-powered fountain  
(with rubber ducky)

After another nine months of preparations, a second phase of community art was realized at this location: a cob art wall was built with colorful mosaics, shapes and niches; a cob information kiosk was installed to exchange messages and notices intended to facilitate social interactions; and a solar-powered fountain tiled with glass mosaics was constructed to invite passers-by to pause, listen to the sound of running water and interact with each other.

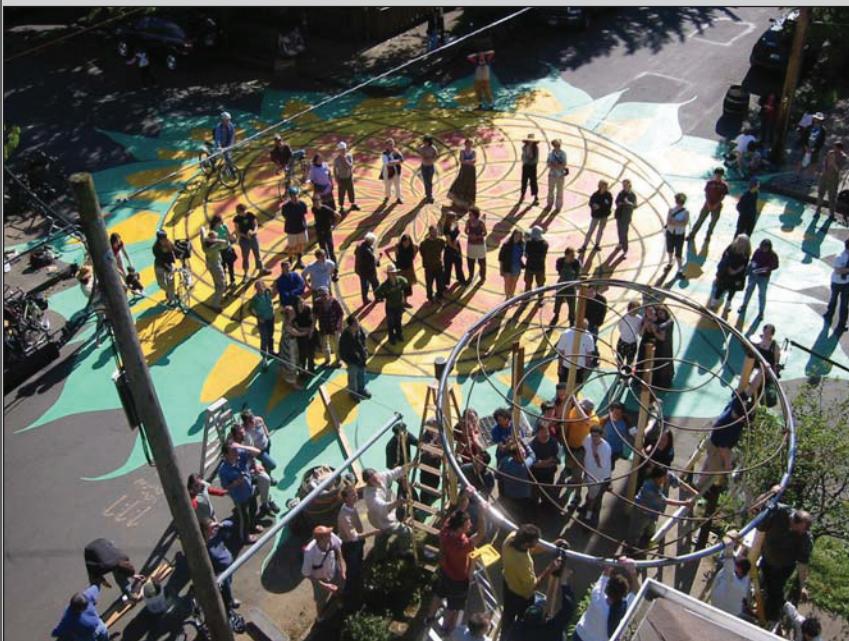
As part of the 2004 Village Building Convergence the community erected a metal dome, towering 13 feet over the Sunnyside Piazza. The dome sculpture was designed according to the scheme of a sunflower: iron rods spiral out from the center with five spirals in one

# Intersection Repair Overview



direction and eight in the other, according to the Fibonacci Series. The structure was welded together in a nearby driveway and carried to the Piazza. As part of a dome raising ceremony (analogous to an Amish barn raising ceremony), the 300-pound dome was raised onto wooden pillars over one of the corners. Over 100 residents, friends of the Sunnyside Piazza and workshop participants of the Village Building Convergence joined forces to lift the structure onto its new home. Three wooden trellises were installed in the other corners of the intersection.

Over the past six years the Sunnyside Piazza has become a destination for pedestrians and a place for people to meet. There is epidemiologic evidence that this successful example of community organizing has had a beneficial impact on social networks and well-being, and crime data suggest that there has been a significant decrease in reported offenses. These data vindicate the merits of public participation in urban design, with cost-effective benefits to the whole community.



The dome raising ceremony of the sunflower dome sculpture at VBC 2004





# Get to Know Your Community

# CHAPTER 3



Intersection Repair is an adventure in re-inhabiting our neighborhood lives. It is a joyful celebration of the possibilities of a community creating its own identity and addressing its own needs. The Intersection Repair process flows in conversation from general feelings and observation to specific ideas and implementation strategies. A series of feedback loops guides community members, as relationships and ideas grow in myriad ways. Intersection Repair is a co-created dance of setting intentions, moving to action and taking time for reflection.

## IN THE BEGINNING...

The beginning of the Intersection Repair process is often the most ambiguous phase because the inspiration must shift from a few people who have an initial idea, to the entire neighborhood. In order to create a successful Intersection Repair, many people must be involved and must feel like they have ownership and decision-making power in the project, although it is ultimately a smaller, core group of people who will likely do much of the organizing legwork. In order to start a new Intersection Repair project a few things need to happen concurrently:

- Neighborhood leadership, or a core group of neighbors, must organize themselves enough to host initial discussions and answer questions.
- The entire neighborhood must be invited to discuss the possibility of Intersection Repair, and needs to be educated about what the process will entail and what their responsibilities may be.
- Neighbors need plenty of time to get to know each other before entering into any discussions about physically changing their neighborhood.



## Chapter 3

*To some degree, neighbors must re-enact the cross-roads before the physical place exists.*

Before diving into any project, you will want to first assess your current resources and better understand what it means to create place. You will want to thoroughly explore the extent of your own neighborhood and widen the circles of involvement.

The project should develop naturally, as an evolution of what is already happening among people in the community. At the same time, remember that the nature of this project is based on challenging what has, until this point, been commonly accepted; you are talking about building a community place where before there may have been none. Therefore, while following a realistic structure, leave yourself plenty of time for things to emerge and change. A great deal of personal development occurs over the course of an Intersection Repair, and the group as a whole will also grow and change as it learns to nurture community in the neighborhood.

It is important to understand that the order of the first few steps may vary. Before beginning the process you should speak with people who have gone through the steps already, be it friends or neighbors who have taken part in an Intersection Repair in another neighborhood or a representative from The City Repair Project. They will be able to offer insight into the challenges and rewards of embarking on this adventure in community building.



Preconceived notions about your community quickly go out the window once conversations start happening. Who could have predicted that this L.A. neighborhood would build swivel chairs on old tree stumps for passers-by to enjoy?

# Get to Know Your Community



## START CONVERSATIONS

The foundation of a successful Intersection Repair project is built upon the strength and interconnections of the people who live in the neighborhood. It all begins with starting conversations in an open and inviting manner.

This neighborhood relationship building can be thought of as your “social capital.” While most people recognize capital in economic terms, the concepts of “natural capital” and “social capital” are very important elements to take into consideration. In fact, the social capital of a community is possibly the most important element of a community project like Intersection Repair. A community that has built social capital has a collective understanding that they themselves can affect change in their lives. Social capital will guide any neighborhood through the process of realizing their collective vision.

Building social capital in your neighborhood is the first step for psychologically reclaiming your street. As people talk with each other more, they will start feeling more connected to the places they share and thus the groundwork will be laid for discussions of physically enhancing your street. To some degree, neighbors must re-enact the crossroads before the physical place exists.

So how do you build your neighborhood’s social capacity? Hang out, have fun and talk with your neighbors! Have a potluck, make efforts to chat as you pass each other on the street or host a block party. Take plenty of time to let people get to know each other better. You’ll find that it’s easier to start talking to people when you have a reason, so it’s okay to begin casually bringing up the idea of a placemaking project and see how people feel.



*Many people throughout history have affected change and nurtured culture through simple actions like sharing meals or tea.*

*Community capacity: “characteristics of communities that affect their ability to identify, mobilize and address social and public health problems.” The dimensions of community capacity include: “participation and leadership, access to and prudent application of resources, social and inter-organizational networks, sense of community, community history of collective action, community power, shared core values and capacity to engage in critical reflection.”*

*–Jan Semenza, PhD, Public Health*



### SOCIAL CAPITAL

*By Jan Semenza, PhD Public Health, Intersection Repair coordinator and City Repair Board Member*

*Social Capital: “The norms and social relations embedded in the social structure of societies that enable people to coordinate action to achieve desired goals.”*



The work of City Repair aims to increase social capital, which is the potential and resources inherent in social cohesion and imbedded in the web of social relationships. Social capital can be seen as a by-product of social relations that promote trust and mutual cooperation and is therefore not a characteristic of one particular individual, but rather a collective characteristic. As such, social capital can facilitate remedial action in an urban setting and promote specific steps necessary for local problem solving.

There are two components of social capital: localized and bridging capital. Localized capital, inherent in teams, social or religious groups, is necessary for community problem solving. Bridging social capital connects various groups and can reveal information for new opportunities and local problem solving. A project that sequentially builds social networks to augment social capital and facilitates bridging capital should result in high collective efficacy with residents engaged in direct social action. The City Repair Project aims to realize community projects that build community capacity and governance skills for consensus decision-making and community stewardship.

Although building social networks and social capital to solve community problems has merit on its own, it can also indirectly improve public health. Studies have shown that social support and friendship ties reduce mortality and morbidity and increase sense of well-being; conversely, lack of trust between neighborhood residents is associated with increased risk of death from cardiovascular diseases, poor mental health in adolescents and more firearm deaths.

In summary, voluntary involvement in organizations and institutions

## Get to Know Your Community



is crucial for local problem solving, disease prevention and mental health; however, it has proven challenging to realize such programs. City Repair promotes a procedure that builds both localized and bridging social capital through ecologic and community interventions. City Repair encourages residents to improve the urban landscape physically (streets and public squares) in order to stimulate walking; supports neighbors to build worthwhile destinations for pedestrians in the public realm that are socially inviting in order to improve social networks and cohesion; and engages participants to beautify the neighborhood symbolically in order to create a sense of belonging and pride.

--For more information, see Jan's article, "*The Intersection of Urban Planning, Art, and Public Health: The Sunnyside Piazza.*" *American Journal of Public Health.* 93(9): 1439-1441, 2003.



Neighbors at SE 19th and Washington gathering at their new community kiosk



## Chapter 3

3:30 AM, I can't really see what I'm writing but I want to say I really hope this will stay here for many years. It is a wonderful attribute to the neighborhood.

Written by a 16 year-old neighbor on at Share-It Square

*"We focus on welcoming our newer neighbors to the Square, always keeping in mind that it's not the number of creative public amenities but the qualities of the interactions between the people who created them that truly counts."*

—Pedro Ferbel-Azcarate, Share-It Square, Portland, Oregon

### Involving the full diversity of the neighborhood

Many neighborhoods encompass people of a wide range of ethnic diversity, race, age, ability, sexual orientation, economic status and life experience that give individuals distinct perspectives. The foundation and fun of Intersection Repair is the involvement of the entire local community. The Intersection Repair process is meant to bring together friends, neighbors and total strangers, despite differences, all working toward one common

goal—to build community. Only when we embrace the full diversity represented in our community will we be truly connected to the place we live.

We often shy away from addressing our full spectrum of diversity out of fear of working with people we don't know, claiming unfamiliarity with the path forward or wanting to avoid bringing up issues that might divide a group. Taking the time to understand the expressions of different issues in your community, developing relationships with diverse community members, eliminating barriers to participation and building partnerships will strengthen your neighborhood immensely.

It can feel intimidating to approach people who may be quite different from you. This section shares some tips and questions to help guide you through this process. It is important to recognize and remember that change and success do not happen overnight.

Take a minute to think about the people in your neighborhood. Who lives and works and plays in your neighborhood? Who do you see at the local coffee shop or at the library? Who do you see at the park or on the street? Demographic information from the Census gives us a picture of who is in the neighborhood. It is not perfect or complete, but it provides a place for us to increase our awareness from a numbers perspective. This is a jumping off point for us in our ongoing work to engage the diversity of the real people behind the numbers.

- Ask what it means to actually engage the diversity of our community. We are working towards true involvement when we are

# Get to Know Your Community



supporting real relationships with people, honoring and educating ourselves and one another about our diverse perspectives and experiences, sharing in the decision-making power and increasing our awareness about how our decisions affect one another.

- Mistakes will be made. Acknowledge and learn from them. It is important to avoid making assumptions and perpetuating stereotypes. People from one ethnic or racial group may not necessarily be experts on race and cultural issues.
- Learn from other groups or neighbors who may have more experience.
- Apply what you know of building relationships with anyone in the community to working with underrepresented groups — express to people that they are welcome, find out what interests them, invite them to come back, include potential partners in planning activities together, etc.
- Identify which local schools and social, religious, political or civic organizations serve different populations within your neighborhood.
- Ground yourself in awareness of the cultural values and biases at work in yourself. Recognize how they influence your attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Develop the ability to acknowledge prejudices and stereotypes when they are triggered and put them aside.
- Learn about the cultural traditions and behaviors of different racial and ethnic groups through reading, participating in cultural events and talking to members of those groups.
- Challenge yourself to participate in workshops and forums that address cultural competency, racism and related topics.
- Reflect on your willingness to adapt your community-building





## Chapter 3

approach to meet the unique requirements of different population groups in your neighborhood.

- Assess your existing leadership to see how well it represents a diverse range of identities such as people of different races, ethnic groups, immigrant status, disabilities, renters/owners and sexual orientation.
- Listen and be open to new ideas: stop doing all the talking. Listen to people's stories. Open up your minds to truly HEAR the other person's viewpoints. The first step is not to presume that one person of a particular race or gender or class is the voice for all. Get input from many individuals and groups and identify issues and concerns common among them.
- Follow-up: It's critical to stay in contact. Solicit feedback about how various people think the meetings are going. Ask if there are others in the community who may have ideas to share.
- Meet at a location that accommodates everyone's comfort level.
- Incorporate issues identified by people of underrepresented populations (ethnic minorities, youth, renters, etc).
- Distribute information in an easy-to-understand format. Work with your community allies to develop materials that are relevant to the various cultures in your neighborhood.
- Make meetings accessible for everyone. If possible, always provide childcare and transportation. If needed, distribute bilingual flyers and provide translation/interpretation services at meetings.
- Use pictures and visuals whenever possible.
- Use simple, straightforward language, free of jargon or clichés that can be difficult to translate or interpret. Explain what acronyms stand for.
- Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing (use "I" instead of "they," "we" or "you").
- Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses—they can be as disrespectful as words.
- Listen non-judgmentally.
- Ask questions. Find out how people arrive at their thinking.

# Get to Know Your Community



- Focus on each other's strengths, not deficits.
- We are ALL teachers. We are ALL learners.

Some questions that you can ask at gatherings early in the process include:

- What is your ethnic/racial heritage (parents, grand-parents)? What messages did you get about your people? Were you made to think you were better than others? Less than others? Equal to others? Standard/bland?
- Where did your sense of connection to your ethnic/racial heritage come from? If you became disconnected from your heritage, describe how.
- Where did you grow up? If somewhere other than here, how was it similar/different?
- What experiences have you had that give you a perspective other than that of the majority of people around you?

To help everyone get to know their neighbors better, the residents organizing Share-It Square put together a map identifying the occupations of everyone in the neighborhood (refer to page 66). This exercise often shows people both how little they know about their own neighbors, and what a diversity of talents and experiences are right around them.



One of the 2006 Village Building Convergence sites is located in ethnically, culturally, and generationally diverse North Portland. The design the group came up with is reflective of both the strong Native American traditions of the Pacific Northwest and a very local history. The design incorporates a penguin motif; real penguins used to live at the community center a block away.



### CROSS-CULTURAL LEARNING

By Gwen Sheinfeld

*It's 7:30am in the morning, it's sprinkling rain as it does here in Portland, and we're standing on the street corner of Southeast 6th and Ankeny. My nerves are noticeably twitching because I am nervous about talking to the jornaleros [Mexican day laborers who wait on the streets in that neighborhood to be picked out for jobs]. A million questions are zipping through my mind: "Do I look too dressed up? (I am on my way to my other job, so I'm dressed for office culture). Do they think of me as a privileged white woman, who has nothing to worry about, and is incapable of understanding their situation? Are they right about that? Do they think I am presumptuous to be coming to them to ask them to help with the project? Oh my god, they have much more important things to think about than building cob structures on the street..."*

*The thoughts and insecurities kept coming, but with the help of VOZ [Worker's Rights Education Program] Director Pedro Sosa, I prevailed at standing in a large circle of men and spoke to them in the best Spanish I could muster about the possibilities of working together, on a project that could open doors, provide opportunities for posting their business cards, give them a work sample to show off to future employers, develop a place where they could sit and meet people and share stories.*

*They listened to my somewhat farfetched-sounding ideas. They even smiled at my occasional loss of a word in Spanish, which they were quick to fill in. But there were still many, many unknowns, and the questions continued to run through my mind long after I left the corner.*

*The amazing thing is that once in a while, the greatest unknowns, the possibilities that seem impossible, the time that seems it may become fruitless, all materialize into something so much greater than anything you initially dreamed of. Which is what happened with this project.*

*Several early mornings later at the corner, I began to know the jornaleros' names, and they knew mine. And I was greeted with hugs and dances instead of strange and skeptical stares of yet another white woman trying to "help."*

*But it was the morning of the design workshop that was the real turning point. We had been having design workshops with the neighborhood and interested participants, but the day laborers were not showing up. So we decided to have a special design workshop just for the jornaleros because we knew that they had insights into how to do this project, and truly wanted their investment all the way through.*

## Get to Know Your Community



*When our group brought the idea to Pedro, he told us in the nicest way possible that we were crazy. He re-framed the plan on terms that would make sense to the jornaleros. First, we would meet at the Buckman School soccer field at around 11, which if we were smart we would understand meant somewhere around 12 or later. Then we would play soccer with the men all morning, and finally end up back at the church where VOZ has its office to eat a great meal. Then, if there was time, we'd talk about the project. My mind began racing, "I have to go into work that day... does this really need to be an all-day event? What does soccer have to do with planning the site?" And on and on...*

*Pedro could not have been more on target. The morning of soccer left us exhilarated, and excited about the new friendships we were forging. Light years away from the traditional "go around" at meetings when people report on their name and what they represent. After lunch we did actually have some time and attention from the men to talk about the design project. Again this busted our every idea about what would happen during this part of the meeting.*

*Before we had a chance to say more than our names and what we were hoping to do, one of the men asked me, in Spanish, "So, why are you doing this?" What he meant was clear by the way he emphasized the words. He wanted to know what I had at stake, why I, on a deeply personal level, was spending my day with him. And before I knew it, in my most eloquent Spanish, I told him, "This country doesn't understand community the way you do. In my short time living in Latin America I saw that people understood community, and that cities or towns were planned with great plazas in the center, where people actually gathered and shared stories, and listened to music, and played soccer, and drank coffee, and enjoyed time. I believe that in your culture, people value the things I do. And I want to know you and work with you, to make something that will bring people together." He shook his head in approval and we carried on.*

*The meeting was a great success. We drew pictures of what we envisioned in the intersection, and then threw around a ball of yarn, making a huge web, with each person stating an idea they wanted to accomplish in the project. Everyone left smiling, feeling like something was going to happen.*

*Taking time to acknowledge personal investment is critical and often a void in western meeting culture where we "don't have time" to hear each other's stories.*

*What great satisfaction for all of us seeing this all materialize! But the most important, for sure, were the lessons we learned from each other in the process.*

Gwen Sheinfeld was SE 8th & Ankeny Intersection Repair site coordination volunteer and a Portland State University graduate student in urban and regional planning.



## WIDEN THE CIRCLES

*How much public involvement is enough? There may be a point when it seems tedious to once again put the word out to engage neighbors in an upcoming meeting or event. Remember that widespread participation will create the deep and long-term success of your placemaking project. Your ideas will be more creative and comprehensive, and many more people will take ownership of the project. And from our experience, people appreciate being informed even if they don't seem to be engaged... So how much outreach is enough?*

Outreach and involvement is without a doubt the most crucial aspect of the Intersection Repair process. You cannot cut corners or replace widespread involvement with anything else. Citizen involvement, participation and collaboration are the heart of the project, and often even more important than what may be physically built as a result.

Placemaking is as much about psychological ownership and reclamation of space as it is about physically building a place. The difference between a thriving neighborhood and an isolated grid city is the communication that happens between neighbors. Your project will run smoother, be more responsive to ideas and issues that arise and offer more profound solutions to local issues when you take the time to truly include all of your neighbors. Also, remember that the status quo of most people in the United States is not based on taking ownership and being involved in their neighborhood. Therefore, the challenge of meaningful engagement is the opportunity and the deeper value of these projects.

### Feedback Loops

Everyone will connect to the project for different reasons and at different times, and it will take time and effort to build effective communication between neighbors. Throughout the course of the project the organizers are responsible for continuing the process of reaching out to people who are not yet involved, while at the same time keeping everyone in the loop.

The process can be looked at as a series of feedback loops. Initially, you may only be talking with a small group of neighbors who are excited about the idea of a community project. As your project grows and evolves and more people become involved, you will eventually communicate in an open dialogue with the entire neighborhood. Throughout the project, the people who are most active will likely need to gather and share the opinions of others. Before and after each major meeting, the core group must arrange multiple opportunities for providing information to and receiving feedback from the full neighborhood.

# Get to Know Your Community



There are three elements for successful outreach:

- Variety of communication strategies: reach people in ways that work for them.
- Consistency and repetition: people often need to hear things multiple times and in multiple forms before it sinks in.
- Appropriate timing: give people plenty of time. People may be turned off if it feels like things are too rushed.

Discussing a placemaking project is a great excuse to talk with your neighbors. Sadly, many people feel isolated in their own neighborhoods, hardly even knowing their neighbors' names. Therefore, keep in mind that many people are not accustomed to taking ownership and direct responsibility for their neighborhood, and may reflexively be cautious if someone appears at their front door wishing to discuss something. Remember: deep down, most people probably would enjoy knowing their neighbors and improving their neighborhood life.

You will probably encounter a full spectrum of opinions and levels of involvement throughout your process of Intersection Repair; everyone needs to feel included and have the opportunity to have a voice in every decision. Even if people don't attend a meeting or respond to a flyer, most people want to be kept informed. For a lot of people, what matters is the opportunity and invitation to be a part of something that is happening. Remember that cutting people out of the loop tends to backfire.

You will need to:

- Provide enough information so that people understand the situation without being overwhelmed with too many details.
- Allow enough time for people to process that information before a decision needs to be made; and if the information is a meeting announcement, allow enough time (usually at least two weeks) for people to plan their schedules.

*The difference between a thriving neighborhood and an isolated grid city is the communication that happens between neighbors.*





- Provide ample opportunities for discussion and response to the information. You should give people various options for responding: directly to a person (phone, email, postal mail), to a third party (potentially your neighborhood association, if you have one) or a public information board (bulletin board, kiosk).

Note that people who initiate projects or meetings are often taken to be the leaders and decision-makers. Be clear that no one person or group is in charge—there are just a few excited people with an idea that they want to share with their neighbors. If someone senses that suddenly a big project is being forced onto them, or if they feel excluded or rushed to make a decision, they may feel as though they are being talked into something and their reaction will inevitably be negative.

## Stages of Outreach and Involvement

*Align the project with activities that people already do or want to do and make it fun! The entire Intersection Repair process can be a series of social events.*

1. Start by talking with neighbors and inviting everyone to a get-together. The “knock and talk” method (refer to Methods of Communication, page 108) is generally most effective for this first stage of communication. Make sure you talk directly with the neighbors whose property touches any site that you are considering as your focus. Consider inviting neighbors beyond the two-block area as well. Host this gathering at a comfortable location (someone’s porch or nearby common space, or even at the intersection in question). Stir curiosity among your neighbors about the possibilities of working on a collective neighborhood project. As with many processes, start with the general and then get specific.

Some neighborhood groups choose to begin with a potluck: everyone likes to eat. Sit down and get to know each other—you don’t have to have a conversation specifically about the project yet. The main thing is to become more familiar with each other. You can float the idea about a placemaking project. Often, there will be some vocal, excited supporters, so keep an eye out for people who may be quieter. Ask them later how they feel. And don’t be discouraged if people are hesitant—it is natural to be apprehensive of change.

2. After an initial social gathering or two, host a more structured informational meeting. Discuss whether the neighborhood will want to consider a project and what roles people would be willing to take on. These are preliminary discussions about strategizing the way forward.

# Get to Know Your Community



Note that having an informational meeting does not mean that you will necessarily build anything in the neighborhood. Make sure people understand this.

A slideshow or other visual presentation about Intersection Repair projects and the larger context for building strong neighborhood connections, pictures, stories and personal experience goes a long way towards explaining this sometimes enigmatic project.

Again, you can conjecture what you want to do, but there must be an open-ended process so that everyone has ample opportunity to get involved, state their opinions and together decide how to move forward. Be patient and flexible—people need time for these things!



3. After initial social gatherings and an informational meeting, if people seem interested you can begin to focus the discussion on potential physical placemaking projects. It is important to consider the opinions and energy level of the neighborhood before you decide together to go ahead with the design process.

4. At about this time, you will want to communicate with your neighborhood association and let them know that you are starting this project. They can help you define some of the major questions that people will want answered, as well as connect you with others who may be of support.

5. The core group should then work with a facilitator to plan out the steps for moving forward with the design process. Refer to Chapter 4 for details about this process, and keep in mind that outreach efforts and feedback loops must continue throughout the entire project.

*The core group may be excited about a certain aesthetic or idea, but you must hold lightly until everyone can join the discussion. Sometimes people who are the catalysts are especially outgoing or passionate, and may even have design experience. Learning to let go of your attachment to your preconceived ideas is one of the most important things for a core organizer. Remember, you want to facilitate the entire community to create a reflection of its collective self.*



### BLOCK PARTIES: EPHEMERAL INTERSECTION REPAIRS

Block parties are a great way to get to know your neighbors, organize a project together, hang out in your neighborhood public space and have fun!! It is also a perfect opportunity to daydream with your neighbors about what elements you might want to build or organize in your neighborhood.

In Portland, the only thing you must do to close your street for a block party is to collect signatures of approval from 100% of the residences on the block and use Type Three barricades to close the street on the chosen day. The Office of Transportation street closure permit form must be submitted at least three weeks before the event.

#### Suggested Steps:

1. Invite your neighbors to a potluck or tea to discuss and plan the block party. At that first meeting, you should discuss: (a) which street to close. If you want to close the intersection, you must close each adjacent street, (b) Fun ideas! (see below for suggestions), (c) How you want to organize the various aspects of the party (food, activities, music, outreach/invitations, future projects, etc.).
2. Go door-to-door and invite neighbors to participate in the planning process. You may want to leave a flyer with the anticipated date, time and location of the party. Personalizing the invitation is always good. You can also use this time to collect signatures for the street closure.
3. On the initial flyer, ask for ideas from other neighbors about what they want to do and what they can contribute. Ask people to bring out grills for a BBQ, trash cans, plates, cups, tables, chairs, couches, porch furniture... anything to create your outdoor livingroom! Invite kids to bring out their favorite games.
4. Invite a representative from your neighborhood association. People appreciate hearing about the resources we have within our own communities. You could also invite a representative from your neighborhood coalition, City Repair or any other organization that may be of interest to the group. Everyone likes being invited to a party!
5. Hand out a reminder about ten days before the event, and then another the day before asking people to move their cars and reminding them what to bring.

Notes: Have a rain plan. You need a permit for amplified music, or to sell food. It is okay to have alcohol if you're not selling it, but you can ask for contributions! Think about what local businesses could donate – food, entertainment, coupons... they are a part of the neighborhood as well and would probably like to be included!



## Other Fun Ideas!

- Create a schedule of the day or make a menu
- Take photos to show people the next time you want to have a party (digital are great for web postings)
- Start the day with brunch in the street
- Create an annual street newsletter to let each other know what is happening in your lives
- Have kids interview the seniors (oral history)
- Invite kids to invite their friends—much livelier!
- Collect pets' names (and type of pet), addresses and phone numbers, so people know each other's pets—make a map! Have a dog race (owners at one end with treats)
- Set up a skill or tool sharing network, plant share system, babysitting/play groups, etc.
- Have a scavenger hunt, games, ice breakers
- Create a phone tree for emergencies (Help! I ran out of oregano!)
- Fill up a kiddie pool or put up a tree swing over the road
- Face painting and children's parade—bikes, streamers, hats etc.
- Provide sidewalk chalk to decorate the street
- Invite the fire/police department to visit
- Invite an organization to host a workshop: Lead testing, downspout safety, bike safety, street trees, Intersection Repair, tool/skill sharing etc.
- Have a potluck. One fun way is to split up categories. For example, you can say, "if your last name begins with A-G bring an appetizer, H-L bring drinks, etc."
- Do some asset mapping activities (refer to page 64)





## DO SOME RESEARCH

Rather than reinventing the wheel, take some time to do a little research and learn from others that have gone through the process before you. We have a few suggestions for broadening your understanding of placemaking and community decision-making processes.

### Learn from other Intersection Repair Communities

Dozens of communities have delved into Intersection Repair projects, with experiences and projects as diverse as the universe. It can be a tremendous support to talk with others to find out firsthand what it's like to knock on neighbors' doors, work with the City or bring together dozens of people in a community design process. The stories available to you are countless, and filled with invaluable tips and advice. Contact City Repair to connect with other Intersection Repairers. You are not alone!

### Visit "Great Places"

Take a field trip to the "great places" in your city or region—the places that attract people for lunchtime or picnics, gatherings or information sharing. Spend time in those places and observe the elements outlined in the questions on page 64. When you're looking for it, you can learn a lot about the qualities and attractions of a great place. Remember to use all of your senses!

Don't be timid about asking people in great places what they like about that place. You'll be surprised by both the simplicity and diversity of the answers, and you may even plant a "placemaking seed" in them, too!

### Explore the Work of Others

Various organizations consciously work to create place and bring the community together. Besides The City Repair Project, there are a handful of other organizations whose mission is to create place (refer to page 151 for details). We recommend learning how these organizations work and what tools they may have to offer. In addition, there are many local organizations working on various aspects of Intersection Repairs, including public art, pedestrian and bike-friendly transit, gardening, mediation and community building. Consider asking them for informational interviews and think about how their lessons could apply to your project.



## DEVELOPING A WALKING/BICYCLE TOUR FOR YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

*From City Repair Ottawa*

Goals: Define a tour that will both be of interest to local residents as well as visitors, and will help residents get to know their neighborhood better.

Distance: approx. 2 km for walking, 6 km for biking

Duration: About 1 hour

Sights/Sites: 12-15, depending on distance, complexity

Identify the sites to point out. These should be a good mix of the following:

- Landmarks (statues, markers, historical or memorial plaques)
- Heritage buildings
- The local community centre
- Interesting examples of the dominant architectural style of the homes in the area
- Examples of contrasting architecture (old and new, ornate and plain)
- Parks, courtyards, other small urban oases
- Gardens with interesting or elaborate design or having special plant types
- Significant locations (location of annual festivals, historical fire, local market)
- Unusual stores or businesses (artist's studio, a business that helps define the neighborhood, a long-time store, bakery, or cafe)
- Natural wonders (a very old tree, an exotic species such as a ginkgo)
- Local institutions (library, schools, colleges, police and fire stations)

Look for:

- Heritage plaques
- Particularly beautiful or surprising views



*Portland's "Benson Bubblers," brass drinking fountains which appear around downtown and inner neighborhoods, are one example of a landmark that imparts a history that is uniquely Portland.*



## Chapter 3

- Old buildings that have been converted to a different use (community centres are often reclaimed buildings. The Glebe, Ottawa South, and “de facto” community gathering places
- Front-yard art

Determine a route that takes you past the sites you have chosen. Keep the distance manageable for a broad range of age and fitness level. You do not have to start and end at the same place, but the starting point should be an area where a small gathering will not be in the way, and where seating is available. End where there is some vending or cafe service so people can get something to drink and sit down. Write directions or draw a map.

Collect information on each site and write up a short description. Individuals who have lived in the area a long time may be able to provide some facts of interest. The editor of the community paper may know of someone with an interest in the history of the area (perhaps someone even writes a column!) The local librarian or church staff members may be able to help.

If any of the sites require that the group enter private property such as the interiors of some buildings or private courtyards, include a contact name and phone number so that permission can be obtained. Indicate whether it is necessary to make an appointment.





## BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AND DRAW IN RESOURCES

Our cities are full of people and organizations that are already working to build community, strengthen our neighborhood fabric and address various social, ecological, political and cultural matters. Build upon this abundance! Collaborating with non-profits, government bureaus, schools, businesses and individuals can bring extensive resources, technical support, and unexpected gifts to your project. Remember, everyone loves a neighborhood effort—you are giving people the opportunity to join in the fun!

### Neighborhood Associations

Formal neighborhood associations are fairly recent structures with respect to the growth and development of cities. The emergence of this structure is part of a process of reclaiming village culture and local power that typify great places. In Portland, our unusually strong neighborhood associations are our most local advocates and powerful voice to the larger City governmental structure. Placemaking projects like Intersection Repair provide a direct tool to connect City bureaus with neighborhood life and culture.

Placemaking projects inadvertently (or sometimes intentionally) build strong local leadership and power. When people realize their own power to change the place in which they live and collaborate with various components of our society (businesses, government, non-profits and our own neighbors) we begin to reaffirm the system of true democracy. We reclaim ourselves as active citizens and become authoritative agents in our City's decision-making system. A functional City government can only thrive if it is based on the input and needs of the people who live there. The few blocks of people around an Intersection Repair project become active and engaged in local life, which they can funnel to a neighborhood association. Neighborhood associations may be great partners and sources of support with a placemaking project.

*"In recognition of the hard work of organizing and staging the activities for community volunteers, I learned that the best leverage is to connect with efforts already underway by other people with similar missions. Those are the assets that I began to discover in working with The City Repair Project and our Seattle Department of Neighborhoods grant work. The better we do in making these connections with other like-minded organizations, the more effective we can be with the little time we have to do our work, and still have a little something left over at the end of the day for ourselves."*

*—Cynthia Shick,  
Seattle City Repair  
organizer*



*“Despite its unusual start, the [Intersection Repair] project proved so attractive and compelling in the way that it addressed long standing livability issues, it immediately gained support from the mayor and myself... The way the project has successfully reinterpreted public space through this unique context for participation has revolutionized the way we involve citizens and enact place-making in Portland.”*

—Charlie Hales,  
Portland City  
Commissioner

## City Bureaus

City government exists to reflect, develop and support the will of the people. Bureaus were created to specialize in administering various responsibilities of civic services. Bureau decision-making depends on good public involvement.

Working with City agencies should be an accessible and transparent process, but many people are intimidated by seemingly daunting bureaucracy. Good relationships with key City departments are invaluable – and this can often happen via non-profit or other liaison organizations. In Portland, organizations like City Repair and our neighborhood coalitions have strong connections with the City, and fill this liaison role for smaller neighborhood projects. These relationships have helped impact both neighborhood empowerment and how the City makes decisions that affect neighborhoods.

Please refer to the Permitting section, page 127, for more details about the relationship between Intersection Repair and the Portland Office of Transportation.

## Businesses

The traditional role of local businesses is to support the community as local centers of natural and economic capital. Businesses, just like any other local stakeholder, want to be involved and give what they can to great neighborhood projects. The key is to make it an attractive partnership for everyone. And as with anyone, involve businesses in your neighborhood in your Intersection Repair process early.

Many people feel intimidated to ask for donations. Remember that most businesses are used to being asked and will probably have a procedure they follow. Besides monetary and in-kind donations, businesses can provide surprisingly powerful political endorsements and support with direct involvement. In return, you are opening up for them a connection to their local community and promoting their business.

Look around at the businesses in your neighborhood and others in town that are known for supporting community projects. It's likely that there are also many business associations throughout your city or town; their monthly meetings are good forums for connecting with local business owners. Like neighborhood associations, you can also

# Get to Know Your Community



call ahead and ask for time on their meeting agenda to discuss your project.

A note of caution: be aware with whom and how you link. Sometimes businesses have a strong commercial, political or corporate orientation that may deter relationships with certain funders, City agencies or other groups. Most locally-owned businesses make great partners.

Refer to page 122 for more information on soliciting donations.

## Schools

Schools are traditional centers of community life. At schools of all levels people come together, families are involved, lifelong friendships are made and place is sacred. There are many benefits to tapping into these existing place-based communities. Schools are ideal settings for large projects to bring the whole community together with their access to space, amenities and connections to neighbors. When schools are partners, they are able to activate the culture and administration of the school and utilize these resources at little to no cost. Students are then encouraged to get involved and spend more time in their own communities.

Some specific ideas for working with levels of various schools:

**Elementary/middle schools:** Every project needs to provide a service-learning aspect or relate to students' curriculum in other ways. Focus areas include: technology, environmental issues, art, ecology, community building, architecture, social studies or government studies.

**High schools:** Activate classes and student groups who can get credit for their work. Many student groups look for year-long projects.

**Universities:** Activate classes and populations who can get credit for their work. Connect with individual students, student groups, faculty, or staff. Examples of past neighborhood placemaking-university partnerships include:

- A whole class contributing active service to a neighborhood while studying placemaking
- A class doing social science research with door-to-door surveys



Portland City Commissioner Sam Adams rolls up his pants to make cob at a neighborhood block party.



## Chapter 3

in the neighborhood

- An anthropology class excavating a site before construction
- Graduate students coordinating aspects of a project as part of a masters thesis
- Individuals helping with specific aspects of the project for their class work, including grant writing, public involvement documents and environmental assessments
- Faculty members organizing large events at the university

Future ideas: photography students to document the process, art or design students to donate time, expertise or materials and language students to offer translation services

We've seen that high school, university students and faculty/staff sometimes become personally involved in these projects and stay part of the ongoing community!

### Non-profits

The interdisciplinary nature of Intersection Repair projects offers many opportunities for organizations to partner. Non-profits can help build community in many aspects: areas of expertise, resources, community relations, advice, experience and more. Since no single non-profit organization can undertake all dimensions of urban life, partnering with certain groups that are of particular relevance will strengthen your project.

Non-profits will get involved with projects that further their own goals, so do your homework before you approach them. And as with most organizations, non-profits and activists have limited time and resources, but if your project is clear, compelling and do-able they will likely engage and find creative ways to contribute. Like businesses, non-profits also benefit from increased exposure.

### Unlikely Partners

You'd be surprised at who turns out to be your greatest supporters. There are vast resources and opportunities around you. Be open to the possibilities and find out what's there! Look around you at who

# Get to Know Your Community



uses or passes through your neighborhood space and think creatively about who may have an interest in helping you to improve it.

A potential set of unlikely partners are the people who come out in opposition to the project at first. Once they feel heard and realize that they have a voice and the power to co-create the project, they sometimes turn into your strongest advocates. Strong energy around a project needs an outlet; try to find ways that work that energy into something that benefits the community as a whole.

**SECTION D**  
FRIDAY MAY 30, 1997

## The Oregonian

# LIVING

Television • Entertainment • People • Advice

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### Psst, wanna new piazza place in your neighborhood?

No anchovies, hold the olives — just food for your soul

**M**ark Lakeman is a man of modest ambition. He doesn't want to change the world. He just wants to change his city.

In this soft-spoken architect of soaring talent, Lakeman did his time with some of Portland's finest before taking off in 1980 to travel the globe.

On his return, he sank roots into Sellwood, a neighborhood of artists. Armed with neither gams nor grants — just passion — Lakeman's coming soon to a neighborhood near you.

Be warned: The guy's got pedigree. He did, after all, design a pioneer urban planner whose signature is etched on Waterfront Park and Pioneer Courthouse Square.

His mother, Sandra Day Lakeman, is an expert in pizzas.

She's a pizza — plazas.

An architectural historian, Sandra Lakeman specializes in the glory of the trademark public spaces of Italy. And it's public space — and the lack of it — that lights Mark Lakeman on fire.

On his first day in the Lo-March, he picked up a can of paint and turned a four-way intersection in Sellwood into a laboratory.

After abandoning architecture in 1980, Lakeman wandered the world. In the rain forest of Chiapas, he worked with Mayan people, an experience he describes as "profoundly transformative."

He underwent the catharsis common to First Worlders who spend time among preindustrial people. He was so enchanted with the abiding aura of community in tribal culture, the lack of competitiveness, the absence of crime, the lack of competitiveness.

For Lakeman, this led to S.E. Ninth Avenue at Sherrett Street, where he opened his assault by painting the intersection red.

And then Orange. Yellow. White.

At first City Hall was outraged.

Then City Hall fell in love.

The resulting "piazza" is not just some visual trick brushed on asphalt. It's a spiritual, political, and geographic empire, a guerrilla attack on the city grid plan, an urban design rooted, Lakeman says, in militaristic Sparta.

The grid, Lakeman says, with its intrinsic lack of community, is as structurally, then emotionally, dead as from traffic racing along residential streets to criminals prowling neighborhoods of strangers.

Lakeman's piazza has spawned a dazzling variety of craft apparel, a bookshop, a library, an art market, a vegetable market, even a baby-sitting bulletin board. And his revolution has launched a road tour, in a pickup disguised as a giant butterfly.

The giant's next appearance will be Monday evening in Couch Park.

All this culminates June 21 in an event called the City Repair Project (231-5609). Before gathering at everyone's favorite plaza, Pioneer Courthouse, participants and spectators hope to have hands around the city, crossing the Ross Island and Broadway bridges, extending 20 blocks on each side of the river.

How many people will it take?

Says Lakeman: "About half a Blazer game."

*On days when he's not spaced out, you can reach Jonathan Nicholas by phone at 231-6533.*



# Design and Create

# CHAPTER 4



*From concept to form  
From abstract to tangible  
From mind to hand  
From design to implementation*

## DEVELOP A VISION: COMMUNITY DESIGN

Transforming community conversations into an actual, built neighborhood gathering place is an exciting and dynamic process. This is the time when you manifest people's sparks and visions into physical reality. Design is about the making of things that are memorable and have a presence in the world. Placemaking is based on the belief that everyone is a designer and a good design should serve social interaction and cultural development. The dynamic aspect of the process is finding ways to harness everyone's individual skills and ideas to develop a unified vision for the neighborhood.

It takes an entire community to create the place for community; therefore, the public involvement process is essential to the design process. A design process interwoven with multiple feedback loops will ensure that everyone's ideas are incorporated into the vision. As with the initial community engagement process, you will want to offer numerous opportunities for people to contribute before, during and after each community meeting.

### Everyone is a Designer

A remarkable feature of the human species is our ability to respond to different environments. Adaptation to myriad forces, including topography, climate and weather patterns, available resources, social structures, traditions, cultural expressions and political and economic circumstances has resulted in the creation of places, i.e. placemaking.



## Chapter 4

African village centers, Italian piazzas, Turkish bazaars, nomadic Bedouin campsites, Native American ceremonial mounds, Chinese gardens, even some suburban strip mall “town centers” have all evolved as gathering spaces generated by local circumstances.

Since more than half of the world’s population now lives in urban environments, it is vital to our humanity that cities are attractive, functional and stimulating places to live. Urban planners and developers may generate interesting projects, but it is essential that those people living within a community “self-create” features of their own environment.

By responding sensitively and intuitively to the existing qualities of a site, a community can express itself with a place design that connects them meaningfully to the location in a timeless manner. And when a community creates its own place, the people living there are far more likely to enjoy, use and become stewards of that place.

Everyone is a designer. We all make design choices in our daily lives—brushing a hairstyle, making fashion attire choices, adding spices to a meal, decorating a bedroom, planting a flowerbed. These all require aesthetic choices and design decisions; everyone’s collective contributions can unite to create a great place. Perhaps a person likes to doodle, is a creative visionary, is skilled at engaging people in conversation or simply likes to use public space: we all have experiences and intuition to know what we like and need in our places.

### Community Design Process Overview

The design process involves a series of steps in which ideas evolve into designs, moving from the general to the specific. A series of design workshops with strategies for soliciting feedback in between is recommended.

Look to your neighborhood’s pool of creative and energetic members to get the design process started. It might be helpful to engage a trained placemaking facilitator to help you through this process. You should pick a facilitator as a group so that everyone feels comfortable with that person. This facilitator should commit to working with you throughout the entire process. Many cities and local non-profits have resources for providing facilitation for community projects.



Your group may also want the support of designers or architects who can help your group manifest visions into technical drawings for permitting and building. Again, first try to activate the skills and talents in your own neighborhood. Or ask local architects and artists if they could help you hold a design workshop for your neighborhood's project; arts organizations are also good networks for finding this kind of technical support. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the "experts" are there to help you and your neighbors create your own project and design, not to actually design it for you.

## Timeline

Your group should work out a detailed schedule for the design process, including specific phases, goals and a timeline (dates of meetings, decision deadlines, etc). List resources and other items you need for each step. This will be helpful to pace and focus your group, have goals and a schedule to meet them and allow neighbors to participate and give their input in a timely manner. A facilitator or someone who has already been through this process can be very helpful.

It is important that your timeline be realistic so that it can be your guide. Don't forget to consider holidays and other activities in your lives that may affect the project schedule. It's okay for your timeline to change as you go (and if so, make sure to inform all of your neighbors!), but try to make expectations as realistic as possible.

You will want to find a balance between keeping the process steadily evolving (which, if too quick, could make people feel excluded and rushed) and dragging things out (after months of meetings, people may get antsy for action). Be careful about being too eager to get to the building stage; a good public involvement process takes considerable time. Depending on the season and your neighborhood involvement, leave yourself at least three months for just the design phase of your first built project. Expect to host at least two to four design meetings with the full neighborhood group and possibly several more meetings in between to refine ideas. And remember that you want to schedule meetings when people can make them—usually this means weekends or evenings, planned well in advance.

## Consider centers of energy:

*What makes these places so vital and alive?*

*London: Piccadilly Circus, Leicester Square*

*Paris: Notre Dame, banks of the Seine*

*New York: Central Park, Times Square*

*Tokyo: Ginza, Roppongi*

*Remember that it took decades or even centuries for these great places to develop.*



### DESIGNING YOUR PLACE

#### **Observation: Pay attention!**

The beginning of any design process starts with observation. Encourage neighbors to spend time outside on the streets and sidewalks. You could begin with a walking tour of common neighborhood spaces so you can discuss elements that you like and don't like, things you notice, things you would like to see happen.

As you observe the public places in your neighborhood and community, you could take photos of noteworthy elements. These will help during the design workshops, or may even be the beginning of a neighborhood scrapbook!

Spend time in the space that you have in mind for a possible project and encourage others to think about how it could be used differently. Conduct a visual assessment of your community. Observe the character and unique qualities of your community, such as landmarks, public spaces, streetscapes, historic buildings and landscapes. Markers or other visual cues can signal transitions between neighborhoods and provide neighborhood identity. In this way you'll develop a clearer idea about what already works and doesn't work in the space, and what its potential is.

The following series of questions will help you identify the assets and needs of that space. You can answer these questions individually, in small groups or as a large group discussion. We highly recommend doing this activity outside in the space on which you are focusing. Two other great ideas for observation are the neighborhood permaculture walk (page 159) and the neighborhood walk/bike tour (page 51).

#### *Observation Questions*

#### **Comfort/Safety/Maintenance**

- Is this space comfortable to linger in? What elements might be added to create a more comfortable gathering spot; for example benches, chairs, tables, water?
- Do you feel physically safe and have a perception of safety when in the space?



- Is there evidence of someone taking ownership or special care for a particular aspect of the area?

## Activities

- What activities happen in this space and at what time of the day?
- Is there anything about this space that encourages or discourages certain activities?
- What special or seasonal occurrences may there be (leaf raking, Christmas caroling, lemonade stands, kids in summer)?
- Are there commonly accepted rules or guidelines for using the space?

## Access/Circulation Patterns

- What pedestrian modes of transportation exist?
- How do the vehicular, pedestrian and bicycling patterns interact?
- How does this area connect with the greater fabric of the neighborhood?

## Environment

- What do you see, hear and smell?
- How does sun move across the space in each season? What kind of vegetation is growing?
- Is water present, in either a good or bad way (such as the sound of





## Chapter 4

### Sample Template for Outdoor Observation Gathering

*Materials: handouts with observation questions, pens.*

*Observation on site can be done individually, in small groups, or as a larger group discussion.*

*Look at these elements on site, followed with discussion on each topic. You can also use the observation questions on page 62.*

- a. *Spirit of the place*
- b. *Civic Life/Uses and Activities—the role in the greater fabric*
- c. *Cultural Needs*
- d. *Safety/Accessibility*
- e. *Ecology/Nature*
- f. *Stewardship/Management/Ownership*
- g. *Patterns of activity—pedestrian and transit flow*
- h. *Wild Ideas!!*

*Discuss next steps for continued observation at different times/seasons/locations in the neighborhood.*

water, the flooding of the street during storms, kids playing in puddles)?

- What is the lighting like at night and how does it feel to be in this space during the later hours?

**People**

- Who goes out? When and why?
- Do the people that currently use this space represent the full diversity of the neighborhood?
- Are people in groups or alone, and is there a pattern you recognize?
- How many people do you think use this area per day, and how?

#### **Spirit of the Place/Culture Characteristics**

- What do you like best about this place?
- How does the place reflect the identity of and serve the broad diversity of the neighborhood?

#### **Improvements**

- What are three things that you would do to improve this place that could be easily done and wouldn't cost a lot?
- What changes would you make in the long-term that would have the biggest impact?
- What wild ideas do you have for this place?

### Asset Mapping

Before diving into any project, you will want to thoroughly explore the extent of resources in your own neighborhood; “asset mapping” is both fundamental and deeply rewarding.

An asset map is an inventory of the strengths and gifts, both tangible and intangible, of the people and places that make up a community.



Assets may be people (their gifts, skills and capabilities), physical structures, natural resources, institutions, businesses or informal organizations. Asset mapping documents the resources of the entire community and highlights the interconnections among them, which in turn reveals how to access those assets.

There are many fun activities you can use to get to know each other better as you discover the secrets of your neighborhood. Some activities are active and investigative, others are gentler ways to observe the more subtle aspects of neighborhood life. Be creative with these and make up new activities for your own community!

### *Activity: Who's Who?*

This activity will give you a visual representation of who lives in your neighborhood, and a little information about each household.

Draw or print out a large map of your neighborhood (several square feet). You can also print out several smaller maps and tape them together. (In Portland, you can get maps of the city on [www.portland-maps.com](http://www.portland-maps.com) or [www.myportlandneighborhood.org](http://www.myportlandneighborhood.org)). Make sure that the map includes property lot lines or outlines of houses and buildings. You will want to have enough room at or near each house for people to fill in information about themselves.

Create a list of the categories for which you hope to gain information. Write this list on the map, or write each category in each house spot. People are more likely to "fill in blanks."

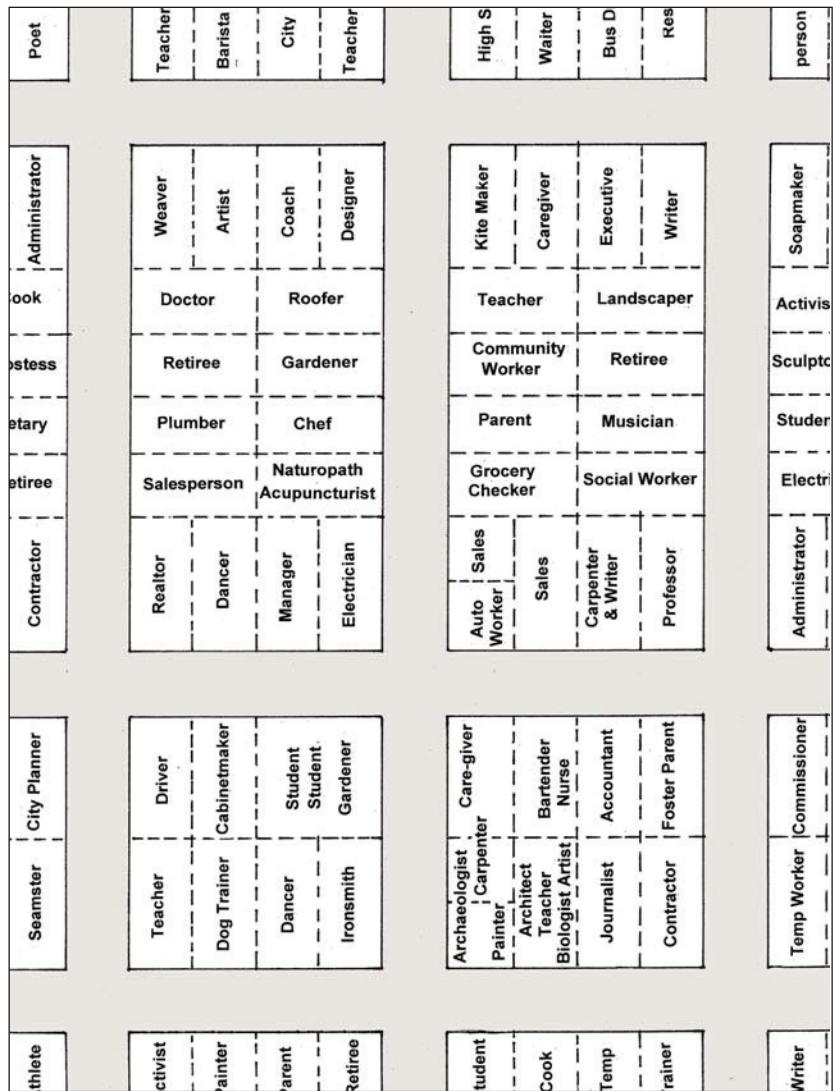
Some suggestions for categories:

- Names of everyone in the household
- Ages of children
- Names and types of pets

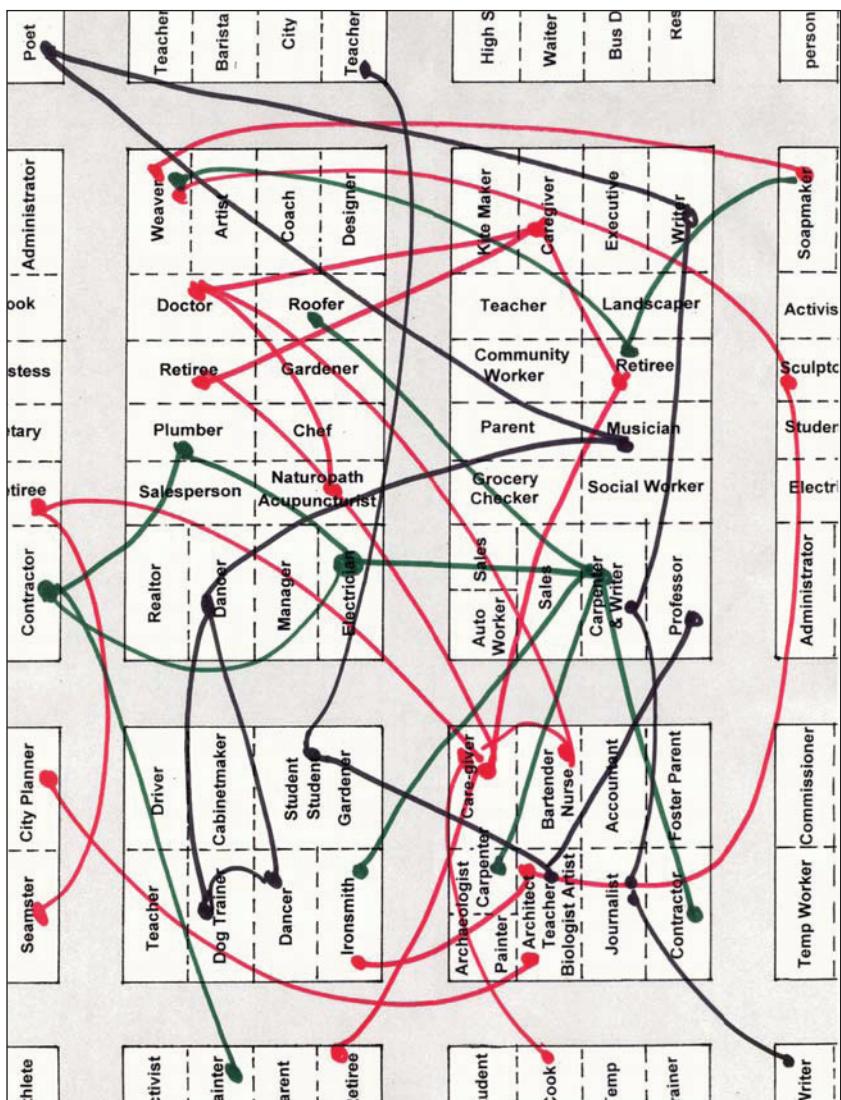
Give everyone pens, pencils, crayons, etc. and encourage them to fill in their information! Bring this map to each neighborhood gathering and fill in the blanks or make changes as needed.



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To help everyone get to know their neighbors better, the residents organizing Share-It Square put together a map identifying the occupations of everyone in the neighborhood. Doing this exercise, many people realized for the first time what a diversity of talents and experiences there were right around them.



When people started seeing similarities among neighbors and drew connecting lines (linking carpenters with plumbers, students with teachers, retirees with caregivers), something completely new was realized: if people knew each other better, they might be able to meet some of their needs closer to home—needs that they currently met by traveling around the city. Building community suddenly looked like it could have some interesting far-reaching results, from reducing car trips, to intra-neighborhood trade and barter, to the neighborhood itself functioning like a village.



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### *Activity: Skills And Interests*

Learn about the skills and interests of your neighbors. Often you can find people with similar interests or find the help you need right within your neighborhood, saving you trips across town and strengthening your local community!

This activity can be done in conjunction with the “Who’s who” activity, or you can do it on a separate large map. On this sheet, give people pens and ask everyone to write down skills or interests that they have. They could write down their profession(s) (i.e. “carpenter,” “writer”), hobbies and passions (i.e. “skier,” “painter,” “singer”) or interests they want to explore.

### *Activity: Give And Take*

You can do this activity on a neighborhood map or just make a list. Here you generate things people have to give or lend, and things people need or would like to learn. Designate someone to connect people as appropriate, or post the list at a neighborhood bulletin board or someone’s front porch or yard.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone, address or email: \_\_\_\_\_

Things I have to give or lend out: \_\_\_\_\_

Things I would like to borrow: \_\_\_\_\_

Things I can teach others: \_\_\_\_\_

Things I would like to learn: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Activity: Hopes, Dreams, Concerns*

Here’s an activity to let people daydream about what they wish for their neighborhood—all of their deepest hopes for how the neighborhood may look, function or feel. Encourage people not to be restrained by laws, money or “the way things are.”

You should also create a space for people to share their concerns about the neighborhood. These concerns can inform you about things you may want to work on as a neighborhood. This is a time for general



sharing and should be used as guidance or suggestions in the process of improving your neighborhood, but should not replace a more formal time for sharing ideas and concerns.

### *Activity: Fill In The Blanks*

<b>Hands/Skills</b> (what you know how to do)	<b>Head</b> (what you like to think about)
<b>Heart/Passions</b> (what you love to do)	<b>Gifts</b> (things you can give or share)
<b>Place you love to be</b> (and why)	<b>Fun Projects and Ideas</b> (go wild!)
<b>Resources</b> (other people)	<b>Resources</b> (businesses, non-profits, etc)

### *Activity: Places We Love*

Ask people to write down places they love to hang out in the town or city, and why. This will get people thinking about what makes a place great! And, it's fun!

### *Activity: Ice Breaker Game*

Hand out five small slips of paper to each person and have them write one thing about themselves on each slip (for example, "I love pistachio ice cream." "I've been to five continents." "I have an "O" gauge railroad train set in my basement." "My middle name is Esmerelda."). Then put all the slips in a bag, mix them up, and have each person draw five. The first person to match all five slips with the rightful owner wins!

### *Activity: Community Vision*

Imagine community in all the ways that you could dream it to be, regardless of what you see as possible or historic. Imagine it now,



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### Some ideas sparked by asset mapping

- *Progressive dinners: moving through the neighborhood, eating one part of a meal at each house.*
- *Babysitting networks*
- *Co-op gardening*
- *Work party pot-lucks: a group of neighbors that meet one half day a month to help each other with household projects. Each month rotates houses.*
- *Classes or a book club*
- *Holiday caroling*

when you were a child and when you grow older. Imagine the services it would provide you, the structure that it might have and the qualities it would carry. How would you integrate with this community, what would be your role? How would this community serve and belong to your neighbors and who they are? Hold this image in your mind and look within it to see the places and the activities that are there. What are people doing and where are they doing it? Live in this vision as you participate in the growing of your neighborhood community.

#### *Activity: Communication Trees*

Review the various communication methods described on page 108. Create a map or database of people's preferred communication means and explore effective ways to encourage a web or tree of communique.

#### **When to Use the Activities**

*On flyers and invitations to the neighborhood:* You can use some of these questions and activities to prepare and excite your neighbors to attend gatherings.

*At a neighborhood gathering:* You can run them one at a time with a facilitator to help people brainstorm, or set them up at separate tables (with very clear instructions) and ask people to spend 5-10 minutes at each table, writing down their ideas. Use a timer and tell people when to switch tables. It is also a good idea to have a facilitator at each table to answer questions and keep the focus. Note: some activities, such as neighborhood mapping, work best as a whole group because each shared idea tends to spark others.

*Out on your street:* Ask these questions to neighbors when you see each other in your front yards or sidewalks. Leave questionnaires at a bulletin board or a neighbor's porch and have a safe drop box for completed forms. Post a big neighborhood map and ask passers-by to fill it in!

Be creative and have fun with these activities!!



## Set Goals

It is very helpful to create a written mission statement that communicates succinctly the identity and design aspirations of the neighborhood. In a sentence or paragraph, solidify the objective(s) of your group and your vision for the future.

Begin your workshops by explaining the reasons why you started this project and a short discussion on what placemaking means to everyone. Emphasize that anything is possible—this is great inspiration! If you are in the Pacific Northwest you might want to ask City Repair to present a short slideshow about the context of these ideas and share images and stories about great public places around the world. Afterwards, discuss people's reactions and the reoccurring elements of these places.

From these general ideas and feelings, you can gradually move towards more detail about your project. Here, you want to work as a group to create a vision for the physical, social and psychological developments you want to make in your neighborhood. You will want to define what you consider to be the impacted neighborhood area, where the focus of the project will be and who the people involved currently are and will be.

Goal setting can be challenging when the possibilities are vast, the groups' initial ideas are diverse and the process ahead of you seems vague. Keep your goals broad so that everyone can identify with them without needing to decide on the detailed physical outcomes. Your goals could be intangible: "we want a place that feels safe and friendly." Or they could be tangible: "we need places to sit." By taking the time in the beginning of the project to set common goals, they can later serve as guidelines for decision-making and prioritization.

As you gather initial data about the site and define your assets and needs, you may be tempted to discuss ideas and details. Be careful about getting into too much detail before you have worked out the deeper common goals for the project.



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### Design: General to Specific

#### *Brainstorm*

After you have established your goals and general vision, the next workshop should include a big brainstorm. This is the time for listing any and all ideas people have about the project.

Brainstorming can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups, and with toys, photos and various art mediums for people to play with to spark ideas. If you have brainstorming sessions in small groups, make sure to allow time for the groups to report their ideas back to the whole group.

*There will be many phases of this project—let things evolve naturally!*

Remember, all ideas are valid in the brainstorm; leave critique for later. Now is the time for dreaming big and broadly!

#### *Moving toward detail*

Once you've done some initial brainstorming, take each element and expand it. This moves the discussion from general to detail, back to general and then to more detail. For example, if someone suggested "places to sit," you can ask what this might mean to people. Someone may quickly suggest "bench," but allow yourselves to keep the discussion going in order to encourage many ideas for "places to sit." Get creative!

*It is very important to follow the basic guidelines for brainstorming:*

*Every idea is a good one. People are free to suggest anything at all and no commentary is allowed at this time.*

*Ideas do not have to seem reasonable or feasible. Ridiculous ideas often spark achievable projects. And forget (for the time being) about codes, rules, money or "the way things are." The evaluation of ideas will come later.*

*Encourage everyone to contribute! At some point, ask people who have not yet spoken if they have anything they want to share.*

One idea for narrowing the discussion after a brainstorm is to "dot vote." Voting with small dot stickers allows each person to have a voice in the decisions, and is a good visual representation of the general direction of the group. There are many ways to dot vote. One possibility is to hand out a specific number of stickers to each person. Another is to give each person three different colored sticker dots: one for "I like this idea," one for "I don't like this idea" and one for "I like this idea with some change." Though everyone's suggestions get voted on, no ideas are necessarily eliminated yet. This is



## SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR FIRST FORMAL NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

Material needs: slideshow equipment, large paper and markers, tape, sign in sheet for contact info, handouts: Intersection Repair Primer, asset and neighborhood mapping worksheets.

*Note: this meeting would happen after a series of more informal social events.*

1. Introductions and context/background of the meeting.
2. Slideshow (can also be shown at the end). City Repair has an inspiring slideshow about the context of community, social ecology, history, the story of City Repair and Intersection Repair and lots of examples.
3. Visioning Session
  - a. Observation – People
    - i. Who's here in the room, who's not here and who would we want to involve in this process.
    - ii. Asset mapping activities: interests and skills of people in room. Acknowledge varied skill sets—a good accountant can be as valuable as an artisan or carpenter for the creation of a project.
  - b. Visioning/analysis – Looking at the neighborhood/fabric of the landscape. What do you like about the neighborhood/what would you change?
    - i. Analysis of the neighborhood with map: boundaries, gateways, monuments, activity nodes. How can we link these together?
    - ii. Social ecology of the neighborhood: what networks and nodes are present? What do people do, and want to do with each other?
    - iii. Sustainability: what does this mean for your neighborhood? This can be economic, sociopolitical, ecological, etc. How does each house relate to the whole of the neighborhood?
    - iv. Contextual analysis looking at the bigger picture: Discuss places we love, why, what make them fun, scale, texture, natural features, etc.
4. Goal setting – Discussion: where are we, what do we want to achieve, what are some sustainable practices and resources to achieve these goals? Start by dreaming big, and then over the next series of meetings work into do-able, incremental steps toward your goal(s).
5. Conclusion/next steps: a go-round of how people feel, etc. Set next meeting.



### SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR DESIGN WORKSHOP (OR SERIES OF WORKSHOPS)

Materials: Site map, tape, art supplies, wall space (to hang designs)

Roles: Facilitator, “Visualizer” (draw ideas), Notetaker

Possible handouts: Intersection Repair Primer, neighborhood mapping worksheet, Placemaking Toolkit, Chartering Process (personal and group)

1. Introductions and context of this meeting.
2. Community design process (note: this is a lot for one meeting; consider breaking this into two or three sessions)
  - a. Brainstorming session: all ideas on the table!
  - b. Refinements: what is appropriate for the site, what is do-able, etc.
  - c. Create visual representations of possibilities, sketch or model form.
  - d. Analyze designs, critique and refine. Try for consensual design; a few variations okay.
  - e. Discuss programmatic activities, events, ideas.
  - f. Try to get a quality rendering together for community review.
3. Discussion: stewardship of the process and the place
  - a. Community decision-making
  - b. Maintenance
  - c. Outreach
4. Next steps
  - a. How to share what you did today to the larger group/neighborhood (deepen relationships). Display design options at local venues: community center, café, school, newspaper or neighborhood newsletter, art center, etc...
  - b. Discuss assets that are not in-house, including people (various skill areas), allies (organizations, businesses, non-profits, government) and abundant local materials.

Note: People will feel more included when they understand that the process and information is freely shared with everyone. Share documentation of every step. Good photographic or graphic representation is essential for good communication, publicity, grant applications and fundraising!



A2 (NEWS)

Portland Tribune Tuesday, September 25, 2001



Neighbors help paint a giant sunflower at the intersection of Southeast 33rd Avenue and Yamhill Street on Saturday. The revived intersection, called Sunnyside Plaza, is the first stage of a project to slow traffic, decrease crime and foster community spirit in the neighborhood.

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## Neighborhood shows sunny side

**Resident group hopes new sign attracts positive attention**

By CRISTINE GONZALEZ  
The Tribune

**Sunnyside neighborhood began to live up to its name Saturday.**

More than two dozen neighborhood residents spent the day painting an elaborate sunflower design over the intersection of Southeast 33rd Avenue and Yamhill Street in bright yellow and green.

The revived intersection, called Sunnyside Plaza, is the first stage of a three-phase plan to slow

traffic, decrease crime and foster community spirit in a neighborhood that has gone through some challenges in recent years.

"This is a symbol of our identity as a neighborhood," said Jan Semenza, a Portland State University professor and member of the 33rd/Yamhill Neighborhood Group. "And it is something we can do as a community to counteract all these negative forces in society."

More than a year ago, the neighborhood caused a row when it complained that free dinners offered at the Sunnyside Centenary United Methodist Church attracted troublemakers to the area.

Although the matter was settled through mediation, some residents say that visitors continue to display unwelcome behavior.

Not long after, Semenza began

having weekly Sunday brunches at his home to encourage relationships among neighbors.

It didn't take long for everyone in the group to identify key elements of the neighborhood they didn't appreciate: hearing drunks in the streets late at night, passing by parked cars with passengers inside doing drugs, and street litter.

After eight months, they named themselves the 33rd/Yamhill Neighborhood Group and hatched the neighborhood enhancement project.

The plan calls on residents to beautify the area with the Sunnyside Plaza, planters installed in parking lanes, trellises at street corners, curb extensions and locally made art in front yards.

It quickly gained support from the Sunnyside neighborhood as-

sociation and City Repair Project, a nonprofit organization that helps communities and individuals creatively transform the places where they live.

"We wanted to make people aware of the paths they take every day," said resident Kevan Mizani, 34. "When their paths take them through this intersection, they will enter a positive space."

The more positive attention at the intersection, residents theorized, would discourage negative public behavior in the area.

On Saturday, they began at 8 a.m. by laying out the outline of the sunflower. By noon, volunteers were splashed with paint. They handed out pamphlets to passers-by. And Semenza filmed the event from the attic of his house, which overlooks the intersection.

The gigantic sunflower design has an inner circle with a 20-foot radius and petals that reach as long as 12 feet. It was designed by a team of neighbors, some of whom are architects and design professionals. Local artist Brian Borrello constructed the template used to lay the pattern over the intersection.

The bright space is a perfect gathering place for block parties and other community events that would require the neighborhood to close down the intersection.

"This entire experience has been a good example of neighborhood residents working with city officials to affect change," Semenza said. "It's been truly gratifying."

Contact Cristine Gonzalez at [cgonzalez@portlandtribune.com](mailto:cgonzalez@portlandtribune.com).



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simply a way to start your discussion with the most commonly agreed upon ideas.

*At any point in the design process you always have the option to choose NOT to physically build anything. Simply talking with neighbors will build community.*

### *Helping people express their ideas*

Many people feel uncomfortable expressing themselves through drawing. Encourage people to express themselves in any way they feel inspired. Ask them what tools they might want to help communicate and spark their ideas. Provide a variety of methods and materials for people to choose from. You can also ask people who are more comfortable drawing graphics to team up with others to help get their ideas communicated. Do your best to create the space for everyone to give input!

As you discuss each element, you should provide multiple methods for people to explore ideas. Some suggestions include:

- Ask people to bring things that they have already thought about or sketched
- Bring clippings from magazines for examples
- Get some library books with examples of designs and styles
- Encourage people to draw or write relationships between elements (such as “put a small game table near the bench”) without the formal plans defined
- Provide big pieces of paper in the middle of the room for people to draw ideas
- Provide crayons, markers, play-dough or clay, sticks, stones, yarn, post-it notes, etc.
- Cut out or draw cardboard representations of your street or intersection. You can even



Neighbors reporting back from small group brainstorms



draw the sidewalk and curb lines and note major elements such as telephone poles, fire hydrants, lights, driveways, walls, trees, etc. This may help people experiment with models of the area.

- Share sketches from other neighborhoods' brainstorms for other ideas (sometimes it's easier to start with something other than a blank canvas!)
- Have a separate group for kids or integrate them into the whole discussion

## Visualize

Visualization, by drawing or modeling, is a primary design tool. This is a way to gather, select and organize information into a comprehensive plan.

*When in doubt,  
listen to the kids.*





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*"I went to a job interview and found myself talking about how I would create a community of people to get the work done. I was speaking "City Repair language" in my job interview! Quite suddenly I found myself hired into a pretty amazing position that I never dreamed I would land."*

—Cynthia Shick,  
Seattle City Repair  
organizer

hensible form. Creating a visual shorthand for expressing complex concepts – articulating in two or three dimensional representation the wide ranging and numerous verbal expressions of your community – will help people get onto the same page and relate to each person's ideas.

This is a great time to utilize the skills of visualization facilitators – artists, architects, designers – to help with the technical aspects of transforming ideas into visual expression. If you cannot find someone in your neighborhood who can serve this role, try your local college or university art, design, architecture or urban planning departments. You can also enlist local professionals to volunteer, or there may be local organizations such as the Charette Institute who can help.

Possible products of visualizations include:

- Sketches, doodles on cocktail napkins—stick figures are okay
- Plan, elevation and perspective drawings
- Scale models: clay, wood, toothpicks, found objects
- Space plan
- Samples or examples of materials and construction
- Structural detail drawings. These are helpful, if not necessary, for engineering and review for permitting, particularly if you are building something large and overhead.
- Construction drawings or shop drawings (for construction, material and budget estimating)
- Landscape plan drawings



### *Small groups*

Small group discussions are often effective ways to formulate ideas and allow more people to speak. Sometimes shy people feel more comfortable in smaller groups. You can break up into small groups at almost any stage of the process. Often, it is effective to have small group brainstorms and then have each group report back to the whole group with their favorite ideas. The common links among groups are



## NEIGHBORHOOD MAPPING

Each Intersection Repair community has an opportunity to build connections with the existing physical fabric of the neighborhood.

This page provides information about how to create a map of neighborhood amenities, places and other important features. This is a fun exercise to begin the Intersection Repair process because it is usually very easy for everyone to participate in labeling places in the neighborhood. It is a great conversation starter, and often leads to interesting realizations about a neighborhood's special places.

1. Begin by finding a map of the entire neighborhood surrounding your intersection. (In Portland, maps are available at [www.portland-maps.com](http://www.portland-maps.com) or [www.myportlandneighborhood.org](http://www.myportlandneighborhood.org).) Take the map to a copy center and blow it up so that it is at least a few feet large. At a neighborhood meeting, post the map on a wall or on the floor between people and follow the following process. It is very useful to have a different color marker for each subject area.
2. Choose a facilitator to keep the conversation on track. As a group, you will map both what is in the neighborhood and how it all connects.

*The Neighborhood Boundary:* Identify and draw it. What defines your overall sense of place? How do you know where the neighborhood begins? What streets or other features (like a river, hill, business or school grounds) define when you enter or leave the neighborhood? Note that the neighborhood boundary that you draw here may or may not be the same as the city-identified neighborhood association boundary. Draw what feels right to you.

*Gateways:* When you travel in and out on the major streets, how do you know that you are arriving or leaving? Draw where the gates should be.



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*Pathways:* How do you get from place to place within the neighborhood? Draw lines showing people's routes. You can also label different modes of transportation (bike, walk, drive, public transit). If you want to get even more detailed you can label the general time of day that people follow these routes.

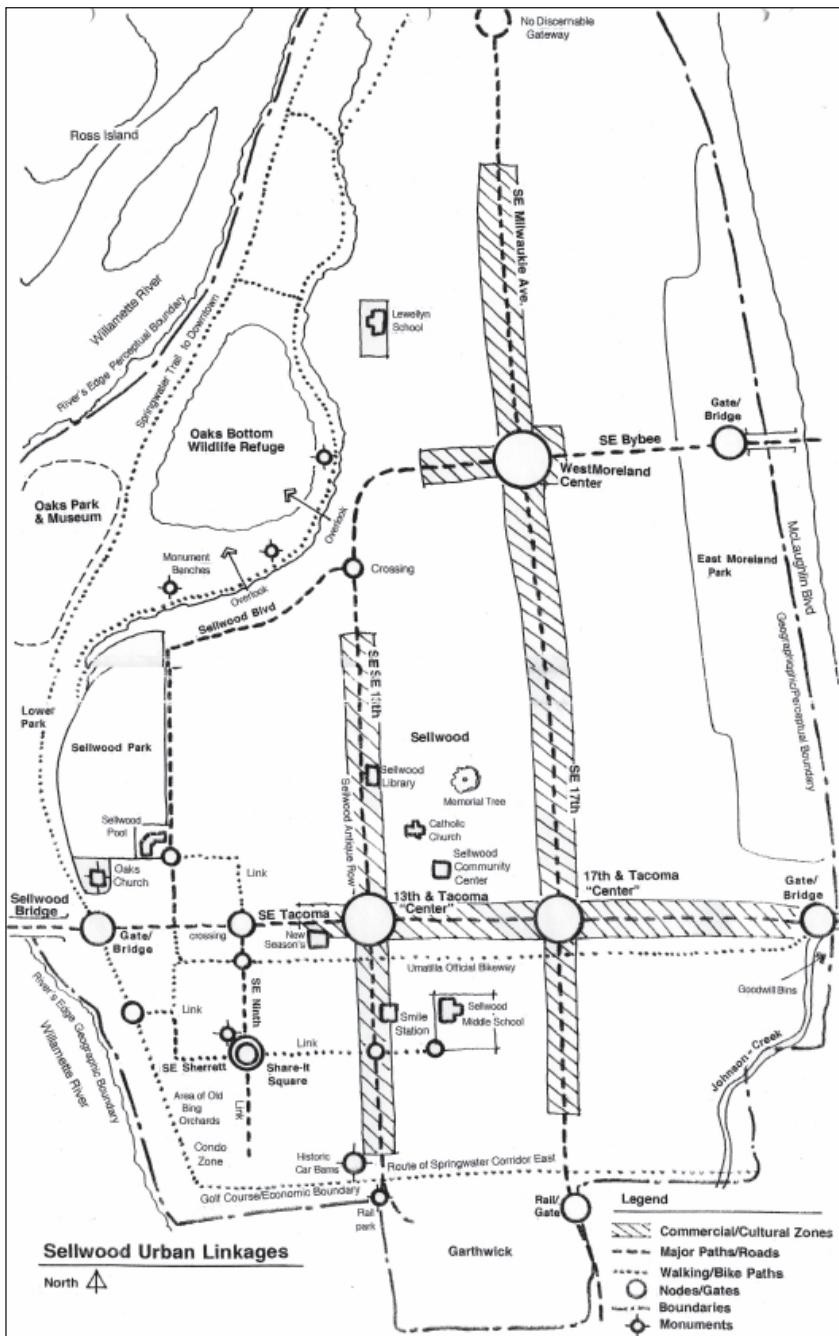
*Signage:* The streets enable you to get around the neighborhood, but how do you know where to go? Are there markers or signs? Identify them on your map.

*Nodes:* Each neighborhood hosts many places for activity that enable people to meet, work or enjoy themselves. These are the places where our lives intersect, and they may be at formal locations such as a restaurant or church, or they may happen at a popular street corner, in front of someone's house or at a basketball hoop. Talk about the parks, schools, businesses, restaurants, natural features, public art and any other interesting aspects that people can identify. Label both formal and informal nodes of activity.

*Monuments:* Wherever people live, special things happen: births, deaths, heroic actions, giving, sharing and many other events. Cities often boast monuments to great worldwide events or leaders, but are your neighborhood events or people remembered or marked? If you can remember special events that have occurred, draw them now.

*The Center:* If your neighborhood had a heart, where would it be? Is there such a place now, and if not where should it start? Draw where the heart goes.

3. Linkages to your Intersection Repair project: Now draw where your project is located on the neighborhood plan. How does it connect with the other places around you? What ways can you think of to create linkages between these places, or signs to mark them? Where would you find the neighborhood nodes, monuments or gateways? This is your opportunity to weave together your neighborhood, first with ideas and then with your project! You can do this activity with your neighborhood association to identify potential neighborhood improvement projects.



*This map of the Sellwood neighborhood in Portland demonstrates one way to represent the nodes, pathways, and gateways that you identify in your community.*



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*This process is about creating your collective neighborhood identity.*

often the ones on which you will want to focus.

Small groups can also be used to focus on specific aspects of the project. This way, people can spend more time on their particular interests, utilizing your time and people's skill sets more effectively. Remember that all major proposals and ideas should be brought back to the whole group to make the decisions unless the small group has been empowered to do so.

Some examples of small groups with particular focuses are:

- Built features
- Information exchange, community events, social life and culture
- Natural environment
- Safety and accessibility
- Gateways, signage, linkages to other parts of the neighborhood

### Refine your ideas

With each successive meeting, you will be narrowing the possibilities for discussion. You will be sorting through which ideas you can implement sooner rather than later, as well as how to lay the foundation for longer-term projects.



Presenting options for a town square. This is the community's third design workshop.



## *Feedback Loops: Repeat Often*

After each meeting or workshop, write up the minutes, including brainstorms, drawings, notes and other ideas that may be written on large sheets of paper. It is now your duty to share this information with those who didn't attend, including any questions, concerns or decisions that were made. Consider publishing this information in a flyer that you hand out to the neighbors within two blocks of the space, or email it to your listserve, post it on your website or implement whatever other communication system you may have decided to use.

Remember that you want to have many avenues for people to give their input about designs and decisions. Emphasize that although they might not have been at the meeting, everyone still has an important voice in the process. In your next meeting, make sure to share any comments you got back from folks and record them in the notes.

Most groups have found that once a few specific ideas have been proposed, it is much easier for the group to focus and have good discussions. As Brent Campbell of the 47th and Ivon Intersection Repair commented, "Before people had concrete things to talk about, the neighborhood seemed pretty wishy-washy about what they wanted."

You should repeat these steps of hosting workshops and receiving feedback until you have agreed upon the design for the first phase of your Intersection Repair project. Allow plenty of time for this process of creating and refining ideas, probably at least a few months depending on your schedule. During this time, your original goals should be revisited often.

## *Challenges*

Design by consensus can be very challenging. There will be disagreements about aesthetics, style and other details—and often these differences of opinion lead to the most interesting projects! Try to incorporate each person's opinions, while still keeping an overall common theme or aesthetic that unites the elements of your Intersection Repair. You may find that ideas tend to get watered down as



The vision must be in everyone's interest



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### DESIGNING GREAT PUBLIC PLACES

Below is a list of tried and true elements of great places. Some information in this section is courtesy of Project for Public Spaces ([www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)).

#### **Sense of local culture**

Share and celebrate the uniqueness of your local community!

#### **Art**

Public art presents an opportunity for a neighborhood to tell its history, express local culture and have a fun project for anyone to get involved!

#### **Seating**

Placement is incredibly important. Seating should be located within view of the action, but out of the way of the flow of pedestrian traffic. Placed in relation to other amenities, seating can be used as a catalyst for social activity. Good public spaces give people a choice of where and how they would like to sit. They provide different types of seating options such as ledges, steps, benches and moveable chairs, as well as different places or locations within the same area, such as in the sun, shade, in groups, alone, close to activity or somewhat removed from activity.

#### **Lighting**

Lighting increases safety in areas that people use, aids in geographic orientation and highlights the identity of an area. Successful street lighting takes into account the human users of the street, not simply the requirements set by the local department of transportation and public works agencies. For instance, one way to emphasize pedestrian activity over automobile traffic is to replace standard overhead street lights with smaller-scale, more frequently spaced fixtures geared to pedestrians. Think carefully about placement, height and secondary uses. Provide lighting at the pedestrian level – approximately 9-12 feet – to create safe, inviting walkways.

#### **Signage**

A good signage system can perform multiple functions. On the most basic level, it provides effective information and direction for people to find their way around. It can also encourage learning experiences, create and maintain an image for a place, communicate rules and provide a sense of place and local pride by incorporating history or cultural details. Location is key. Placing signage in conjunction with others can create



mini “destinations” or places-within-a-place. When well-located, signs can help create a comfortable and social place where people can relax and spend time.

## Water

Waterfalls, waterwalls, rapids, sluiceways, tranquil pools, water tunnels, meandering brooks, bubblers and fountains of all kinds: water creates a sense of tranquility, privacy and it's so nice to touch! Water features can also be used to educate about the local climate, watershed and ecosystem.

## Waste receptacles

Can be useful, but only if maintained properly.

## Information centers

“Communication stations,” or information kiosks, are great local ways to exchange information and create a mini meeting place in the middle of your neighborhood. A kiosk can be as simple as a bulletin board built in a neighbor's front yard. Others can become community projects placed in the public right-of-way. They can be big or small, open to all community announcements or have a particular theme. Some uses for kiosks include announcement spots for neighborhood board game playing, birthdays and significant events in neighbors' lives and the multitude of announcements about services, items for sale or missing pets. Once a neighborhood takes ownership of kiosks and refers to them regularly, they can be used for surveys or block party planning. They begin to fill the role that the neighborhood post office or local tavern used to offer: a place outside of home and work in which neighbors bump into each other, exchange greetings and information and enjoy a vibrant local culture.

## Triangulation

Positioning multiple elements in close proximity to one another increases the interest and use of a place and will encourage more spontaneous interaction between neighbors. For example, placing a bench in a front yard near a community kiosk and next to an herb garden will attract people to the same place for different reasons.

## More ideas to keep in mind

Design public spaces for multiple uses—performances, markets, festivals, etc. Also consider: paths (how different areas come together), landmarks (objects or features that serve as a reference point), edges (how boundaries are defined) and nodes (focal points of activity).



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*Once neighbors are engaged, the process takes off.*



the group tries to compromise. This may frustrate some people, but many groups have found that projects still turn out beautiful because of the dedication, cooperation and ownership that emerges from the community.

People generally want to “keep the peace” with their neighbors and tend to be nervous about disagreeing with each other or voicing a concern. Sometimes a group would rather drop an entire idea so as to avoid a potentially difficult discussion. If you feel comfortable, however, it is often very fruitful to allow healthy discourse about exploring a solution. This could be a time when a trained facilitator and designer can help separate emotion from constructive dialogue and move the group through an effective discussion.

If the discussion starts overwhelming the group, consider assigning a small group the task of addressing that concern. Or, another small group can pick a few of the most popular designs and incorporate the opinions of those whose houses are nearest the site. When a specific theme or idea is agreed upon, communicate with the rest of the neighborhood and ask how they might want to see it refined. Everyone wants to see their own idea discussed, but sometimes you may need a small group to take the lead and present a narrowed down list of options.

If people have major concerns or questions, try to address them and/or bring them to the core group to discuss in detail. At this point in the process, people should be familiar with this project and feel like they have had the opportunity to contribute. Remind them of the process

*“One of the neighbors at the meeting was an artist, and adamant that the colors of the street painting be a certain way. The discussion became strained, and had not been resolved by the time the artist had to leave early. A few days after the meeting, one of her neighbors came to her door. The woman timidly showed her a few sets of colors they had chosen after she’d left, and said she and the group had wanted to be sure the artist was okay with what they had decided. As the artist related this story to me, her eyes welled up with tears and she told me she realized in that moment that her relationship with her neighbor was far more important than whatever color was chosen.”*

–Charla Chamberlain, City Repair Co-Director



and that the designs are a reflection of everyone's contributions!

There will inevitably be tough days and roadblocks throughout your placemaking project. This is okay. Be encouraged to find a better design, tweak your design to make it work better or even decide that a certain part wouldn't have fit into the neighborhood very well anyway! Remember that this is a continuous and creative process. Take a short break; think about the reasons you started this project. But don't let a disappointment or challenge create an overall negative tone on a very important and positive project! Start small and watch your seed of community grow at its own pace.

## Finalize

At some point, the world of ideas evolves into the world of the constructed environment. The reality of the physical world will temper the outcome and "buildability" of your design. It would be important at this point to look to the materials, talents, resources and capabilities of the neighborhood to determine what can be built, when and how. Civil code restrictions, set-back requirements, environmental conditions, safety and maintenance must be considered. This is also a time to get resourceful about finding donated materials.

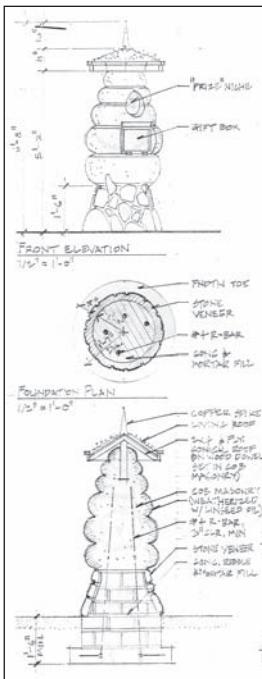
Remember that the first phase of your project can be simple and you can compile a list of more complex projects to do in phases in the future. Starting with something small, accessible and doable is less threatening to people and will show that success is possible. For example, some neighborhoods suggest plants, gardening and trees as good starting points for placemaking projects, since greenery is already commonly accepted and enjoyed in neighborhoods.

Whatever your choice, once the neighborhood has made a community decision about the final design of the first phase of your project, you can figure out how to make it happen.

## Petition and Permit

If your design is in the public right-of-way you must submit a petition and supporting documents to the City. (Refer to page 127 for detailed information about permitting.) When you feel confident that your neighbors have finalized the ideas, and they are technically and

*When setting up your design workshop space, think about hanging up useful information such as: maps of the neighborhood, contact information for someone in the core group, opportunities for involvement, meeting guidelines, the agenda, the overall timeline, current ideas, concerns and any other pertinent information.*



## Share-It Square Gift and Story Box!



## DESIGN QUALITIES

## Scale

Scale is an important consideration in designing your project. Scale refers to the size of an object in proportion to its surroundings. Considerations of scale could include the prevailing local architecture and street furnishings, the layout of the neighborhood, the physical dimensions of the constructed elements, as well as the size of your neighborhoods' dreams and ambitions.

“Human scale” is more than the measure of physical dimensions. It is an intuitive sense of your relationship to your surroundings and how comfortable you feel there. In our cities, it is the street furniture, steps, railings, doorways and people that set the human scale.

Things scaled at smaller body proportions appeal to children and to the “child” in adults. Objects and places at the architectural scale have a more monumental feel, larger than the human body. Oversized or miniature proportions can evoke a surreal or magical moment, as if one were in the presence of giants or Lilliputians.

## Texture

Texture can be described as the physical material attributes of a project—it is the feeling to the touch, usually in variations from smooth to rough. Visual texture can also be considered. Surfaces can be shiny, dull, reflective, dusty, mossy, spiky, etc. in their perception to the eye. An area can be uniformly patterned, display wild variety in color and form or create a rhythm through repetition of its elements.

There are “textural” elements that are less physical in nature, like historical character and cultural identity. By incorporating existing natural, historic and cultural features into the project/public space, a “texture” can emerge that augments the identity and spirit of the neighborhood.



## Placement

Consider the proper siting of a project in response to environmental conditions: windy street corners, low areas that retain rainfall, shading structures like buildings and trees, etc.

The aesthetic placement of things might involve decisions about the grouping and isolation of elements, creating similarities or variation and balancing forms to generate symmetry or asymmetry. Whenever a series of disparate elements are brought together, one must consider a cohesive form or conceptual unity. The ordering of a variety of elements into a unity can be considered “synergy,” where the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts.

## Appropriate Materials and Technologies

Consider height, color, building material and orientation in relation to the existing natural and constructed environment. Sustainable development is a way of using an evolving set of principles and practices to make decisions that minimize negative environmental impacts while ensuring positive social and economic benefits.

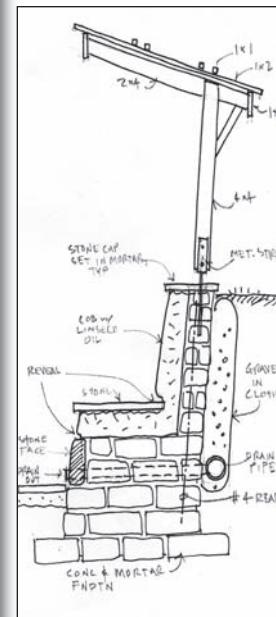
A well designed place should express the interaction between its function (shelter, activities, beauty) and the materials with which it is constructed.

## Nuts and Bolts

- *Site planning*
- *Site preparation*
- *Material choices*
- *Construction techniques*
- *Tools*
- *Landscaping*
- *Tree and shrub planting*
- *Footings and foundations*
- *Fasteners and adhesives*



Another cob bench built into a front yard. The bench blurs the boundaries between public and private space.



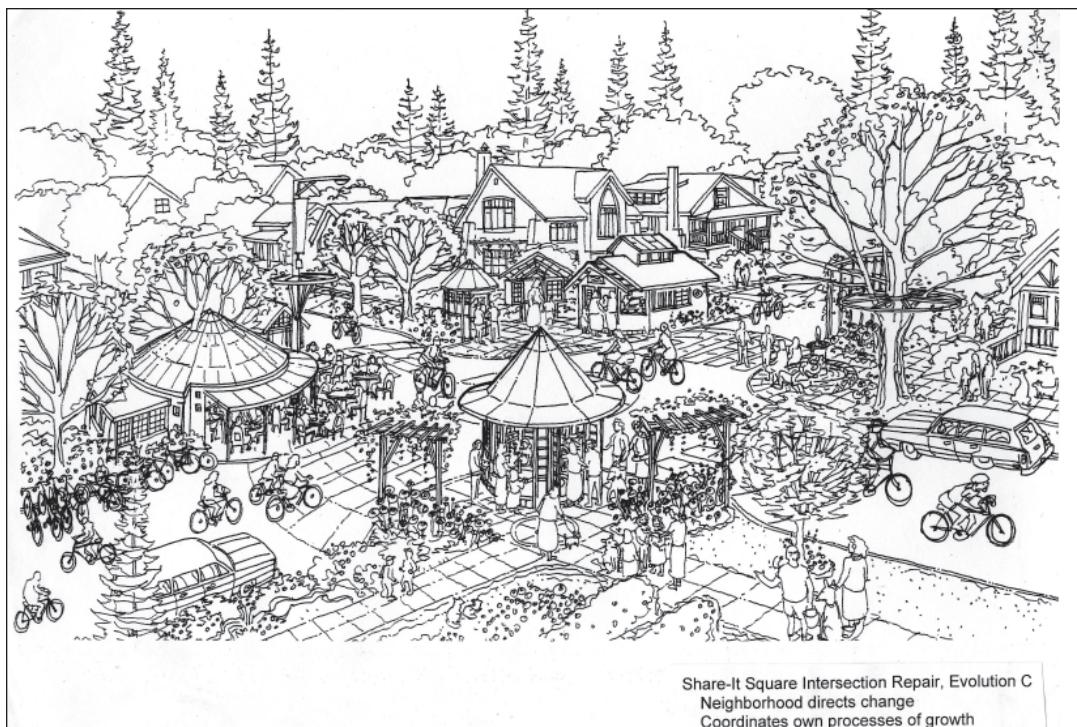
Cob bench design for Portland installation



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aesthetically portrayed, you are then ready to gather signatures of support from the rest of your neighborhood. You must have sketches of the final designs to show people when they sign the petition. It is also a good idea to show them documentation of the entire process that led up to these specific designs. Note that at this point, none of this information should be new to anyone in the neighborhood; they should all have been part of the decision-making along the way.

If your city has set a minimum degree of neighborhood approval in order for you to proceed with the project (Portland requires 80% approval within two blocks and consensus at the intersection itself), set your goal higher. Intersection Repair is about bringing the neighborhood together and you want as many people as possible to feel part of the process.





## CREATE!

For many people, building the physical features is the culmination of your efforts and you will find that many neighbors emerge to participate in the fun of hands-on work. At this point, additional people may step forward and take on new responsibilities. The energy around a neighborhood project is contagious.



When you are planning your work parties to build the elements of your design, here are some things to think about:

- As you gather signatures for the petition, you can also use that time to coordinate work parties. Some things to discuss with people are dates and schedule, tools, equipment or materials they might want to share and other ideas for activities during the work parties (a potluck, block party, music, etc.).
- Food is essential at any event longer than 2-3 hours. Ask people if they would want to provide a full or partial meal for the group, or if they would be interested in soliciting donations from a local restaurant or store.
- If you are planning to get materials delivered to the site, ask around about interim storage places. Plan a place for people to use bathrooms and/or clean-up during the work party.
- Decide as a group if you would like to involve folks from outside of the neighborhood to help build. There are many people who love volunteering for community work parties! If so, you will want to publicize the event well in advance.
- If you are painting a street mural, you will need to close the four streets that meet at the intersection. Use a block party form to collect signatures to close the street. Include one or two rain dates on the form. You will want to paint on a somewhat sunny day; if you start in the morning the paint should be dry by nightfall.
- If you are using natural building materials and techniques, invite the local grade school to participate. Kids love to build!
- Identifying aspects of the building project suitable for children or providing activities for kids is helpful for allowing children to

*“One morning when we all gathered [for the work party] we found the tree in the park all decorated with bubble wands and ribbons of cloth. All day long kids blew bubbles. It was great!”*

—Janis Campbell,  
core group, SE 47th  
& Ivon Intersection  
Repair



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participate meaningfully. And even if just adults work, one group found that the “energy was really provided by the kids playing and running around and screaming.”



There are often many logistics associated with the building aspect of the project, especially if you make it a larger community event. Create a division of labor so no one person feels solely responsible. Think about building your projects over a few weekends. Organize your events around your neighbors’ free time.

Neighbors who have not participated in the design workshops may feel shy about coming out to build. Again, personally inviting people makes a big difference. Let them know it’s not too late to help out.

The finishing work is often the hardest part. Plan for people feeling tired and schedule enough work parties to finish. Keep it fun and provide great food!

### Celebrate!

When you have finally built elements of your neighborhood plaza, it’s time to celebrate your hard work! Throw yourselves a great party and recognize all of the people who volunteered their time, resources and energy to make the project a success!





You are invited to:

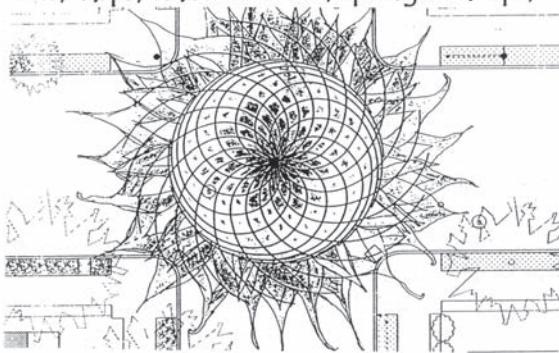
SE 33<sup>rd</sup> and Yamhill Intersection  
Saturday September 22nd

# Painting Party

12:00 Noon – 5:00 PM

Come and help paint the sunflower in the intersection!

Wear painting clothes and bring brushes, rollers, rags, gloves, kneepads/small pillows, tarps, water buckets, sponge stamps, etc



# Block party

5:00 PM – 12:00 Midnight

Come and celebrate the new intersection!

Bring: friends and family, your favorite food, musical instruments, candles, etc

P.S. This neighborhood enhancement project is supported entirely by the residents; we need your help to pay for paint, supplies, planters, art, etc. Please bring tax-deductible donations (checks payable to "The City Repair Project")



## HOW TO PAINT AN INTERSECTION

### *Wisdom from Ottawa City Repair*

Painting an intersection is very straightforward. There are only four steps: sweeping, washing, layout, painting. The method described below assumes that the pre-painting steps: planning, consensus and street closure, have already been completed.



### 1. Sweeping

When you first arrive at your intersection, it will probably look clean, but on closer inspection you'll find many small rocks, sand, dust and tree debris. Sweeping the intersection prevents the road debris from clogging up your rollers and brushes and contaminating your paint.

Depending upon the size of the intersection and the number of brooms available, the sweeping can take anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour to complete.

Be sure to use brooms with stiff bristles. Loose bristles will not be able to get into the gaps and cracks in the asphalt. Wide push brooms are better than narrow detail brooms, simply due to their size.

You will likely find that a considerable pile of road debris is collected. In some cases an entire wheelbarrow could be filled. In Ottawa, road debris is comprised mostly of small rocks and sand (distributed by the city in winter). This clean fill can be disposed of anywhere there is already crushed gravel. However, filling a pothole is somewhat poetically appropriate.



### 2. Washing



It is not essential to wash the intersection before painting it, but this step does remove the thin film of dust, which in turn allows for good adhesion of the paint.

For this project a power washer was available, but regular hose pressure will also suffice.

Washing an intersection can take a lot of time, up to several hours, especially if only one person is involved. For this reason it's a good idea to have a general plan



of the final painting roughly laid out so that the washing can be focused on only those areas that need it.

### 3. Layout

This step is simply drawing the plan onto the road so that many people can paint at the same time. That way the painter need only stay within the lines. Street chalk is the best tool for laying out a road painting. The lines are easy to see and the chalk washes off in the rain.

There are many different ways to do layout, depending upon the complexity of the plan.

*Drawing big circles – use a big compass.*

To make a big compass all you need is a spool of string. Tie one end to the chalk and locate the other end in the centre of the intersection. Putting an “X” at the centre of the intersection will allow you to draw many concentric circles.



*Marking equal divisions – use a length of string.*



Some plans call for many equally spaced markings. This can be done freehand, but it's quicker if a length of string is used.

1. Hold one end of the string in each hand.
2. Place one end on the starting mark.
3. Pull the string tight and mark the distance using the chalk
4. Move the first end to the new mark and repeat.

*Deciding where to paint – X marks the spot.*

Most of the time extra layout lines will be required. To avoid confusion as to where to paint, put X's or some other mark in the places where paint is supposed to go. Make sure everyone knows this.





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## *Freeform artwork – freehand it.*

Unless your design is strictly based on basic geometry, there will be some freehand work involved. However, drawing a geometric boundary will help the artist get the scale right.



## 4. Painting

Once you've got your layout, it's time to start painting. This is by far the most fun part of the project. It's also the most inclusive as just about anyone can paint. You'll likely find that as the painting progresses, more people will show up to help out or just watch. Painting an intersection is not the kind of thing that happens every day!



You'll need the following tools and materials—and you'll need lots of each. Paint, rollers, roller trays, brushes, yogurt containers (or other small tubs), stir sticks (very important), a drop cloth (to put all the painting stuff on and catch spills), paper towels.

Before starting, always take a picture of your crew. It'll make a good scrapbook picture.

### *Painting Techniques*

Neither brushes nor rollers are perfectly suited to street painting (the city uses a spray nozzle). However, you can get full coverage by employing both. To fill large spaces with a single colour, first use the roller to fill in most of the area. It may take two or three passes to get a good coat. Unlike painting an interior wall where several light coats are best, you'll want to get a good thick coat on the road the first time.



After rolling out the main coat, use a brush to fill in the details, cracks or edges the roller missed. This approach is best suited to two people. For smaller areas, large brushes and small rollers are best. It may take several successive passes to get a good coat.





## *Mixing Colours*

If all your paints have the same base (i.e.: latex), you can mix them together to produce new colours.



## *Getting Painted into a Corner*

It may seem silly to talk about painting oneself into a corner in the middle of a street with no walls, but it can happen. Fortunately the escape route here was nothing more than a little hop.



## *Watering the Pansy*

There's always some room for silliness!

## *Admiring Your Work*

Once the painting has been completed, it's good to stand back and admire what was accomplished.





## STEWARDSHIP

Whether your Intersection Repair turns out to be a block party, street painting or built elements, the act of intentionally working with your neighbors has probably created a sense of connection and place in the neighborhood. Spontaneous conversations and activities probably occur regularly. You have created community in your neighborhood. You also now have a physical place to use and co-create. This is both an opportunity for new events and activities, and a responsibility to maintain.

### Reflection

At some point after each phase, it is important to take some time to reflect on the process, share what you each learned and what you might want to do next. Some areas that you will want to address include what went well and what could have gone better and how to identify indicators of change. You can ask a facilitator to guide you through this process of reflection.

### New Phases and Programming Throughout the Year

Build upon the energy from your first phase and consider programming some events or activities throughout the year. Some ideas include: block parties, potlucks, movies in the street (put up a screen or hang a sheet on someone's house), holiday parties, collective gardening, games in the street, dances, street theatre and more! You have created your own public plaza; enjoy your sense of "ownership" and have fun!

Also consider connecting with other Intersection Repair groups around your city (or your region—an excuse for a field trip!) to create networks, share information and visit each other's projects.

### Ongoing Responsibility

Consider forming a "Friends of ..." group to solidify a body that will hold ongoing responsibility for managing consistent communication systems and maintaining existing elements. This group should make itself publicly accessible so that neighbors, passers-by and the City know whom to contact with needs and ideas. Also consider what will happen when neighbors move out and new neighbors move in, and



## 2006 Village Building Convergence Kick-Off Newsletter



### South Tabor Neighborhood 61<sup>st</sup> and SE Clinton St.

**Site Update:** This will be the third year for the development of this city approved Intersection Repair. The project was designed to bring the community together and improve overall neighbor relations and safety. The neighborhood was able to raise funds to support the project with the non-profit organization, City Repair, as well as gain the support and involvement of the South Tabor Neighborhood Association.

In 2004 we completed the cob oven and mosaic flooring in front of the oven. The Natural Building Examples Shed was 50% completed and the corner was planted with edibles and natives. In 2005 the cob oven was re-finished and the Bulletin Board with living roof 75% complete. Several pizza parties also took place, including an afternoon with the owner of Hot Lips Pizza, David Yudik and children, who taught neighbors the art of crafting an oven baked pizza!

*Please Join Us For the First 2006 Planning Meeting*

*Sunday January 29, 2006.*

*Pot Luck from 4-5pm and meeting from 5-7pm.*

*All are welcome!*

*Comments about the site can be given to one of the listed contacts.*

This is an on-going project that began in 2004 and has the support of the S. Tabor Neighborhood Association and at least 80% of the neighbors within a two-block radius from this site. All neighbors are encouraged to participate in the process. If you are interested in participating or would like to share your thoughts and ideas about this project please contact one of the Core Group members listed below.

### 2006 Project Ideas

Please share your thoughts by checking off the most appropriate answers:

Love it!   Unsure   Indiff.   No   Comment?

- Cob Bench to face the Cob oven
- Pizza Parties
- Complete the natural building examples shed
- Trellis over the oven & define site boundaries
- Develop Community Building Skills
- Discuss Street Painting
- Other suggestions

#### Core Group and Important Contact Information:

Connie VanDyke, Permaculture Designer & Neighbor

503-788-4520

Mark Bardajy, Contract Builder & Site Host

503-789-3203

Erin Mirrett, Coordinator

503-957-6706

City Repair.org, [thecircle@cityrepair.org](mailto:thecircle@cityrepair.org),

503-235-8946



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how you will welcome them into the Place and the community that you have created.

Over time, conversations will naturally lead to new ideas about further developing your Intersection Repair. Consider hosting an annual or even semi-annual event to add new phases to your project or develop ways that work for your group to continue building. As always, make sure to match the pace of the project to the energy level of the neighborhood. It may take time for some people to get used to the new elements in the neighborhood. If some people feel rushed into new projects, consider focusing your energy on events and other uses of the intersection until they are ready to move forward with new built elements.

The manifestations, uses and development possibilities for an Intersection Repair are endless. Continue reaching out to the full neighborhood and go where the energy is. We look forward to hearing what your group creates!





A circle dance celebrating a newly created mandala painting



Notice of a community member's passing at the Share-It Square Communication Station



Moving planter boxes into the street at the Copperbeech "Park Repair" in southeast Portland



Working things out at a neighborhood meeting



Blowing bubbles at an Intersection Repair site



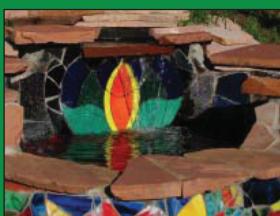
Kids serving tea at a neighborhood 1-Horse event



Cobbers at VBC 2003  
building a poetry kiosk



City Repair Ottawa's T-MoBeetle canopy, made out of umbrellas



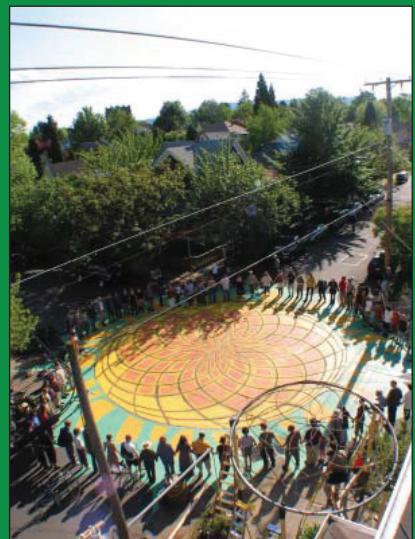
The solar-powered water fountain at the Sunnyside Piazza



Neighborhood cob bench  
in a private front yard



Placemaking activites at St. John's Woods Garden Project  
at the 2004 Village Building Convergence



Sunnyside Piazza celebration



Envisioning Share-It Square, 1996



Planters in the right-of-way at Sunnyside Piazza serve as traffic calming devices and shared garden space.



This beehive kiosk at Share-It Square distributes The Bee, the neighborhood newspaper.



## Sunnyside Piazza celebration



Preparing for a neighborhood celebration; setting up the wings of the T-Horse is a practice in community coordination.



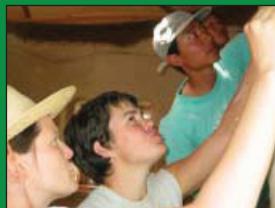
Building a cob structure at an Intersection Repair



Life is good



Earth Day Parade



Natural building



New phases at Sunnyside Piazza



Share-It Square  
Produce Station



Oblio the cob frog pizza oven at  
Share-It Square



City Repair Ottawa Intersection Repair  
on Pansy Street



Kids at Share-It Square proud of the tables  
they built for the clubhouse

# The Fundamentals



In this chapter you will find information about many of the tools you will use throughout the Intersection Repair process.

## ORGANIZING YOUR GROUP'S STRUCTURE

If your neighborhood moves toward a more focused interest in creating a community gathering place, you will want to develop some organizational structure and agreements about decision-making.

It is important that this structure is transparent and accessible to all. There are a lot of people who will be coming together to make this project happen, and because it affects people's personal lives and alters the public space near their homes, you need to develop a system to involve everyone in decisions.

There are usually a few people who start stirring curiosity and educating neighbors about the idea of an Intersection Repair, and these "sparks" can serve as an "interim organizing group." It is vital that this initial core group of organizers make it known that they are only an interim group until everyone in the neighborhood learns about this project and has the opportunity to take a more active role. The interim group's purpose is to initiate the process of inviting everyone to the table to learn about Intersection Repair so that as a full neighborhood you can collectively decide to continue.

As people have more opportunities to get involved, your core group will coalesce. There are typically two methods for defining organizational structure within an Intersection Repair: one based on physical geography and one based on leadership, responsibility and involvement. Both are important.



### Roles Defined by Leadership, Personal Responsibility and Level of Involvement

- Catalysts: the primary sparks for discussing the Intersection Repair, the “interim organizing group” who will later become the core group.
- Core group: more formal group of people who like to organize, meet, communicate with their neighbors and share power.
- Neighbors who show up for bigger meetings and design workshops, actively participating in larger decisions.
- Neighbors who join in with work parties, building and developing the space.
- Neighbors who help out in other ways, for example through donations or connections to businesses, people and organizations that support the project.
- Neighbors who want to be kept informed and notified about project progress.
- Neighbors who come out for the big celebrations.
- Neighbors who are apprehensive about the project (refer to page 106 for more about concerns and dissent).

### Roles Based On Geographic Location

- The Heart: property owners and residents whose property borders the site.
- The Core: residents along the street axis of the two blocks in each direction from the square.
- The Perimeter: the blocks immediately surrounding the square, typically numbering 16.
- The District: the area of the City-recognized neighborhood association within which the public square is to be located.

These models of involvement will inevitably overlap. You must decide as a group how you will make decisions.

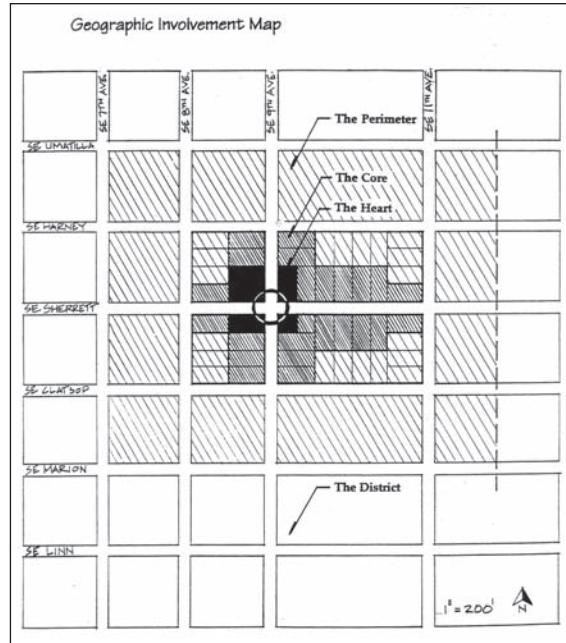


## Core Group

The Portland City ordinance that allows Intersection Repair (refer to page 26) is based on the trust and expectation that neighbors will take responsibility for their Intersection Repair. To ensure that the intersection enhancement will be properly maintained, most groups establish a core group that is responsible for overseeing maintenance, programs, communications and development.

The challenge of the core group is to provide as much information and access to decision-making as possible to the rest of the neighborhood. The core group's responsibilities include organizing and planning meetings; encouraging participation from residents in the impacted area; determining the schedule for the community involvement process, design workshops and installation dates; and plans for maintenance and future development of the project. The group also ensures that all voices are heard, that the decision-making process is accessible and that there is a way to address concerns and move the group to either consensus or informed consent (refer to page 104). If you have a neighborhood association, your core group should communicate regularly with it.

Your core group will probably be faced with many decisions throughout this project, and therefore it is important to have a core group that you can count on to be there through the whole process. Spend time recruiting additional members. People involved in this group often find the most meaning and reward in the Intersection Repair project, and often enjoy the opportunity to practice or develop new skills and interests. You may want to think about specific roles for people in the core group, and keep in mind that people often discover new strengths as they get more involved.



*This map shows the structure of neighbor involvement with management of the Share-It Square Intersection Repair at SE 9th & Sherrett Streets in Portland, Oregon.*



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Some specific core group roles you may want to include:

- Liaison to the neighborhood association: go to monthly meetings and keep the neighborhood association informed and involved in the project.
- Outreach coordinator: central point-of-contact for neighbors; manage neighborhood database/spreadsheet.
- Volunteer coordinator: connect people's interests with project needs; work with outreach coordinator to be "Keeper of Names," tracking each person's contact information and skills.
- Donations coordinator: form partnerships with local businesses and other groups; coordinate creative fundraising.
- Documentation coordinator: keep a copy of all communication; document events.
- Design coordinator: take a lead in creating the design workshops; serve as link between neighbors and design professionals.
- Publicity/Communications/Public Relations coordinator: field interest and questions from people outside of the neighborhood.
- Liaison to City Repair (in Portland).

Note that none of these roles needs to be one person, and that a person filling a role is not solely responsible for all of the tasks. It is just helpful to have a person with the responsibility of overseeing each aspect of the project. Remember, a lot of the work involved with the project will be done by the core group or neighborhood as a whole.

### DECISION-MAKING

Intersection Repair is about creating a collective and inclusive project. While projects in Portland must have 80% support from neighbors in the two-blocks around the intersection, the goal, however, is to gather the support and opinions of everyone in the immediate area. Working collectively as a neighborhood to determine your future together can be more important than actually installing the project.



In your initial community meetings, discuss as a group what your model of decision-making will be. Publicize this model in all of your communications and meetings; with so many people involved and affected, it is vital that you are transparent with your process.

Whatever form or combination of forms of decision-making your group uses, it is important to make every effort to be inclusive through the use of “informed consent.”

Informed consent is the idea that everyone impacted by the decision is aware of the details of the issue and has the opportunity to influence the process, participate in discussions and make decisions. In practical terms, this means providing notification about what types of decisions will be made with enough advance opportunity for people to make plans to attend that meeting or at least communicate their perspective to a designated person that will be attending. Nothing can upset people or a process more than finding out a decision they care about was made “behind their back.”



## Decision-Making Models

You have many choices for choosing a model for a decision-making process, and it is vital that you are clear about how decisions are made. The most popular types of decision-making for Intersection Repair projects are majority-rule and consensus.

Majority-rule voting means that a decision requires only 51 percent support. For many people this is not a sufficient level of agreement for community building efforts because it means that too many people could be left feeling unhappy or disempowered. Sometimes a “super majority,” such as two-thirds or 80 percent, is used instead. Often you have to compromise on a proposal so that a majority-rule decision is possible.

Consensus puts aside the ideas of majority-rule and compromise in favor of the best possible decision for the community. Consensus looks to find win-win solutions and agreements. It is based on the understanding that the best solution is one that is created and supported by all involved. Because time and effort goes into hearing each person’s



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*Nothing can upset people or a process more than finding out a decision they care about was made “behind their back.”*

concerns in order to craft a proposal, it can feel like a longer process. But your outcome has buy-in from everyone involved, the decision made has a strong foundation and people feel a bond and sense of accomplishment after making a decision as a group.

It is worthwhile to consider using a consensus process, and it is wise to note that a decision assumes that each participant has some shared understanding and commitment to the group. It is a good idea to provide information and training when using consensus because the process can seem complex and many people are unfamiliar with the nuances needed to make it successful.

### Concerns and Dissent

Changing one's environment is an emotional experience. It is inevitable that many people in your neighborhood will have concerns and questions about a project that affects their daily lives and physical space. It is important to understand that people who have doubts about the project are not necessarily dissenters who object to the community goals and visions. Often, if people feel that their opinions are heard, acknowledged and incorporated, they will become strong





supporters, dedicated to the undertaking. The opportunities to address multiple viewpoints and accommodate all voices will refine your creativity and strengthen the project.

People should feel like they have access to all relevant information and a safe person or place to voice their opinions. Many questions and concerns can be addressed with accurate information about the project. You can therefore prevent most dissent with good communication from the start. Again, an accessible and transparent decision-making structure remains your strongest foundation.

Your organizing group must determine a process for how you want to address and resolve concerns. You must decide if your goal is to achieve complete consensus or simply informed consent. Sometimes unanimity is difficult to achieve in this type of community process, and expression of dissent is a necessary part of the community building and growing process. You must determine the level of dissent at which it is time to look for other options.

Sometimes a person may just want to be left alone and not bothered. This is okay; every single person does not have to be active. Just make sure that they don't mind other people working on a project in the neighborhood.

Dissenters, on the other hand, are people whose concerns remain a barrier even after discussion and compromise, and will actively block the project from continuing. If this is the case, it may help to discuss their concerns with a trained mediator, or it may be that it's just not the right time to continue a placemaking project at that particular site. Sometimes people will be vocal about one thing, when the real reason for their concern is something else. Listen, ask questions and try to understand their deepest reasons for opposition. Often concerns are voiced about specific issues like aesthetics, money or noise – issues that can be addressed – so make sure their concern isn't rooted in something deeper.



*People need to feel listened to. Everyone's comments are valid!*



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*This project requires compromise and compassion from each person.*

At meetings, begin with meeting protocol and basic ways of communicating so that you can refer back to them if needed. Also, a short “check-in” is a good idea, asking people how they generally feel about the project, what they like and what aspects they may have concerns with. If you encounter a disruptive dissenter, make sure to talk with them outside of the meeting so that you can discuss more deeply what their concerns may be and how they would like to see them addressed. Throughout the course of your project, be aware of people’s feelings and take action if it seems anyone is feeling ostracized.

Once you’re at the design stage, expect and encourage healthy dialogue about your plans. Open conversation about issues of disagreement will often lead to the most creative solutions! Many of these opinions may be “chicken and egg” type questions -- which aspect of the project or neighborhood to focus on first. Take your time. Build in phases.

While it’s important to go to great lengths to hear out dissent and even angry feelings that individuals may have towards the project, don’t forget about the people (often the majority) who want to continue working toward a constructive outcome. If neighbors who are proactive about the project know that others feel the same way, they will feel more empowered to represent their own feelings about the project in the face of uncomfortable dissent.

### METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

People have many means by which they communicate with the world around them, and it is the core group’s responsibility to figure out the most inclusive and effective process to contact your neighbors. Usually this means employing a few different methods. Some people may be satisfied with email, others may prefer phone and still others may prefer personal, direct communication.

Some neighborhoods have found that it helps enormously to create a spreadsheet of information identifying each household’s preferred form of communication. On this sheet you can collect names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, space for comments, when and how the neighbor was contacted and other pertinent information. Remember to include anyone who may be outside of the two-block area who has shown interest in the project so that you can keep them

# The Fundamentals



informed as well. You can then use this information for efficient and thorough communication. If someone is unable to attend an important meeting, you can use this sheet for offering alternative ways to communicate.

Address	Name	Pets	Skills/passions	Interest level	Role	Preferred communication method
14520 SE Maple	Sue and Russ Arnold (children: Guthrie and Myrtle)	dog: Jack	gardening, knitting	interested but very busy with newborn	volunteer for things they can do at home	visit in person or email only; small children in house
14521 SE Maple	Lance Johnson		music	semi interested	will get a band for events	email or phone
14522 SE Maple	Nate and Sarah Smith		architect	concerned about aesthetics of the historic neighborhood	not sure	any
14523 SE Maple	Betty Piccolo	two cats	organizing	high	core group	any
14525 SE Maple	Lola and Trevor Fuller (teen: Maggie)		graphic designer	interested in getting to know neighbors better	make and distribute flyers	phone or visit

Sample neighborhood spreadsheet. Spreadsheets can be extremely useful in keeping relevant information organized.

Below is a list of communication tools and how they relate to Intersection Repair.

## “Knock and Talk”

**What?** Personal visits to each household.

**Why?** This will be your most labor-intensive but most effective means of communicating with your neighbors. Talking with people personally is usually more engaging and allows people to talk on their own turf and feel heard. This establishes a personal connection between you and your neighbors and is most effective for actively involving them in the projects.



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### "Knock and Talk" (Cont.)

**When?** Ideally this would be the first point of contact about this project with your neighbors so that people feel personally included at the beginning. If you have a good conversation at this point, people will probably feel more comfortable with less direct means of communication in the future. You might want to employ another "knock and talk" session in the middle of the design process for people who are unable to attend the workshops so that you can explain proposed ideas. And of course, at the end of the design process, when you are gathering signatures, you will need to do another round of knocking and talking.

**How?** The best times to go door-to-door are on weekends and Sunday or Monday evenings. Be mindful about encroaching on people's personal space. Before you go out, make a list of all of the various things you would like to talk with your neighbors about. For example, if you are asking them to sign a block party street closure form, think about any other dates in the next six months that you may close the street and ask people to sign for each one. As you talk to people, fill in your spreadsheet with contact information and their preferred method of communication. Notice how much time it actually takes to talk to each household so that you can have a gauge for future visits.

### Existing Networks

**What?** Word of mouth is a powerful tool. Some people regularly communicate with their neighbors, so you should utilize this existing network of information sharing. Also remember that kids are natural connectors between families.

**Why?** This is a more natural way of communication within a neighborhood—exactly what Intersection Repair projects encourage!

**When?** Anytime you need to communicate with your neighbors! Best used in conjunction with other methods.

**How?** As you discover these networks, note it on your spreadsheet and create a map or tree of communication patterns.



## Flyers

**What?** 1/4 page, 1/2 page or full page piece of paper that you deliver to houses or post in local businesses.

**Why?** Easy to distribute and post. Also useful as a reminder (for the fridge), to show others and to save for documentation. Can be very informative, interesting and inviting!

**When?** If a meeting invitation, at least two weeks in advance.

**How?** Besides the specific information you are sharing, make sure to add contact information. If the flyer is a meeting announcement, provide the date, time and location and other specifics of the meeting. Nice artwork or graphics is always a plus. In a pinch or if your group lacks artistic expertise, don't fret; a simple flyer with the correct information will suffice. Or cut out artwork that you find from other sources and paste it onto your flyer, but be careful not to reproduce art that has been copyrighted.

Flyers can be distributed in a number of ways. They can be hand delivered, mailed, left in piles at locations throughout the area (i.e. churches, stores etc.), put up on bulletin boards in your community or inserted into other publications. A combination of methods is often best. Do not put flyers or any other information into mailboxes! This violates federal law; only USPS is allowed to deliver to mailboxes. Instead, leave flyers under doormats or tucked into doors.



Courtesy of City Repair Ottawa



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Note that there is a large difference in the time that it takes to simply flyer a neighborhood versus “knock and talk.” And you can recruit volunteers from outside of the neighborhood to help flyer, while only you and your neighbors should do the more in-depth knocking and talking.

### Email Lists

**What?** An organized list of emails compiled into a listserve that allows people who have consistent access to a computer to share information quickly and easily.

Many people seem to have email today, even without owning a personal computer. Libraries offer daily free email access, and many local organizations offer free classes about how to use computers and email systems. Thus, email is becoming a more popular and effective way to ease communication. However, one major concern for using the Internet for neighborhood communication is equal access to information. Some people do not have the choice or do not want to use computers for their communication, and groups must be aware of each individual’s abilities and preferences.

**Why?** Since email has grown to be a widespread method of communication, it is becoming a very useful tool. Through the use of a listserve, a group is able to communicate and document their thoughts regularly.

One added benefit for using a listserve is that it can help create an identity for a neighborhood. For example, the neighbors around the SE 47th and Ivon Intersection Repair in Portland have a listserve named “Copperbeech” for the Copper Beech heritage tree in their park.

**When?** Depending on the group, you might want to use email for meeting announcements, agenda setting or other discussions. Note that no decision should be made via email unless all affected participants agree to this. In the world of formal meetings, groups are usually not allowed to make decisions via email because it violates the open meetings law.



**How?** You can simply gather a list of emails and write messages to each other, or you can set up a formal listserve so that people can write messages to one address that everyone will receive. Yahoo Groups is a popular free listserve host (<http://groups.yahoo.com>), as is Riseup.net (<http://www.riseup.net>), which supports grassroots community projects.

Note that you might want to set up some etiquette and guidelines for posting messages on the listserve so that it is only used for neighborhood business. Also, be aware that anything said online may be replicated and sent to anyone outside of your control.

## Phone Tree and Phone Bank

**What?** A communication network of neighbors via phone.

**Why?** An efficient method of spreading information through the neighborhood without leaving your home. Also useful because it provides a personal connection for people while leaving enough distance for each person to feel safe and on their own turf.

**When?** Great for meeting invitations, reminders or other communications.

**How?** Once you have established communication with your neighbors and collected phone numbers, a “phone tree” can be set up. The tree can be as simple as each person in the core group dividing up the list of neighbors. Or you can have multiple tiers in which one person calls about five people and then each of those people calls five, and so on. You can also simplify this into a circle so that each person is responsible for calling one other person, and then the last person calls the first to complete the loop. This method gives each person responsibility and encourages them to be an active member of the neighborhood.

A “phone bank” is a night when a few people get together for a few hours to make phone calls together. This only works if you have multiple phone lines or people willing to use their cell phones. This method is a fun way to support people in “getting through” the list of neighbors to call!



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**How?** Tip: make sure you have a script or list of talking points for people to cover while calling. This helps guide the caller and ensures that all of the information is conveyed. It is also helpful to have some kind of “tick sheet” to record the outcome of the call (for example, “not home,” “left message” and a space for comments).

### Social Gatherings/Potlucks, etc.

**What?** Fun, informal times to meet, often around food.

**Why?** Don’t underestimate the importance of informal conversation! How many times have you heard about the most remarkable discoveries and solutions being written on napkins at a bar? Or how about the quote saying, “The revolution will happen at a party.” A lot of good communication occurs in informal settings.

**When?** As often as you’d like! Have fun!!

**How?** Any way you feel inspired. Host a potluck, invite neighbors to the street to play four-square, have a holiday party, organize a dinner where you go from house to house through the course of the night. Or just make a pot of tea and invite passers-by onto your porch.

### Informational Kiosk or Bulletin Board

**What?** A public place to post information and/or record comments.

**Why?** Get people outside using their public space! This also encourages spontaneous interactions between neighbors and shares information with passers-by.

**When?** Until most people refer to the board for information, you will have to use this method as a supplement to others.



**How?** This method only works if people walk outside to read the bulletin board. Try putting up a temporary “information station” in someone’s front yard or corner property, and encourage people to read it. You could do this with a simple piece of plywood (with a rain cover). Each time you publish a flyer or have a meeting you can post the information. You might want to leave a book or paper for people to write comments. And as always, leave contact information so that people with questions or interests in getting involved can do so!



## Community Meetings

**What?** Formal neighborhood meetings.

**Why?** These are the times to have discussions and make decisions as a group.

**When?** Regularly. During each stage of the project, you should decide how often to meet. Some meetings will be logistical planning meetings and others will be design workshops. Work with the core group and your meeting facilitator to determine an appropriate schedule.

**How?** The agenda should be planned in advance and people should be notified multiple times about the meeting. Some may be smaller core group meetings, others may be larger and more formal. Refer to the meetings section on the next page for more information on running effective meetings.



## MEETINGS



Many people are not familiar with participating in meetings, working groups, committees or design workshops. Be sure to follow a clear structure and take the time to explain meeting basics. Setting the agenda well ahead of time and sharing it with participants will help people feel more prepared. A strong facilitator will make sure that everyone feels comfortable with the process.

A few notes about running effective meetings:

- Introduce yourself to new participants at the beginning of meetings.
- Lead go-around introductions to welcome people. Use ice-breakers that allow people to share cultural backgrounds or personal interests.
- Go over the agenda, explain groundrules and explain how the meeting will be run.
- Ask questions to check-in and make sure everyone understands the process.





- Have snacks and drinks available. Rotate having someone make a special dessert, or organize a potluck. Invite people to share different family or cultural recipes.
- Create multiple ways for people to express themselves. Some people tend not to want to share in a larger group setting. Other options include one-on-one discussions, written comments on note cards or breaking up into small groups and reporting back to the larger group.
- Consider changes to your meeting time and physical location if they are barriers to participation for people you are attempting to accommodate.
- If complex issues come up which are unfamiliar to new people, suggest a follow-up discussion or presentation in a smaller, more intimate setting to allow for more individual interaction.
- Listen to concerns expressed by people. Be honest about what you can do.

One useful tool in meetings is called the “parking lot.” This is a place (usually a piece of paper up on the wall) where comments and questions that are not on target to the conversation-at-hand can be recorded and addressed at a more appropriate time. You can also include concerns that arise, or a discussion point that does not get resolved. It is a way to acknowledge an idea but come back to it later. This can help keep the discussion moving while still honoring each person’s contributions.

## VOLUNTEERS

Your community is a wonderful volunteer base. People generally like to help with neighborhood undertakings; you just have to ask and create the opportunity for folks to participate! Many people find this to be a great project to express their passions or try out a new skill in a safe environment. Volunteering gives neighbors ownership of the project.

### Volunteer Roles

You will find many areas for volunteers to contribute outside of meetings and design workshops. Give people options. Everyone has

Some common meeting ground-rules are:

- *Listen more than you speak, unless you are playing a specific role.*
- *Let people finish thoughts before speaking.*
- *Acknowledge what someone has offered and build upon that.*
- *Don't interrupt each other.*
- *Be relevant but not repetitive.*
- *Be careful not to monopolize the conversation.*
- *No ideas are bad ideas.*



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Envisioning possibilities with cardboard intersection models and a variety of art supplies and toys

different skills, interests and abilities; strive to provide a place for anyone to plug in. You may be surprised by the talents and ideas people share when they feel safe to express them!

There are a few ways to unite an individual with a great volunteer job: ask about their strengths and interests and then tell them about specific tasks that might make sense for them, or share what you need help with and let them self-identify what they can offer.

Examples of volunteer opportunities include:

- Organizing data and logistics
- “People’s people,” talking to people, informing them, introducing them to neighborhood happenings
- Organizing events or parts of events
- Computer work
- Graphic design
- Art, music, writing, editing
- Going to meetings
- Political advocacy
- Forming connections to universities, organizations, businesses
- Translation/interpretation into other languages
- “Making an ask:” asking people and businesses for services, funding, time, etc.
- Taking walks around the neighborhood: distributing information and/or keeping an eye on things

Everyone wants to belong and feel part of a fun community project. Let them align their natural abilities and interests with the needs of the group.



## Managing Volunteers

There are six basic ingredients to managing volunteers for this project: Fun, Meaningful work, Staying constructive, Not too many meetings, Redundancy and Accessibility.

1. **Fun:** If they're not having fun, they won't come back. Fun is the glue that keeps everyone together and makes a meaningful experience for you and everyone else involved. Bring drinks and snacks to meetings or make them snack potlucks. Let the meetings start a little late if there's a good conversation happening. Host a spontaneous group game during meeting breaks or when you see a few people in the street. Try to make meetings a good mix of visioning and organizational work so that people stay engaged.
2. **Meaningful work:** Work is meaningful when you connect a volunteer to a position they're interested in doing. Keep an eye out for volunteers who seem uninterested in their volunteer task. If this happens, talk to them individually about what's going on for them and see if you can come to another option together. Maybe they just want to use a different skill, or maybe there's some group dynamics going on that you weren't aware of. Just initiating the discussion to find a solution will make this project more meaningful for both you and them.
3. **Stay constructive:** We all feel overloaded sometimes: we have too much to think about at work, the project seems too big, the house is a mess and we find ourselves "stuck" at another neighborhood meeting. At times like these, it's important to remember why we began to do placemaking work in the first place: to improve the quality of life in our neighborhood through our connection to others.
4. **Don't hold too many meetings:** No one likes going to weekly three-hour meetings (well, some of us do). Try to make meetings efficient and encourage committees to take on certain areas of work. If your group has agreed, you can hold a lot of discussions via email. If people feel like there are too many meetings, consider extending your overall timeline. The project may take longer, but it's important that people feel like the project is fun and worthwhile.

*The Sunnyside Piazza project ended up involving three architects, two engineers and five specialized artisans—all as volunteers. The project wasn't unusually complicated; it simply inspired and excited these individuals, who then combined their talents to help implement a project that was designed collectively by the neighborhood. The process was very collaborative, and the Piazza reflects this in its strong design theme, varied details and quality craftsmanship.*



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5. Support and redundancy: Make sure each volunteer has a structure for guidance and support. They should know how they fit into the overall project, who is there to offer mentorship if needed, and what resources are available to them. Have a back up plan for managing roles or tasks that people are not able to finish.
6. Accessibility: Though most people want to be involved in their neighborhood, there are numerous social, physical and time barriers that limit participation. Many of these barriers can be broken down with beautifully simple changes or ideas. For example, for meetings:
  - Hold them when people can make them. Is it early morning breakfast/coffee? During lunches on a weekday? Evenings? During the weekend? Accommodate busy schedules!
  - Choose a building that is wheelchair-accessible or go outside to be more welcoming to those who are differently-abled in the neighborhood.
  - Choose a place with a separate room so kids can be loud (but be sure to play some games with everyone!) and consider hiring a babysitter or rotating the duty among parents.
  - Invite a translator for those in your neighborhood for whom English is not their primary language.
  - You could also host meetings for specific groups in your neighborhood: throw an “Elders’ Party,” “Latino Party,” “Kids’ Party,” etc. in the street.

In the end, a diverse placemaking project is fun, educational and something to be proud of.

*“During my recent career reassessment I applied things I learned from my work with City Repair: the model of recognizing, understanding and using my own existing personal assets and traits, as a reminder that there are places to work that already are a fit for who I am, and that I don’t have to re-create myself in order to become employable. Finding those places are in my best interest, not fixing something that I think may be lacking. The best fit is the one that is a match for my innate skills and passions. I think what may have happened is that I learned how to find community within myself, which I am sure will make me a far more effective community member.”*

—Cynthia Shick, Seattle City Repair organizer



## DOCUMENTATION

It is important to document each step of your Intersection Repair project. Your local government (in Portland, the Office of Transportation) will want to see the extent and responses of your public involvement process so that they are assured that the whole neighborhood indeed supports the project. It also helps to have detailed information to refer to for future reports, grants and publicity articles.

Suggestions for documentation are as follows:

- A copy of each flyer or email that you produce
- Dates and method of all communications (flyers, emails, etc.)
- Numbers and geographic area of houses/people with whom you are in communication
- Responses, reactions, outcomes
- Dates and outcome of contact with neighborhood association
- All meeting agendas and minutes
- Photos of events and meetings
- Drawings of projects, and sketches of their evolutions

One Intersection Repair group found it extremely useful to maintain a binder with a chronological record of the items listed above. In fact, the up-to-date and thorough organization of their project, as showcased in their binder, was influential in gaining the confidence of City officials.





## FUNDING

Intersection Repairs are an expression of sharing. Just as we are reclaiming the commons by transforming intersections into public gathering places, we are also rebuilding our sense of community and cohesiveness through the process. What is built is reflective of what is shared. Many neighborhoods have been surprised at the abundance of useful materials already in their possession and the resourcefulness of material procurement they are able to accomplish.

Community projects are based by nature on utilizing resources that are abundant and available. While there are still costs associated with building new gathering places, they are kept at a minimum through the creative re-use and acquisition of materials. With the current intersection projects, funding and materials have come from a variety of sources: donations from businesses and individuals, fundraising activities and events, grants and the re-use of materials available in the neighborhood.

Below is an overview of the various forms of funding for Intersection Repairs.

### Time, Skills, Ideas and Resources in the Neighborhood

*Intersection Repair  
is a reflection of  
what a local com-  
munity has to offer  
itself.*

After a gathering where people have had a chance to meet their neighbors, people naturally tend to feel better about the place where they live, and their spirit of generosity is engaged. Often people find that they have more in common with their neighbors than they thought, especially when they begin to address shared issues. People suddenly find a purpose for those things they have been saving for years, whether it's an old door knob, a can of paint, some wood, a pile of books or nails. Other people realize that they may be able to contribute other essential resources like time, leadership, expertise (in building, fundraising, making flyers, talking to people, etc.), or connections to other people or groups. We have seen this spirit of sharing emerge in communities of all economic levels, cultural backgrounds and political beliefs. Everyone has something to bring.



## Fundraising Events and Activities

There is a multitude of creative fundraising possibilities! For example, one group asked a local restaurant to donate profits from one evening's service and then broadly publicized the event. Other groups have organized neighborhood garage sales, art sales and musical events. One group hosted a pancake picnic in which they cooked the breakfast with donated ingredients and then asked picnic goers for donations. Be creative! Many people will respond when they know that they are supporting a neighborhood effort.

## Partnerships

By involving your neighborhood association (where applicable) and other local groups at the beginning of the project, you open up many possibilities for support, ideas, resources and funds.

## In-kind Donations

Local businesses will often donate food, materials and other means of support for neighborhood projects. If they can identify with the project, even simply becoming more connected to the neighborhood they serve, they will often respond generously. You just need to ask!

You might need to write a letter explaining what you are asking for, and may need to provide a tax ID number and even 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status in order to receive a donation (another reason to partner with your neighborhood association or other non-profit). Basic items to include are as follows:

- Who you are, what you are doing and why it is important (and why it is meaningful for that business, if possible).
- What you are asking them for. Be as exact as possible.
- When you need it by, and how you will get it from them.
- Tax ID number.
- Person and contact information.
- THANK YOU!

A few days after you send the letter, call them to follow-up.

*Community wealth arises from the immensity of community participation, and compensation is meaningful relationships and new local gathering places. The economy of sharing is one of the most powerful elements of this project.*



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Don't forget to thank any business that supported your project in any way. Businesses especially appreciate certificates of appreciation or thank you cards that they can hang in their store or office. And as always, one of the best ways to thank a business for their support is to return the favor: make an effort to spread the word and employ their services!

### Individual Donations

People feel good when they give. In offering your community the opportunity to contribute financially, you are opening up another avenue for people to be part of the project. It may feel uncomfortable at first to ask people for money, but if you don't ask, you may not receive! And remember that people will only give at a level that they are able; you may be pleasantly surprised by the gifts that your community offers. People will appreciate the opportunity to give to a group that they know personally and where they will directly see the benefits of their gift. So ask!

### Grants

Due to the multifaceted nature of Intersection Repair projects, you may qualify for grants from a variety of sources, for example grants directed towards public art, the environment, public health, community development, traffic calming and pedestrian safety issues. Explore grants on the Internet or talk to local community development organizations, arts organizations or neighborhood associations about possible sources. Your city and state governments are also good places to look for funding.

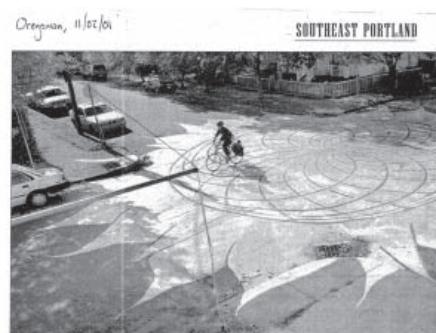


## PUBLICITY

Every neighborhood that comes together and stands up to create a sense of place in a context of social isolation serves to inspire others. One of the most powerful ways to teach is to share a good story. Various forms of media can help you by literally broadcasting and magnifying the impact of your work, inspiring thousands of other people to take that first bold step of knocking on a neighbor's door. And getting an article publicized is a great affirmation of your efforts!

There are many tips for attracting media attention to your project. In general, remember that the person reading your press release or listening to your story has probably never heard of you, your project or any groundbreaking ideas that you may be talking about (i.e., converting a street intersection into a public square or using natural building materials). Also remember this person hears a lot of stories and probably has a very short time with which to decide whether or not to publicize yours. Make your headline and the first sentence captivating!

Some common forms of publicity include posters, bills, community radio, community calendars, trailers/public service announcements on commercial radio, cable TV interviews, newspapers, bilingual/alternative language news outlets, other print media and Internet news outlets, TV stations, listserves and other groups.



A large sunflower painted on the asphalt in the Southeast Portland neighborhood could turn out to be more than a decoration. Supporters hope it will slow traffic and even create a public plaza where residents can sit and socialize. It is the second Southeast Portland intersection decorated in accordance with city regulations.

ROBIE JENSEN  
THE OREGONIAN

## A splash of color aims to help build community

Sunnyside residents, who painted a sunflower in an intersection, also hope to slow down traffic

By FRED LEESON

How much can you expect from a few gallons of paint?

Residents who recently painted a massive sunflower on a street intersection in the Sunnyside neighborhood of Southeast Portland are aiming to slow down traffic and a splash of bright color.

They'd like to see slower traffic, greater community interaction and a place where pedestrians will want to walk, stop and talk with each other.

Paint alone might not achieve all that. The giant sunflower — a symbol of the Sunnyside neighborhood — is the result of a neighborhood that's come together to make a difference.

Now, with a few more steps, the neighborhood's plans to convert a typical residential intersection into a transit-style plaza.

Other elements of the plan include adding planter boxes, new sprouts to be followed hopefully by trees, and a paved plaza with mostly curb extensions to make crossings easier for pedestrians.

"It's not as much about physical changes in the neighborhood as it is about social cohesion," said Jan

Semenza, a Portland State University associate professor of public health who lives in one of the surrounding houses. "It's to attract more attention to the intersection and paves the way for the intersection section of Southeast Shermer and

Sherrard.

The Sunnyside Sunflower Initiative is the second in Portland to undergo an innovative paint job on the pavement. After activists painted a sunflower on a street in the Sellwood neighborhood at Southeast North Avenue and Shermer Street in 2008, city transportation officials granted permission, the city government has agreed something it least expected.

"There was quite a bit of support for the sunflower in the neighborhood," recalled Jillian Denner, who organized the project. "It's a place where people walk and a place where pedestrians will want to walk, stop and talk with each other."

Paint alone might not achieve all that. The giant sunflower — a symbol of the Sunnyside neighborhood — is the result of a neighborhood that's come together to make a difference.

Now, with a few more steps, the neighborhood's plans to convert a typical residential intersection into a transit-style plaza.

"We have had some discussions with other neighborhood groups," said Daniel Lewis, a co-director of City Repair. "But Sunnyside really seemed ahead."

Seminza, the spark behind the project, a native of Zurich, began growing up in an environment where people lived and worked in the same neighborhood. "I grew up to live in the so-called 'faculty ghetto,'" thinking it would be an urban environment.

"I learned it was just like suburban, he said.

The requirements of outdoor living

helped revitalize Sunnyside's commercial district, the Sunnyside Sunflower Initiative likely will attract more attention to the intersection and paves the way for the intersection section of Southeast Shermer and

Sherrard.

However, there are loops to jump through before a neighborhood can start decorating its public spaces. These requirements include:

- Unanimous approval by property owners and residents of all four corners adjoining the intersection.
- Signatures of approval from at least 90 percent of residents, including street numbers, within the city traffic engineer's jurisdiction.
- Approval of the design by the city traffic engineer.

The City Repair Project, a neighborhood group that decorated Shermer Street and then worked with the city government in developing the regulations, helped meet the requirements to do it legally.

Once the neighborhood has the necessary resources to believe that can slow down drivers, they drive on. In this case, the Sunnyside Sunflower Initiative, the group that decorated Shermer Street and then worked with the city government in developing the regulations, helped meet the requirements to do it legally.

"We have had some discussions with other neighborhood groups," said Daniel Lewis, a co-director of City Repair. "But Sunnyside really seemed ahead."

Seminza, the spark behind the project, a native of Zurich, began growing up in an environment where people lived and worked in the same neighborhood. "I grew up to live in the so-called 'faculty ghetto,'" thinking it would be an urban environment.

"I learned it was just like suburban," he said.

### PAINTING THE TOWN

**WHAT:** A city ordinance allows residents who meet certain requirements to paint certain sections of city streets at intersections.

**WHO:** The decorations allow a neighborhood to paint a section of a city street to make it more attractive and help enhance the neighborhood.

**HOW:** A great social experiment.

Semenza, who holds a doctorate in molecular biology, moved to live in Sunnyside because the lack of sense of place in the neighborhood with a mix of housing and commercial uses. He thinks the Sunnyside Sunflower Initiative and art would enhance the neighborhood.

With City Repair's advice, Semenza held a series of meetings to discuss the idea and to get the project and develop support for it.

Then Beretta, a Portland artist, came up with the idea of using spray paint and provided a metal arch to lay out the design on the pavement.

Joanne Olejnik, a Sunnyside resident who lives near the Sunnyside Sunflower, said the neighborhood is "a mix of people. It's not something you can name," she said. "That's part of its purpose. It makes you feel good."

City Commissioner Charlie Hales and his assistant, Berwell, showed up Sept. 22 when the Sunnyside Sunflower and neighbors painted it.

"There was a definite energy in the room," Hales said. "Everyone came up and asked, 'Is it OK for them to be doing this?' It gave me great pleasure to say yes."

You can reach Fred Leeson at 503-224-5540 or at [freel@news.oregonlive.com](mailto:freel@news.oregonlive.com).



# Chapter 5

**The Southeast Examiner**

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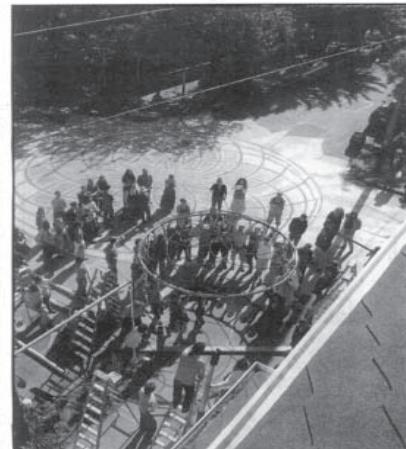
## Dome-raising celebration at Sunnyside Piazza

By Jan C. Semenza

On Sunday May 19th, as part of a grassroots initiative in the Sunnyside neighborhood, the community installed a metal dome, towering 13 feet above the Sunnyside Piazza on SE 33rd and Yamhill. Over 100 participants helped to raise the 300 pound dome that reflects the sunflower design painted in the middle of the intersection onto four wooden pillars. Three wooden trellises planned for the remaining three corners of the intersection are still under construction and are scheduled for completion in coming months.

Matt Cartwright, a local artist, created the artwork for the dome sculpture and trellises and coordinated the construction. The dome sculpture is designed according to the scheme of a sunflower: iron rods spiral out from the center with 5 spirals in one direction and 8 in the other, according to the Fibonacci Series that characterizes a natural sunflower seed head. The structure was welded together in

Katia Bretsch's driveway (thank you Katie) and carried to the Piazza. There, a large number of residents, friends of Sunnyside Piazza and workshop participants of the Village Building Convergence joined forces to lift the structure onto its new home. In a metaphorical act, the large dome was raised onto ladders and installed over the sidewalk. Chris Waymire and Jon Meyer were instrumental in securing the dome to the hatches and bolting it to the footings. We collected written comments from participants: "I have never seen so many active, creative, awesome people from one community gathering together and having so much fun making their home such a wonderful place." "It is not only aesthetically pleasing but it clearly demonstrates the community involvement and dedication to a united and sustainable future." "I love seeing so many of my neighbors getting together, taking pride in their community. The 33rd and Yamhill intersection is a place of beauty, and I am glad to have it in my neighborhood."<sup>1</sup>



*Dome raising celebration*  
In the past, The Sunnyside Neighborhood has been plagued by a variety of problems, including large transient populations, crime, drugs, so- der, street litter, noise, and traffic violations. In response to these urban problems, the community developed a three-phase plan to

*turn to page 15*

## Intersection becomes gathering place

*from cover*

enhance the physical environment of the neighborhood with the overall goal of improving the livability and vitality of the community. In collaboration with The City Repair Project<sup>1</sup>, a local non-profit organization, a place-based design was developed for a public space in and around the intersection: the Sunnyside Piazza. A sunflower, the neighborhood symbol, was selected as the unifying theme of this three-phase plan to enhance social cohesion in the community. While the plan is based on a variety of artistic features intended to reverse urban decay, more importantly, neighborhood organizing is anticipated to cultivate social

connectedness and a sense of community. The first phase of this plan, the installation of the "Sunnyside Piazza" street mural, solar-powered fountain and information kiosk, and art wall was completed in May 2002. The second phase of this community initiated neighborhood enhancement project was supported by a grant from the City of Portland, Bureau of Housing and Community Development, and approved by City development engineers.

As part of this plan the neighbors have engaged in the Sunnyside Piazza enhancement project, as a reflection of community problem solving. In the past month, Renee Pyne organized a block party to repaint

the sunflower and Griff Jack had a workshop creating glass mosaic mural on her retaining wall next to the Sunnyside Piazza; Katie Bretsch designed the artistic composition of Koi fish surfacing on the wall. Lisa Weasel built a beautiful poetry garden on 33rd and Salmon consisting of a cob bench, lantern and poetry exchange box that will bring more art and culture to Sunnyside and will invite passers-by to read and exchange poetry on rocks and tiles. During future block parties, the neighbors will get together to plant and maintain hanging gardens on trellises on the three corners and install eight planters in the parking lanes within 15 feet of the inter-

section in order to enforce the no-parking zone that will prevent parked cars from blocking vision clearance for on-coming traffic.

Taken together, these activities allow neighbors to build social capital and create a public square where neighbors and by-passers can interact and get to know each other. By building social relationships and mutual cooperation around collective problem solving, the residents of Sunnyside have embarked on an urban experiment to modify the physical design of an intersection, as a manifestation of reclaiming the neighborhood. The project is educational as well; university and high school students have been brought to the intersection on field trips to observe the Fibonacci series and to learn the concept of mathematical relationships in nature. With these new features we can all enjoy the richness of the urban experience at the Sunnyside Piazza.

(Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup>cityrepair.org; cited Jan. 1, 2003



## PERMITTING

*Compiled by Steve Wissow, City Repair Permits Coordinator*

### Crossing Official Boundaries: How City Code and Community Placemaking Interplay<sup>1</sup>

While placemaking comes from the ground up so that neighbors take responsibility for growing the community in which they live, official government offices also take responsibility for the quality of other elements in your home and neighborhood. The city in which you live has various laws intended to promote safety on both public and private property; there are rules about how to build a safe house as well as guidelines about how to build a safe and accessible street and sidewalk system. Depending on the location of your placemaking project (public or private property), you may work with one or several departments in city government who ensure the safety and coordination of building projects and public services.

#### Basic guidelines: public and private property

##### *Private Property*

Let's say you want to build a bench on the corner of a private property. There may be certain rules in your city regulating what you are allowed to build within a certain distance from the property line. In Portland, the area 15 feet or less from the front property line is called the "front-yard setback," and the area five feet or less from either of the side property lines is called the "side-yard setback" (these distances are typical, and may vary across the city).

If you choose to locate community features on private property they may fall under guidelines such as the following, which are the regulations in Portland. Vertical objects located in the front- or side-yard setback of a house may be 3 feet by 3 feet by 8 feet tall (surface of ground to top of object). Walls located in setbacks may be up to four feet high and have no limit in length. Benches built in front or side yards during Intersection Repair projects have come under wall regulations because they often incorporate one or more "vertical objects" with a section or two of "wall."

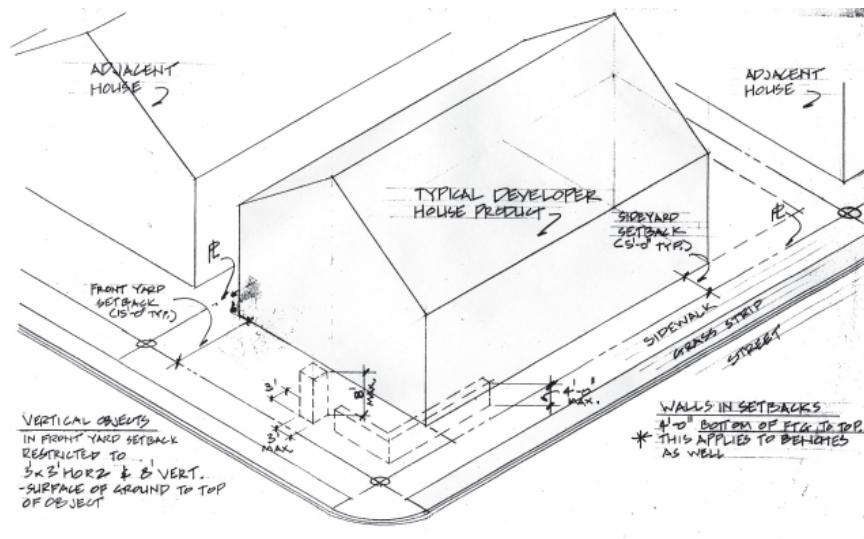
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<sup>1</sup> This section has been reviewed and approved by the Portland Office of Transportation, May 2006.



## Chapter 5

If your structure in the front- or side-yard setbacks falls outside of these dimensions, the law in Portland requires you to seek approval with the Bureau of Planning. Such approval can take one or both of two forms: in the short-term, the Bureau of Planning can issue an Adjustment, allowing you to build outside of the guidelines at a specific site. In the long-term, you can engage Planning in a revision of zoning code. In Spring 2006, The City Repair Project approached Portland's Bureau of Planning to initiate both of these methods. First, in order to build a roof on Portland International Hostel's Community Cob Bench on the corner of its property, City Repair sought an Adjustment, and then, because the same issue would arise around the city as more sites planned roofs over their benches, we sought to revise the zoning code.



Drawing of how possible Intersection Repair elements might fit into typical Portland residential neighborhood setback requirements.

### *Public Right-of-Way*

The City Repair Project has extensive experience working with the Portland Office of Transportation (PDOT) on the following steps. Contact City Repair for assistance.

In your city, a part of the local government holds responsibility for maintaining the safety and accessibility of what is called the “public right-of-way.” The street surfaces, sidewalk and grassy planting strip between



the sidewalk and road are part of the public right-of-way. In Portland, PDOT holds that responsibility; the relationship between City Repair and PDOT is an example of how to interact with the steward of the public right-of-way in your city.

PDOT's primary goal is to ensure safety, though they also seek to support community placemaking efforts. In fact, PDOT holds deep appreciation for community placemaking projects because these communities help them accomplish important elements of stewardship and beautification. While some may see PDOT regulations simply as restrictions on public freedom, others might see placemaking projects in the right-of-way merely as safety hazards and nuisances. Over the past decade, an evolving relationship has grown between PDOT and communities undergoing placemaking projects such that both groups tend to understand each others' valuable goals and recognize the considerable areas of common ground. We all seek to create a safe, functional and lovely city.

Almost all built elements in the public right-of-way will have to be reviewed for structural soundness. The Office of Transportation will do this internally as part of their review process. If you want to simplify and speed up the process, you can choose elements with the same parameters of those that have already been permitted at Intersection Repair sites (refer to page 132). These include various benches, kiosks and other placemaking elements.

## **Reasonable and Sustainable Expectations**

As a neighborhood group, it is good to understand that a government organization often has a lot on its plate. Just as community members have to juggle all parts of their lives when coming to meetings, the people at PDOT have a lot of projects to balance as well. Therefore, structuring your timeline such that your group can submit requests in advance of when you will need to receive service back will directly benefit the outcome of your project (and certainly everyone's well-being). This allows everyone a reasonable amount of time to do their part.

Depending on what you are asking for, you may want to budget a different amount of time:



- For a permit, call as soon as you can. A minimum comfortable amount of time is about four months; any less time than that can end up feeling like a squeeze.
- For a meeting, call three to four weeks in advance to schedule and allow time for confirmation. Your government organization may only be able to schedule up to a week in advance, or it may already be booked for the coming month and a half—so build flexibility and extra time into your overall timeline!
- For data of some sort (e.g., a list of properties whose residents' signatures are required), call as soon as you know that you will need the data. If you don't know what you specifically want, it can help both sides to call first anyway to ask what kind of data are available, what your official will have to do to gather different kinds/amounts of data, how long that process might take and what your role might be.

In addition to helping your officials help you by setting a reasonable timeline, it is also always okay to check in with someone working on your project to see how things are going; ask if there is anything you can do to help them in their process and communicate your needs in a manner that includes theirs as well.

### Intersection Repair Projects

The Portland Office of Transportation supports Intersection Repair as a creative, neighborhood-based project that reflects the will of the neighborhood. Since the process between City Repair and PDOT continues to evolve each year, and because placemaking can lead to many different physical forms, PDOT does not want to codify every detail of the process. Rather, PDOT keeps in mind its goals of safety and accessibility as it reviews the proposals that neighbors present. City Ordinance #172207 established Intersection Repair in Portland in the year 2000. Revised in 2001, Ordinance #175937 specifies several requirements for location, design and process that each proposed site must meet. For a full text of the Ordinance, refer to page 26, but here is a summary of the main points:

- Fewer than 2500 cars per day pass through the intersection on an average day (combined all directions).



- 80% of residents living on either side of the two closest blocks of the streets that go through the intersection must give their signature in support of detailed designs and location. Every resident living adjacent to the proposed project must give their signature in support. One signature is required per house.
- A permit is given for a specific design (this necessitates a review process before finally requesting a permit).
- Beyond the ordinance, PDOT asks for evidence of the community design and decision-making process, as well as a maintenance plan for the future.

### *The Petition*

The final step of your design process before seeking a permit will be to collect signatures of support from your neighbors; however, there is a long road of community design and consensus before you reach this point. *The petition is the absolute last step of the process*; in fact, when you go out to collect signatures of support, your neighbors should already be familiar with the final designs and have taken part in the process. The petition is just a formality; consensus should already have been reached. We cannot emphasize this point enough: the process of co-creating the design is the essence of the Intersection Repair, not the final petition for getting a permit. PDOT concurs with this sentiment; the reason they support these projects is because of the widespread neighborhood involvement in the process.

PDOT has chosen to provide the neighborhood groups with an official list of homes they must approach for signatures. This makes it easier for the City to confirm the required support. It also saves time and simplifies our job at sites with atypical locations in the grid, such as at a T-intersection, on a dead-end street and other places where it is complicated to determine who has a direct stake in the project.

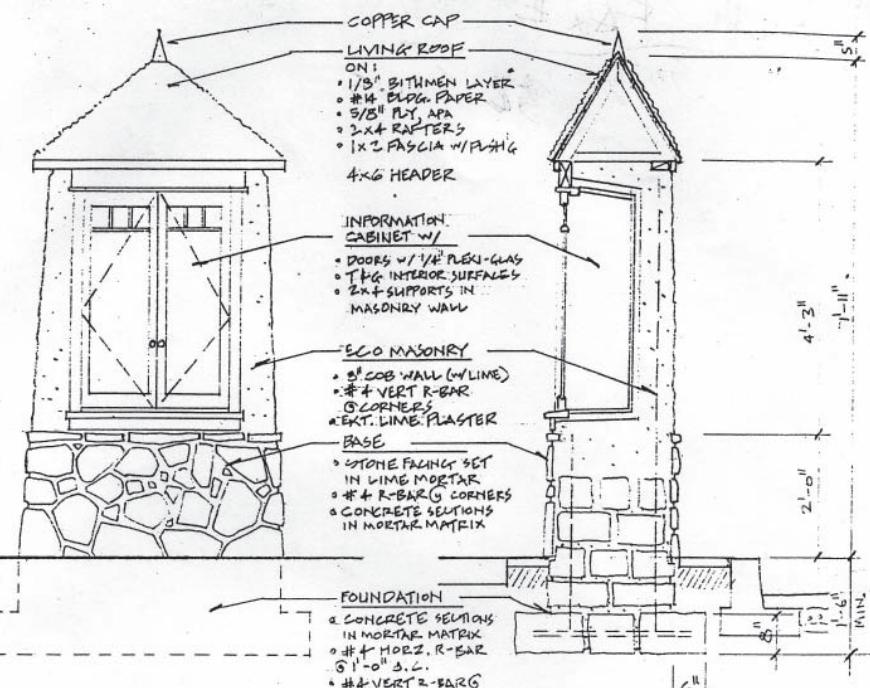
### *Documentation of Community Design Process*

At the end of the review process, when designs are finalized, PDOT will want documentation of the community involvement process. They ultimately see this with the petition of signatures you will collect, but they want to know the details of outreach and involvement.



# Chapter 5

The design for the kiosk at the Red and Black Cafe and Sunnyside Piazza, Portland's first permitted natural building features in the public right-of-way. These modest amenities have opened the door for more ambitious urban natural building projects.



### ELEVATION

1/2" = 1'-0"

#4 HORZ R-BAR (10 1/2" O.C.  
TYP.)

FOOTING  
6" TYP.  
3" CLR  
TYP.

FOOTING & BASES OF  
MORTARED CONC.  
SECTIONS, TYP.

#4 VERT. R-BAR  
CORNERS  
3" CLR, TYP.

### SECTION

1/2" = 1'-0" - 4'-0"

2' 0" IN  
MASONRY  
TYP.  
ECO MASONRY  
WALL W/ LIME  
PLASTER

### CABINET PLAN

1/2" = 1'-0"

LIVING ROOF  
W/ SEEDUM ON  
2X4 FRAME,  
RAFTERS 1 1/2" O.C.  
SEE SECTION

COPPER CAP

### FOUNDATION PLAN

1/2" = 1'-0"

### COMMUNITY KIOSK

PROTOTYPE

3-21-03

### \*COMMUNITY KIOSK

AT RED & BLACK CAFE

### ROOF PLAN

1/2" = 1'-0"

Things to include are:

- The names and contact info for your “core group.”
- Timeline: when you started talking about a project, sent out flyers or other announcements, had meetings, etc.
- Numbers: how many people you flyeried, spoke to or that came to meetings.
- Neighborhood association: when you went to meetings and if you have a letter of support from them.
- Responses: how people have responded to these ideas, what the general sentiment is in the neighborhood and any wonderful success stories.
- Concerns: what people had concerns with and how those were incorporated into the project.
- Responsibility and plan for maintenance: how often and in which ways your place will be maintained and who is responsible for organizing this.
- Sample flyers and other materials are always good to include.

### *Dissent*

Sometimes a person will avoid talking with their neighbors and go directly to PDOT or City Council members to register a complaint or concern. Don’t worry; City officials are used to this! It is important, however, to contact the official with information about your public outreach process, explaining the opportunities that the individual in question had to share concerns directly with the neighborhood core group. City Council and PDOT officials will be more sympathetic if they see that there has been a transparent organizational and decision-making structure and a high level of endorsement from neighbors, the neighborhood association and the general community. That’s the “Portland way”!



### Step-by-Step

Contact PDOT (or the relevant local department in your area) as soon as your group shows interest in enhancing the public right-of-way at a specific site, and schedule an initial meeting where a representative individual or group from your neighborhood will meet with PDOT. In this example timeline, there will be three meetings total.

At the first meeting with PDOT, you will present the initial general ideas your community has had for a project. Use this meeting to ask for advice from the officials on what helps projects work from their end, and ask if there are any particular issues to consider at your site. Using the site location you propose (or the list of sites), PDOT will then record the traffic data on the appropriate streets, and determine if there are few enough cars to meet standards for the Intersection Repair ordinance.

PDOT will also want to see documentation of your community's general vision. Write a paragraph about your site, why you are doing this project, what it means to the community, etc. Is this a particular phase of a project, or is this the whole project? Are there plans for the future? This gives PDOT the context and background to understand how the projects fit into the neighborhood and other local plans.

Immediately after this first meeting (even on the same day, if possible), contact your point person at PDOT to schedule the second meeting. Set a date that will allow your group to complete exact, color, to-scale designs by that time. Try to find out if the traffic frequency data will be gathered by then. Also, you may be able to find a university class or faculty member to record "before and after" data about traffic speed at your site.

At the second meeting, you will look for much more in-depth responses and guidance from PDOT officials. Bring your designs (detailed, to-scale and in color), including all street paintings and built structures in the public right-of-way. They will be able to give you feedback on structural and design issues, as well as any changes you need to ensure proper visibility from the roadway and sidewalks. Take careful notes. At this meeting (or as soon as possible afterwards), schedule the third, final meeting.



With those notes, go back to your core group to work through any issues brought up at the second meeting and develop solutions that resolve the conflicts that PDOT identified, while continuing to embody your community's vision and values for the structure.

Bring your revised, final designs to the third meeting. Speak to the issues identified at the last meeting by showing how your revised designs resolve those problems.

When all designs are finalized by PDOT, then you can gather signatures of support for the project. You should use the official list of homes that PDOT provides to confirm that you have reached all of the appropriate houses.

Your final submission to PDOT should include:

- Your completed petition
- The final designs: detailed, in color and to-scale
- Documentation of your outreach and design process (as explained above), and the text description of your group's goals

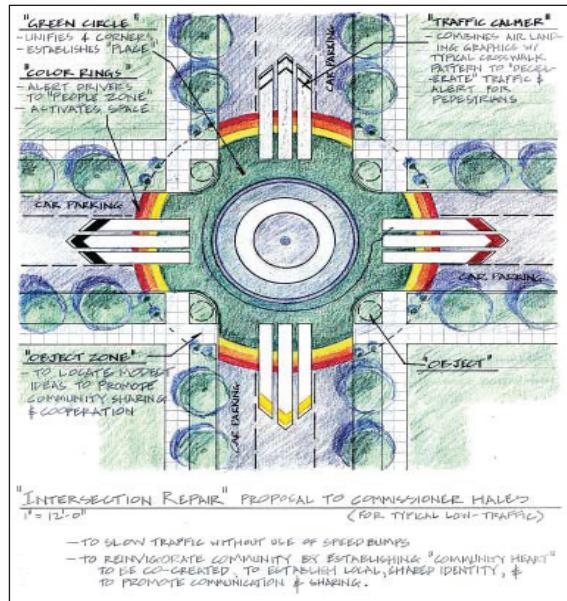
Don't forget to thank and recognize everyone for their hard work!

## Safety and Design Issues

There are many overlapping uses of the public right-of-way. When designing the size and location of any element, you must take into consideration potential conflicts of interest. Below are some issue areas as well as information on how to find out if these will be issues for your site (in Portland).

**Tree roots.** Call the City Forester at 503-823-4489 for assistance in determining if any built element will affect tree health.

**Fire hydrants and utility poles.** Minimum 2-foot clearance from the face of a curb, 5-foot clearance from a fire hydrant and 3-foot clearance



Sample drawing of Intersection Repair project



## Chapter 5

from utility, signal and light poles.

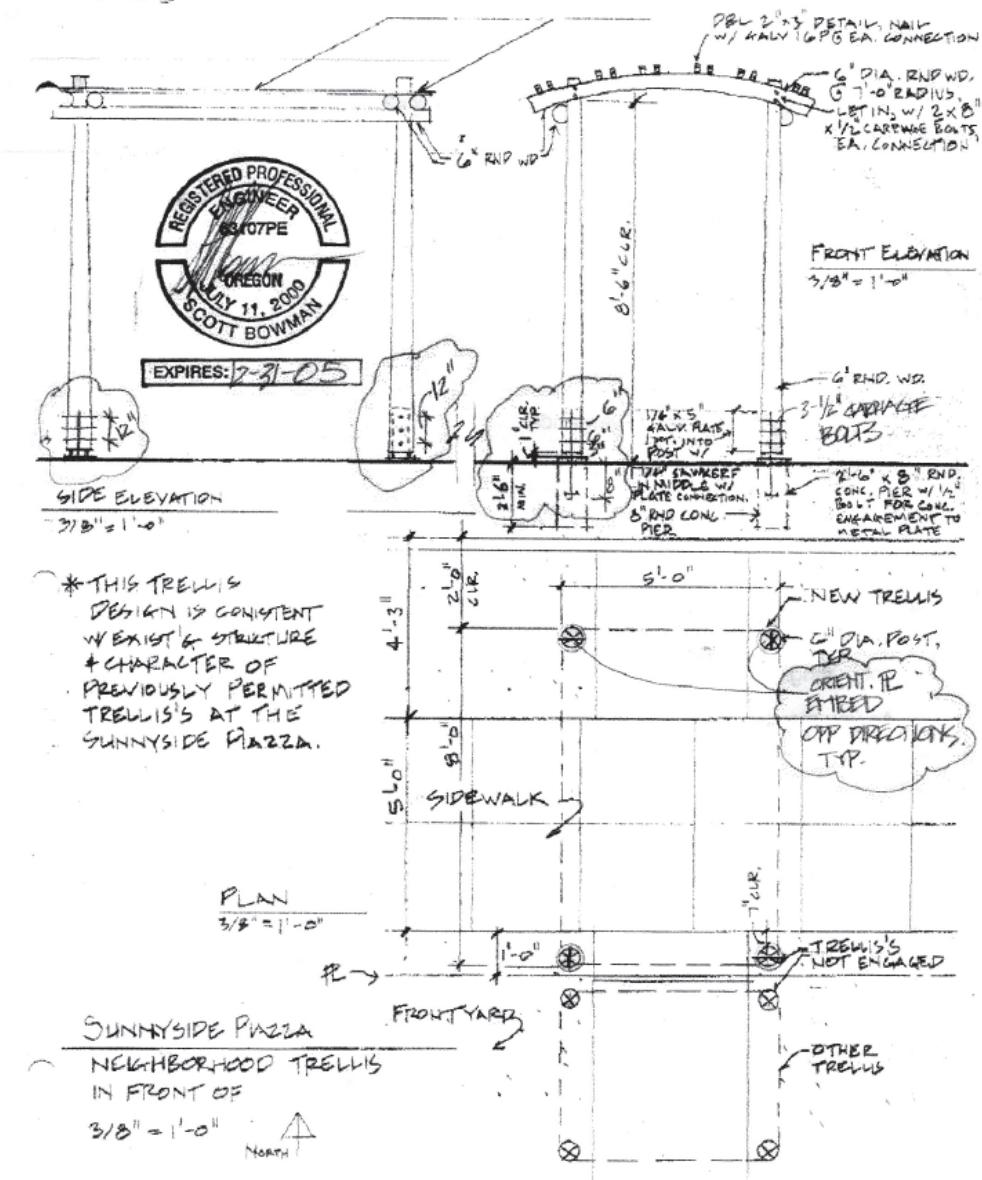
*Underground utilities.* Call Oregon Utility Notification Center at 503-246-6699. Within 48-hours they will mark the streets/sidewalks in your area with lines showing where all of the underground utilities are located. Make sure you record exactly where these lines are and use them in design workshops to determine where not to build!

*Large trucks.* Any built element in the right-of-way that may constrict access by large trucks, such as garbage trucks, will need to be reviewed for traffic design sufficiency.

*Offensive, distasteful or political content.* While somewhat arbitrary, you should ask yourselves if any graphic you create may be offensive to anyone. Unknowingly, some images may be an offensive symbol to someone. Do your best to find out what a graphic means. Usually, however, the neighborhood design and decision-making process ensures that a group will ultimately choose a graphic pleasing to all.

*Design review districts.* Some areas of the city, due to historic or other designation, are required to have design reviews. These areas have what is called a “d-” or “h-overlay.” You can find out if your site is in an overlay zone by checking the zoning designation on Portland Maps ([www.portlandmaps.com](http://www.portlandmaps.com)). The overlay is symbolized with a lower case letter after the zone code. For example, your area may be zoned R5, but if it says R5d than you are required to go through a design review. You might also want to check with the Portland Development Commission to find out if your site is in a Target Area or Business Improvement District.

# The Fundamentals



Depending on what kind of structure you intend to install, other requirements like an engineer's stamp may be required. This trellis design needed to go through this step because it extended over the sidewalk and into the public right-of-way.



# The City Repair Project



The City Repair Project is a non-profit organization of hundreds of volunteers and activists working together to make our communities better places to live. The City Repair community facilitates the creation of public gathering places and events that invite people to connect with the people and places around them. City Repair helps people physically change their neighborhoods to be more community-oriented, ecologically sustainable and simply more beautiful.

The City Repair Project was born out of a grassroots initiative that legally converted a Portland, Oregon street intersection into a neighborhood public square (refer to the story of Share-It Square, page 19). The successful transformation of public space into a vibrant community place sparked the imaginations of hundreds. Soon, a movement, and a non-profit organization, was born. Focalized by tea parties, creative engagement with social issues and activation of local resources, a broad City Repair community has emerged.

The original “T-Hows,” from Share-It Square, evolved into the mobile T-Horse, bringing community tea parties across Portland and sparking new groups of neighbors into action. After a summer of tea parties throughout Portland, City Repair coordinated “Hands Around Portland,” facilitating thousands of people to hold hands in a giant circle across the city. After such a strong statement of local power and potential, the Earth Day Celebration of Localization was born in 2000, a showcase of all things local. At the city’s largest Earth Day Celebration, Portlanders enjoy three stages of solar-powered music, learn from 150+ organizations and local businesses, explore aspects of sustainable living in the Better Transportation Fair, Health and Wellness Village and the Village of Community Action and relax under the giant T-Palas (tea palace). Over 5,000 people converge for a day to enact an ephemeral “village”—a statement of the beauty of life in its most local, organic state of being.

Meanwhile, neighborhood groups across the country began picking up on City



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Repair's innovative approach to addressing citywide issues and building sustainable culture. Interpretations of Intersection Repair have bloomed in all five quadrants of Portland and in more than a dozen cities nationwide. Community groups, universities, city officials and the press call on City Repair to share our success stories of grassroots community building.

*The City Repair Project is an organized group action that educates and inspires communities and individuals to creatively transform the places where they live.*

*We facilitate artistic and ecologically-oriented placemaking through projects that honor the interconnection of human communities and the natural world.*

The beauty of the story lies in its simplicity: create a common space for people to express themselves and practice the magnificence of working together, and we can change the world.

And as author Bill McKibben said, “The only way to subvert people is to have more fun than they do.” We do that too.

### **An “Organized Group Action”**

The City Repair Project is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, though we like to call ourselves an “organized group action.” City Repair uses a decentralized, collaborative, volunteer-based model for our programmatic and organizational decision-making. Instead of an executive director, we have a “Coordinators Council” of program representatives and support staff that makes operational and programmatic decisions, and a Board of Directors that is responsible for fiscal and legal oversight. Most of our program staff are unpaid and none are on salary; this forces us to rely on volunteer energy and truly shows that our work is a direct result of the interests and resources of the people in our community.

City Repair is an excellent example of a “chaordic” (chaotically ordered) organization. In our version of a chaordic organization, resources and decision-making are delegated to the periphery, where people are deeply engaged with hands-on community actions. This allows an extraordinary degree of autonomy while ensuring that individual actions serve the mission of the whole, but it requires a basic commitment to shared principles by staff, coordinators, volunteers and board members.

### **Fractals of Synchronicity**

The Village Building Convergence, City Repair’s largest project, is an annual ten-day period of action, education and celebration demon-



strating the adaptability of City Repair concepts and the sheer impact of coordinating multiple community efforts. Intersection Repair projects on their own are momentous events; when thirty projects are synchronized, the whole city feels the energy, creating a sense of reclaiming our city as a collection of coordinated village centers.

As a ten-day work party, thousands of people take part. Participants in daytime hands-on workshops and projects simultaneously build community gathering places in dozens of sites, transforming spaces into places in neighborhood nodes across the city. Evening events with innovators and leaders spark dialogue about creating sustainable urban villages within the modern city. Shared meals become times for conversation and connection.

The overall event trains developing leaders and builds capacity for individuals and communities, while offering us an experience of actually living in an urban village. The Village Building Convergence becomes ten days of inhabiting a timely vision: working as a community to better ourselves, learn from each other, laugh, reflect and dance. There is an infectious air of possibility during those ten days.

### *Communication and Coordination*

Beyond all of the projects that are built during the Convergence is an equally innovative organizational structure. City Repair simply practices its highest knowledge of multi-layered collaboration. The VBC is coordinated by hundreds of volunteers: neighbors, activists, professionals, students and other community organizers. A Spokes Council, comprised of representatives of each committee, guides the overall project and serves as the core coordinating body. Each committee is empowered to make the majority of their own decisions, but brings significant matters to the Spokes Council.

This model can be described as a scaled series of fractals: a repeating form of localized empowerment that is coordinated to take action at many scales. The efficiency of the model is based on consciously communicating and coordinating with others in order to align with the community vision and each person or group's own interest. People are therefore able to feel in control of their work, have ample resources and support and contribute to a meaningful accomplishment.

*Chaordic processes prevent the accumulation of power and resources in any one part of an organization while achieving a remarkable level of coherence and creativity. City Repair is a living organism, which in turn reminds the City that it is truly a confederation of villages, and awakens each village to its role as a living system embedded in broader economic, social and environmental systems.*



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The fractal model of organization extends beyond the internal structure of the VBC. It allows for many citywide partnerships, by identifying specific links among many layers of the organization. The VBC traditionally partners with five city bureaus, dozens of local businesses and organizations, schools, neighborhood associations and thousands of individuals.

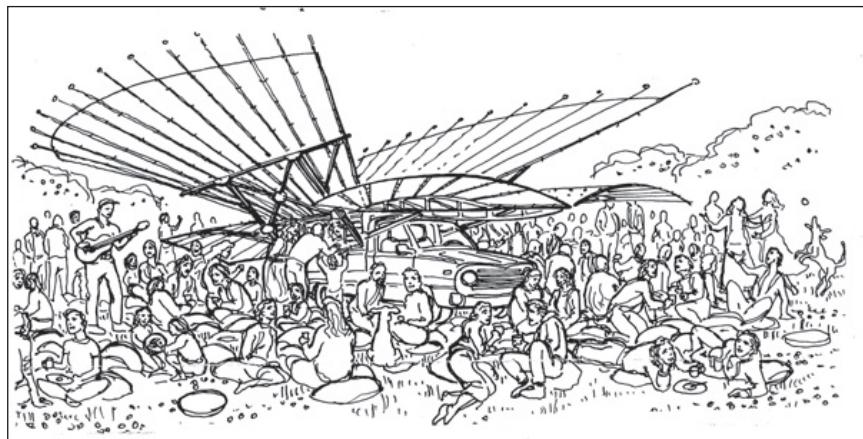
This structure allows many people to be the leaders and decision-makers, dispersing the power and responsibilities among the community. This model also teaches people how to communicate effectively within a complex organism and truly work as a team. Understanding that everybody has different working styles and interests, people synchronize efforts in order to accomplish great feats beyond any individual capability. The project not only utilizes resources and ideas more efficiently, but also makes a profound statement of the community's collective visions.

### Portland as a model

The City Repair Project promotes events and activities that inspire people to take active, direct roles in re-inhabiting our neighborhoods and cities. This model of community involvement has tangible benefits to both residents and non-residents alike, and has sparked both city- and nationwide projects.

With The City Repair Project, our neighborhood associations and the many manifestations of community empowerment and action,

*City Repair's beloved  
T-Horse Mobile  
Neighborhood Public  
Square*



# The City Repair Project



Portland is leading the nation in re-envisioning civic infrastructure. We are demonstrating that localization of culture, economy and decision-making is the foundation for a sustainable future. We actively build our community capacity and celebrate the strength and beauty of our collective dedication to create a world of cooperation.

## City Repair Projects At A Glance

*Sellwood Moonday T-Hows* (1996) A semi-permanent gathering environment modeled after ancestral European and indigenous meeting houses. A highly successful adaptation that provided the local community an impetus to establish a permanent public gathering place.



Earth Day 2003 Parade

*T-Horse Mobile Neighborhood Public Square* (1996 to present) A mobile tea house and public gathering place; travels to different Portland neighborhoods, providing a comfortable, creative atmosphere where people can meet their neighbors and form community bonds.



Another magical T-Horse event

*Intersection Repair* (1996-present) A community-driven transformation of street intersections into neighborhood public squares. As of May 2006, dozens of Intersection Repair projects are in existence in Portland and nationwide.



Hands Around Portland route map

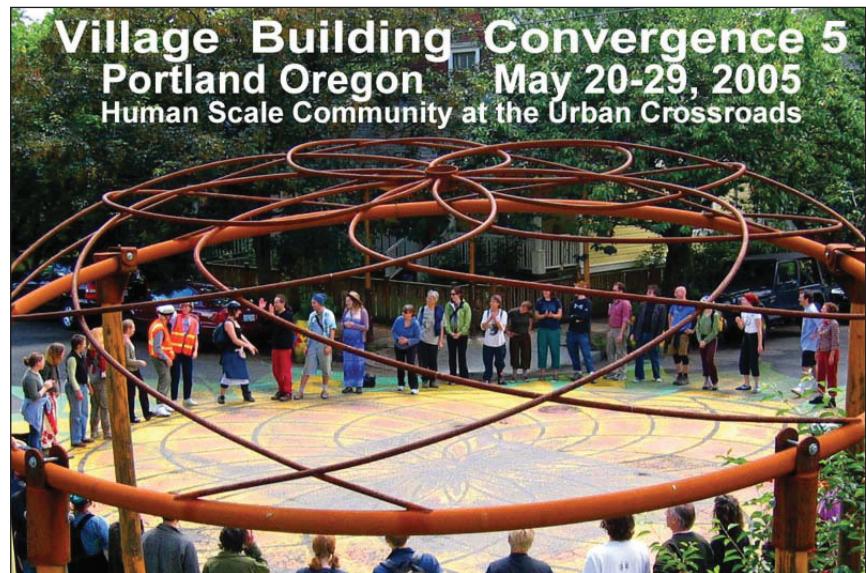
*Hands Around Portland* (1997-2000) A city-scale human circle of approximately 7,000 people, this project is a powerful gesture of hope, community and human interconnectedness.

*Earth Day Celebration of Localization* (2000 to present) This annual festival of all things local highlights the resources of our community, the interconnection of human communities and our environments, and the sheer beauty of public gathering and celebration.

*Community Visioning* (2001-present) Workshops have assisted residents, businesses and visitors of an inner-city commercial street (SE Division Street), a neighborhood (Sunnyside) and a coastal Oregon town (Bay City) to envision sustainable placemaking opportunities.



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**Village Building Convergence** (2002-present) An annual ten-day event that reclaims urban spaces and transforms them into community places. Daytime hands-on workshops and evening events teach, inspire and connect thousands of people to celebrate our local communities.

**City Repair Headquarters** (2005-present) Providing the City Repair community with a center, the City Repair office in the Seven Corners neighborhood of southeast Portland is a vibrant setting for meetings and gatherings of all sizes. With the warm and welcoming “Reception-Nest” tea area at the entryway, earth-painted walls, wood stove, work-stations and large central area, the CRHQ serves as the focal point for a diversity of work and play.

The story of how Portland, Oregon's design and artistic culture is taking to the streets and inspiring citizens to rebuild their city.

### THE VILLAGE LIVES

Comments and Questions  
Mark Lissenden and Jeremy Liss of  
THE CITY REPAIR PROJECT

Join us for this new opportunity to learn about  
Portland's unique culture and how it is changing.  
Mark and Jeremy are Co-Chairmen of The City Repair Project.  
Mark is a landscape architect and urban designer.  
City Repair founders and guides the transformation of the  
Seven Corners neighborhood into a vital community of  
businesses, citizens, andnelly children.

City Repair constitutes neighborhoods, planning, neighborhood  
community development, public art, guerrilla gardening,  
and neighborhood repair. It is a process of repairing and renewing  
places at local levels. By helping citizens to imagine and literally  
rebuild their neighborhoods, City Repair creates the  
physical and social foundations for sustainable cultures.

*“Another world is possible, and it's being  
built right here in Portland.”*  
- Mark Lissenden, Co-Chairman  
of City Repair's Village Building Convergence

Date, Time \_\_\_\_\_  
Location \_\_\_\_\_  
Hosted by \_\_\_\_\_

[www.cityrepair.org](http://www.cityrepair.org) • P.O. Box 10440, Portland, Oregon 97294 • 503/231-1204

## CITY REPAIR NATIONWIDE

When City Repair started in 1996 through a simple vision of a neighborhood teahouse, who knew it would birth so much? Since 2003, Portland City Repair representatives have shared the City Repair story with more than 50 communities nationwide. More than a dozen cities have created their own forms of City Repair-inspired community tea houses, urban natural building projects and Intersection Repairs. Below are updates from a few of these communities.

# The City Repair Project



## Eugene City Repair

*By Katie Geiser*

Neighbors in the 22nd and Garfield section of Eugene have completed the first phase of their Intersection Repair project. Included in the project are a brick and river rock spiral patio, information kiosk, benches and plantings. The project brought many neighbors together to plan, collect materials and implement it. We received endorsement/support from our neighborhood association, the City of Eugene, and a grant from Eugene Neighbors, Inc. to help pay for expenses which were not donated by neighbors. The site is much used by neighbors on a stroll, posting information, traffic calming and as a meeting spot for block parties and other activities.

In 2005, we began our street mural planning and as of April 2006 have made initial contact with the City to get a list of their needs/concerns in moving forward with such a project. Neighbors have had several mural design meetings and are currently working with a local artist to gather our ideas into a cohesive, beautiful and "user friendly" design which can be implemented by a group of novice neighbors. We are in hopes of a smooth city approval process so that we can implement the mural in summer 2006. We'll see!

*Please contact Katie at 541-342-5500 or [katieg2@earthlink.net](mailto:katieg2@earthlink.net) for further information.*

## Olympia Village Improvement Project

*By Katherine Byrd*

Olympia VIP has facilitated the transformation of two intersections, received city approval to facilitate community-designed intersections and is gaining momentum with a series of place-making workshops as part of a larger vision for neighborhood walkability and community engagement. Olympia's Procession of The Species event helped make it easier to imagine the streets as places to commune, share



Eugene's Intersection Repair



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our creativity and rethink our relationship to our environment.



Olympia's Intersection Repair

*“As a neighborhood activist, I became inspired by the idea that the structure and arrangement of public places influences or guides cultural behaviors.”*

—Katherine Byrd,  
Olympia Village  
Improvement Project

Our first intersection was transformed in the fall of 2004 as part of !OLYNOW!, a congratulatory street celebration that acknowledged the work of community activists. After attempts to gain permission for neighbor-designed art in the intersection, we painted an intersection mandala and planted a native-plant poetry garden without city approval, but with some council member support. One year later, we joined with an elementary school program, The Olympia Peace Scouts. Kids from Garfield Elementary were learning about the “Power of Place” when they planned a celebration of place. They participated in the design of an intersection mandala, planted a memorial iris garden around a bench and planned details of the celebration that included brick-oven pizza and a bicycle smoothie blender.

As a neighborhood activist, I became inspired by the idea that the structure and arrangement of public places influences or guides cultural behaviors when Mark Lakeman spoke to a group of Olympians in 2003. My work as a facilitator for OVIP expands on my work as a writing teacher and the understanding that language structures can guide and influence thinking. I believe that people become empowered, more deliberate and more thoughtful by engaging in writing communities. Similarly, Intersection transformation is a way to empower people through community design, to take part in the creation of culture, to influence behaviors that are more human, more soulful, more creative, more communal and more sustainable than behaviors that are encouraged by the standard development and design of our urban spaces.

### Los Angeles City Repair

*By Lois Arkin, LA Eco-Village*

I use our Intersection Repair as an occasion for “car retraining,” especially on our regularly scheduled tours. There is a fair amount of traffic here, though there are stop signs on the three sides of the intersection. I take people into the middle of the intersection to stand around the mandala. At first the people are hesitant because they can see the cars lined up at the stop sign on either side, and think they should wait for the cars to pass. I urge them to come stand with me in the intersection, and not to worry about the cars.

# The City Repair Project



Sometimes, it takes quite a bit of urging, because I don't tell them ahead of time what we will be doing. Once all the people are there in the intersection, I smile broadly and say, "This is our car re-training program." Sometimes, the cars have figured out how to go around us fairly quickly, especially if none are coming from the opposite direction. And sometimes, the cars just wait thinking we will move.

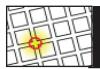
But we don't! Some people in the tour group want to move for the cars. I urge them to stay put: "It's important for the cars to learn how to go around us-to be re-trained!" I urge.

I used to motion the cars to go around us. It was hard to juggle talking to the tour group while trying to communicate with the cars. The tourists are generally delighted to learn about "car re-training," and many cars that regularly pass through the intersection have been re-trained, their occupants are full of smiles as they slowly pass us.

Occasionally someone among our tour group will confront me with "Why would you want to obstruct traffic?" This is a good test for me, and others in the tour group, because we need lots of practice in answering these kinds of questions in helpful ways, and without alienating people.



"Welcome" in three languages around the Intersection Repair at the LA Eco-Village



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### LA: Welcome to the Comfy City

*By Jane Tsong and Robert Powers*

*Please have a seat. Or make one. Here, the neglected stumps of razed trees are converted into comfy chairs.*



*Our urban spaces could definitely benefit from more public seating and relaxation. How luxurious it will seem when we are able to rest our feet where we please once in a while.*

*Let us know the location of other stumps in need of improvement.*

*Simply contact: [nothing3@adelphia.net](mailto:nothing3@adelphia.net). Or for the handy and brave, a chain saw can do the job with two careful cuts. Ask your local tool rental shop for safety tips. Let us make the comfy city ours.*



Of course, we always tell everyone in the tour group how we came to have our City Repair project, and that we are part of a national movement to transform neighborhood intersections designed for cars into intersections where neighbors can meet and use them as plazas. And we pass along the contact info for City Repair.

We are about to do our first public cob benches near the intersection, and we plan to work with neighborhood youth on this.

### Village Renaissance, Sonoma County

*Information from Joe Kennedy, Leadership Institute for Ecology and the Economy*

Village Renaissance, inspired by The City Repair Project, focuses on “County Repair” in Sonoma County, California, following Portland’s lead in creating a process by which ordinary people can reclaim their public places, and do it in a way that is educational, beautiful and fun.

The Sonoma County Placemaking Project was formed in October 2005, based on the premise that people crave places to gather and want to engage in their community, but don’t know how. Existing efforts towards placemaking (i.e. ArtStart, Prince Memorial Greenway, Farmers Market) are precedents for new efforts. Meeting with the mayors of Sebastopol and Santa Rosa, State Assemblyperson Noreen Evans, Santa Rosa City Councilmember Steve Rabinowitz and numerous other community

leaders, the Sonoma County Placemaking Project is bringing together a diversity of communities.

# The City Repair Project



The Sonoma County Placemaking Project held a successful workshop to initiate conversations in Santa Rosa. Through brainstorming, visioning and artistic play, the group came up with such ideas as creating an existing neighborhood places inventory, common graphic interpretation along certain streets with repeating themes in the neighborhood and engaging apartment dwellers, youth and people in recovery. The group is targeting the Junior College Neighborhood of Santa Rosa for its initial project.

In the interests of economy, success-building and developing a sustainable process, the initial project will be relatively modest in scope. One of its main purposes is to lay the groundwork for more ambitious projects in the future. It is hoped that ongoing networks will be formed between project partners and other interested parties that will result in additional projects, not only in the Junior College neighborhood, but in other neighborhoods across the county.

This initial project is envisioned to:

- Be constructed with recycled, donated and/or natural materials
- Be created through a facilitated neighborhood design process
- Be built during a multi-day workshop
- Engage elders working with neighbors working with college students working with youth who work with younger children
- Be a project in the heart of the neighborhood where lots of people come by
- Result in a publicly designed and built piece of art

Another area of focus is the small city of Sebastopol, where Village Renaissance is creating a citywide placemaking plan that serves downtown and all neighborhoods. By selecting a couple of projects to start with, they hope to engage Sebastopol citizens in creating their own public places. Values include striving for economy, inclusiveness and environmental awareness.

*For more information, contact Joe at [livingearth62@hotmail.com](mailto:livingearth62@hotmail.com) or (707) 528-1579.*



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### Ottawa City Repair: Transforming Urban Space Into Community Place

*A group dedicated to helping people self-organize to create socially, environmentally, culturally, and economically vibrant communities by:*

- *Offering workshops, tools, and other support to individuals and neighborhood organizations*
- *Undertaking popular education and advocacy*
- *Collaborating on local community-building activities*

*To help Ottawa achieve its full potential as a fantastic place to live.*

#### City Repair Ottawa



Ottawa Intersection Repair on Pansy Street

On a cold, snowy evening in November 2003, a coalition of organizations and community members hosted The City Repair Project for a presentation and workshop. With an energized room of 150+ people, City Repair Ottawa was born. The crowd was encouragingly diverse, including all age groups—from elders to a newborn child—and from a variety of disciplines—gardeners, architects, students, environmentalists, artists and city workers.

The goal of City Repair Ottawa is to establish and nurture healthy, effective, enjoyable, permanent community relationships at the neighbourhood level. City Repair Ottawa helps people strengthen community in Ottawa neighbourhoods, building relationships with neighbours, creating a local identity, discovering mutual needs and ways to meet those needs, sharing fun, food, information, stories and the tricks of surviving and thriving in this place. CRO offers guidance, ideas, examples, workshops, tools and practical assistance.

#### T-MoBeetle: The Traveling Tea Party

The Earth Day Canopy T-MoBeetle is the first large-scale project undertaken by City Repair Ottawa. The purpose of the canopy is threefold:

1. An info table/booth/kiosk
2. To protect the attendant from the elements (rain and sun)
3. To draw the attention of passers-by

# The City Repair Project



For the most part, the entire canopy is made from reclaimed or recycled materials. As can be seen from the photos, the canopy is made by overlapping many umbrellas. Approximately 50 umbrellas were used during Earth Day. The beam and arch components are made from the stretchers from scrap shipping pallets. About a dozen pallets were taken apart in order to acquire enough stretchers to complete the project. The beam and arch components are held together with plates and brackets made from small bits of construction-grade plywood. Some of this came from the deck of a pallet, but most was picked up from residential construction sites (with permission). The hardware is all 3/8" brass bolts and nuts that were salvaged from a scrap bin. The hundred or so steel washers needed were simply purchased. We could have used just about anything for the cable, but in this particular project, old clothesline was used. The plastic sheath prevents it from burning or cutting the umbrellas.

Visit [www.cityrepair.ca](http://www.cityrepair.ca). General inquiries: [ottawa@cityrepair.ca](mailto:ottawa@cityrepair.ca)

## OTHER PLACEMAKING RESOURCES

### Project for Public Spaces

The Project for Public Spaces is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating and sustaining public spaces that build communities. Based in New York City, PPS provides technical assistance, training, research and other services. Since founding in 1975, PPS has worked in over 1,500 communities in the United States and around the world, helping people turn their public spaces into vital community places.

PPS is a vast resource for technical assistance, tools and publications, and historical and experiential knowledge of public places. Their program areas include: parks, plazas and squares, transportation, civic centers, public markets, downtown, mixed-use development, campuses and trainings.

For over thirty years, PPS has been building a placemaking movement. They believe that when you focus on Place, you do everything differently. This means when you look first at local communities' assets and aspirations, you create public spaces that will nurture people's health, happiness and well-being. They have discovered, however, that this



The beautiful umbrella cover tea canopy!



## Chapter 6

approach ran against the deeply ingrained habits of most design professionals, traffic engineers, developers and public policymakers.

By the mid-1990s, PPS had acquired a long record of accomplishments and a national reputation, but their original goal of revolutionizing the design and management of public spaces remained largely unfulfilled. However, they began to notice that institutions with enormous influence over shaping the built environment were coming around to our way of thinking.

Departments of Transportation in several states wanted PPS to teach them how to design streets as places that balanced the needs of people, transit and cars. The General Services Administration, the branch of the U.S. government in charge of federal buildings, enlisted PPS to transform public properties into vital places throughout the country. The Federal Highway Administration tapped PPS to create an online resource center to boost the adoption of Context Sensitive Solutions, taking communities into account in transportation planning, in all 50 states. PPS had found a new and receptive audience for the ideas of Placemaking among key decision-makers.

The City Repair Project highly recommends the Project for Public Spaces as a resource base. Their website and publications are full of practical ideas, inspirational stories and technical resources.

For more information, visit [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org) or contact them at (212) 620-5660 or [pps@pps.org](mailto:pps@pps.org).

### Pomegranate Center

Pomegranate Center is a non-profit community design and development organization helping communities utilize their unique gifts to become more vibrant and humane.

They do this by integrating social, artistic and environmental perspectives into:

- The creation of meaningful gathering spaces
- Constructive and inclusive community-based planning
- Educational outreach, research and training

# The City Repair Project



Pomegranate Center was incorporated in 1986 by artist and community organizer Milenko Matanovic. An experimental artist in the late '60s in his native Slovenia, Milenko has pushed art out of studios, galleries and museums and into the street, the workplace and the market square. Concerned with the direction of modern communities, he decided to create Pomegranate Center to explore how artists can have a role outside the narrow artistic world and be actively involved in building better communities. From the beginning, Pomegranate Center dedicated itself to linking art with social and environmental issues.

Since its inception, Pomegranate Center has used its skills in service to many diverse projects, including:

- Eleven gathering places
- Three friendship parks in far-east Russia, China and the United States
- Community-based plans for parks, trails and other amenities
- Advising municipalities, developers and communities how to integrate social, environmental and design issues into the urban fabric (including Chattanooga, Tennessee; Pattonsburg, Virginia; Issaquah, WA; Burien, WA; Calgary, Canada; Ottawa, Canada, etc.)
- Four curriculum programs linking youth with community
- A creek day-lighting project
- A teaching garden demonstrating environmentally sound practices
- Interdisciplinary design workshops focused on sustainable design
- Numerous lectures and workshops instructing others about Pomegranate Center's philosophy and community-building methods
- Publications and articles

The City Repair Project and Pomegranate Center have collaborated in conferences and workshops. Pomegranate Center is another great placemaking resource in the Pacific Northwest!

For more information, visit [www.pomegranate.org](http://www.pomegranate.org) contact them at (425) 557-6412 or [info@pomegranate.org](mailto:info@pomegranate.org).



# Appendix: Design Possibilities

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While the possibilities for each community's manifestation of Intersection Repair are endless, there are some popular design elements. This section outlines some of these possibilities.

As we are reclaiming the commons and rebuilding community, we have the opportunity to implement our most current understanding of sustainable culture. Building structures that manifest our highest awareness, sense of beauty and practical knowledge is a way to demonstrate these possibilities. While most conventional construction disregards its impact on both the places where materials came from and the places in which they are used, often causing harm to both people and the environment, an ecological approach provides a model for a healthier living environment. This approach to building utilizes locally available materials, recycled materials and other ecological innovations. In order to build a better future, it is important to have an integrated approach that maximizes benefit and minimizes waste.

## TRAFFIC CALMING

Speed bumps, chicanes and other conventional traffic calming measures have proven to be quite effective. Unfortunately, they are expensive and often require a substantial bureaucratic process, assuming they are allowed at all in your city.

Placemaking projects also tend to have a traffic calming effect, and some neighborhoods are turning to them as alternatives to conventional methods. Projects that attract pedestrians, diversify the streetscape with interesting details or simply involve putting objects or artwork in the road communicate to drivers that something is different, and drivers slow down.

According to David Engwicht, author of *Street Reclaiming: Creating Livable Streets and Vibrant Communities*, "Experience says that traffic slows down when drivers perceive that a



## Appendix

*During the design workshops for the Sunnyside Piazza, wide ranging ideas for traffic calming were generated. The Dept. of Transportation engineer suggested speed bumps (at \$10,000 each!) and roundabouts (at \$30,000 to \$60,000 each). Neighbors offered their own solutions. One artist painted “faux” potholes in the street. Another neighbor placed a basketball goal on the curb, suggesting the presence of children at play (even though there were no children in the household...). Another couple placed a bird feeder with ample seeds on their corner and encouraged passersby to toss birdseed into the street. The constant presence of feeding birds would slow traffic there (and was more like a \$.39 solution!)*

—Brian Borrello, artist/facilitator

street is no longer their sole domain and that traveling through becomes riskier because of increased pedestrian activity.” He advocates for an “ever-changing” landscape that increases the intrigue and uncertainty of a street.

Neighbors of many Intersection Repairs have observed that cars often come to a complete stop at these intersections, even with no explicit signs telling them to do so. The pure interest created with these projects captivates people and inspires them to slow down and look around.

The built elements of Intersection Repair can also support traffic calming. Creative curb extensions become places for artists to set up displays and performers to sing or firedance. Planter boxes define pedestrian space while also providing places for flowers or food.

*“We didn’t change traffic signs whatsoever at Sunnyside Piazza – it’s still just two stop signs on a four-way intersection. But cars now often stop at all directions, and they always yield to pedestrians and cyclists in the Piazza, whether they have the right-of-way or not.”*

—Renee Pype,  
Sunnyside Piazza  
Intersection Repair  
core group





### WHY PAINT THE STREET?

*By Daniel Lerch, Intersection Repair facilitator*

When you close your neighborhood street for a weekend block party, you and your neighbors are, for one day, reclaiming public space. When you paint an intersection, however, you and your neighbors are reclaiming that public space for your community in the long term. Cars may continue to drive through the intersection, but the space has been clearly and unforgettably marked for the community: visually, by the paint itself, and socially, by the shared experience of your neighbors collaborating to plan, design and paint the street.



But paint is temporary. Ultimately, a painted intersection is a marker of your neighborhood's intention to turn that street into a long-lasting community space. It helps your community see the intersection as something special, inspires them with tangible proof that they can affect their own neighborhood and encourages them to imagine how the street might be different. It also shows your local government that your neighborhood is serious about the project—serious enough to organize yourselves and invest in the semi-permanence of a painted street in front of your own homes.

The paint design for your intersection can help chart the future of your public space. Share-It Square, the first Intersection Repair, started with a big, bold graphic of white stripes and colored circles to clearly mark a central space. It later evolved into painted "bricks" and "flagstones" to show people what the intersection would look like if it were permanently turned into a public square. Other possibilities for a more permanent square include pigmented concrete, permeable paving blocks, permeable concrete, "glassphalt" and form-patterned concrete.

Whether your painted intersection turns into a raised, brick-paved public square, or remains as a street that the neighbors shut down to paint once a year, you have made a powerful, important statement: "This Place Is For The Community."



## Appendix

### PERMACULTURE

*by Toby Hemenway, City Repair Board Member and Permaculture Extraordinaire*

*Note: “Permaculture” is a concept often used among the City Repair community. Below is Toby Hemenway’s interpretation of permaculture as applied to Intersection Repair. For more information about Permaculture concepts, we highly recommend Toby’s book, “Gaia’s Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture.”*

A short definition of permaculture is “the conscious design of sustainable human settlements.” The key element in that phrase is “conscious.” The urban and suburban development of the last century has been unconscious, chaotic accretions of housing, commercial centers and traffic flows built primarily by non-local businesspeople driven by profit. Those forces resulted in our built environment, and we must work with that to transform it from degenerative to regenerative.

At first glance, permaculture seems easier to apply in rural places. There, permaculture can be used broadscale to regenerate damaged landscapes. Planting, soil building and water harvesting on a nearly blank canvas can revitalize large acreages. Key permaculture principles, such as catching and storing energy and materials to recycle them within the system, and making each element serve multiple functions, are not difficult to practice when damaged landscapes can be rebuilt nearly from scratch. Regenerating urban landscapes is more challenging, because structures and the pattern of development are already established. We learned from the disastrous urban renewal projects of the sixties and seventies that tearing down neighborhoods and rebuilding them wholesale removes what small sense of place once existed, and replaces it with pure sterility. Thus urban regeneration must begin with what we have, and should reconnect the pieces into a pattern brim-full of life.

Permaculture is about being local: shepherding the resources that enter a place; keeping them cycling within the “system,” be it backyard, neighborhood, or bioregion; and creating beneficial connections between each part. By this logic, massive urban renewal projects



and most contemporary development are doomed because they are imposed from outside the area. Community and a sense of place can only be created by the people who dwell together and who have real stake in creating a home. Developers who do not live in the place they are building will always fail to create true neighborhoods.

So we begin where we are and with what we have. This is why nearly every permaculture principle I can think of applies perfectly to Intersection Repair projects. *“Make the least change for the greatest*

## Story of a Neighborhood Permaculture Walk

By Carla Bankston, Portland Permaculture Guild

*At the block party, the neighbors had been well fed and were having fun getting to know each other. As we set up our [permaculture] display board, many people were curious about the principles displayed in the photos. This helped to develop their interest in coming with us on the “tour.” At the start, we gave a 90-second overview of what permaculture is, and then set out to look for illustrations in the yards around us.*

*One of the first houses we passed belonged to an elderly woman named Edna. Edna wanted us all to come see her backyard, so about twenty people trooped in and we talked about her use of native plants and plants which provide beauty—an important human need sometimes overlooked in “sustainable” landscaping.*

*As we walked, we shared visions of empty lots becoming food forests with beautiful places for neighbors to gather. We talked about sharing surplus in one person’s yard with others whom would enjoy the bounty. Neighbors showed each other their successes and challenges and bonded in the common ground they discovered. Sharing discovery of the unexpected uses of a familiar (or unfamiliar) plant had eyes lighting up and smiles spreading to everyone’s faces. And everyone was SO excited to show off their yard, which led to everyone knowing where each other lived, as well as discovering what resources each might have to share.*

*By the end of the tour, the neighbors had a basic knowledge of permaculture principles (as illustrated throughout the tour), a high level of excitement and inspiration for further action and a wonderful shared experience which connected them physically as well as mentally. We came away feeling that this was the perfect way to set the groundwork for any Intersection Repair or other community-building effort.*



## Appendix

*effect*" would guide us to start with the existing urban grid, understand its qualities and intervene at key points. *"Understand and optimize edge"* points us to critical transition zones as potentially being those key points. One of these is surely the place where two roads cross each other, where people on foot and in cars meet, where sidewalk, pavement, yards and cross-traffic all intersect. So the urban intersection is a propitious place to begin to decrease damaging interactions, such as high speed cars meeting low-velocity humans, and regenerate beneficial ones, such as neighbors talking to one another.

Yet another principle – that each important function should be supported in many different ways – tells us that simply building a traffic circle or a lone bench is not enough. Intersection Repair is always approached on many levels and at several scales. We would naturally try to create habitat that serves many different kinds of beings and activities, like children playing, good conversation and bright butterflies perched on flowers. And we would shrink the niches for undesirable forces, such as speeding cars, through curb bump-outs and a constant pedestrian presence.

Permaculture tells us to start small, get successful at that scale and then repeat those successes with variations. Intersection Repair embodies this principle too, at many levels. City Repair first learned what makes Intersection Repair work at Share-It Square, and that positive experience has now been replicated at many other intersections. This principle works within each Intersection Repair project as well. Sunnyside Piazza began modestly with painted pavement and a kiosk and has accreted more elements with passing time: a fountain, mural, trellises, benches. The piazza is expanding in space as well, as neighbors down the adjoining streets catch the enthusiasm and place arbors, benches and poetry stations in their front yards.

The principle of catching and storing energy and materials locally is key, as without this practice our own interest and resources simply bleed away. This is why Intersection Repair must always be local. If people think of their home ground as merely a bedroom, and leave it automatically when they socialize, eat, work, shop or play, then our home places will remain dead. These aspects are some of the principal flows and functions of human life; thus creating a neighborhood begins with and expands on that list. We would seek, if we are



thinking permaculturally, to support each one of those functions as close to our homes as possible. That's how a village comes together. When neighbors engage one another in building the infrastructure and the dynamics of community right where they live, places come alive. That's the foundation, and the promise, of Intersection Repair.

## NATURAL BUILDING

by Lydia Doleman, Cob Star

The essence of natural building lies in its inherent emphasis on environmental preservation and social sustainability. Natural building is a method of construction based in using minimally processed, natural materials that are available locally. The techniques for most natural building methods reflect the materials themselves in that they are simple, low-tech and ecologically sustainable. Natural building employs a sense of the human-scale and isn't dependent on expensive, energy intensive, high-tech equipment. Natural building materials have low toxicity, are low-tech and local, making them great tools for teaching communities the synthesis of building principles in sustainability and social empowerment.



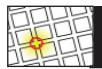
People have been using local materials to create shelter since human communities first formed. Here in the Cascadia bioregion, the indigenous peoples built their shelters from the local timbers. However, two hundred years of negligent timber harvesting has rendered this resource better valued as a healing forest ecosystem. Now, we must examine other materials to construct our ever-growing human habitat. The urban landscape is full of usable materials. There are many untapped local resources right in Portland that can be used to exemplify the principles of ecological sustainability. The Rebuilding Center is a great resource for urban natural building. Redistributing local and reclaimed materials, The Rebuilding Center fits seamlessly into the parameters of natural building.



Portland's first strawbale building

## Cob

Cob comes from the old English word for 'loaf' or 'lump.' It gets this name from being formed into loaf-sized balls for tossing to the people working them into walls. Cob is made of sand, clay and straw, and is a European style of building. It is sometimes referred to as "Earthen



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Masonry" because it is basically like a microscopic stone wall on a giant scale. Each particle of sand is wrapped in a clay mortar. The sand is the strength, the clay is the binder and the straw adds tensile strength, like rebar in concrete. It is made of the same materials as adobe, but instead of being shaped into bricks in a wall, the materials create a monolithic wall system.

### *Why Build With Cob?*



Oblio, the cob frog oven at Share-It Square

Cob construction has many virtues. The first is that due to the minimally processed nature of the materials, cob has very low embodied energy (a measure of the energy it takes to create a material). For example, steel must be mined as iron from the earth, transported to a refinery, melted at extremely high temperatures and formed into its final shape. Cob requires very little energy to make. It is just sand, clay and straw mixed together. The less energy required of a building material, the more environmentally friendly it is!

The constituents of cob are in their natural state and minimally processed, making cob non-toxic. Most construction materials come with warning labels to protect users from their harmful side effects.

*A multi-generational group works on a cob Intersection Repair project in Southeast Portland in 2005.*



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Cob needs no such label; clay is even known to be a curative and remover of toxins.

Since cob is generally mixed by foot and applied by hand, it is a relatively low-tech material. It doesn't require expensive tools or extensive knowledge to build with. It does, however, require a good sense of building and creativity.

Cob's earth friendly, non-toxic and low-tech properties makes it a great tool for community building. Anyone can participate – from toddlers to great-grandmothers – in building together. With a building material that usually doesn't require noisy machinery, people can work together and get to know one another. After a day's work or when the project is complete, people who participated can see the beauty they created together and also see that with only simple materials they can transform the world around them.



Mixing cob by foot

## ECO-ROOFS

Also known as living roofs, these are innovative systems that function as shelter for a building, while providing habitat that cools and beautifies the urban environment and absorbs and filters rainwater runoff. It is composed of drought-tolerant plants and grasses, growing from permeable soil atop a protective membrane. A small eco-roof can function as a demonstration project, an example for a roof system that will not degrade (but will thrive!) under the sun's exposure.



## PHOTOVOLTAICS

The sun is an endless source of energy to power elements of Intersection Repairs. In a partnership with the Office of Transportation, City Repair and Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program, many neighborhoods have coordinated relatively low-cost photovoltaic installations.

The solar panels can charge batteries that would in turn power low-wattage lighting (like LEDs), water pumps (for small fountains) or small DC motors. A charge controller will be necessary for regulating both the input and the output of the electricity. A more ambitious project might involve tying the output into a neighborhood energy distribution network, or to the local utility grid for credit.



Photovoltaic cells in a panel



### WIND TURBINES

Wind turbines can generate electricity on windy street sites. Spinning vanes can have a pleasant, hypnotic effect on the viewer. Windmills, rotor turbines, even whirligigs will be subject to the presence of available wind, so height and placement (i.e. rooftops or open areas) are important considerations. Vertical axis turbines, though less efficient than horizontal turbines, are quiet and start up in low wind conditions. Wind turbines can provide power in similar devices as photovoltaic panels, and you might consider a hybrid system, where energy capture is optimized. For example, at the same site, a cold, dark winter environment engages the wind turbines, and in the summer months, the sunny, still atmosphere provides solar gain.



Street trees can provide shade, absorb pollution, and cool streets.

### URBAN FOREST

Organizations such as Friends of Trees and the City of Portland's Urban Forestry Program assist neighborhoods with bi-annual tree plantings. The benefits of re-planting in the urban landscape include building neighborhood relationships, beautifying the landscape, developing a stronger sense of place, providing habitat and food for wildlife and regulating temperature and humidity.

Providing identifying tags or signs on trees can be educational and help neighbors connect with their urban natural environment.

### POCKET PARKS

Pocket parks are secret little delights of the neighborhood! These small parks are great places for small neighborhood events like a summer movie night or a pancake picnic.

Janis Campbell, who lives adjacent to a two-lot size pocket park in Portland, explains, "I think pocket parks are the single most underappreciated and unrealized potentials in a city. It's exactly the thing that can really make a community. It's so nice on a weeknight to go somewhere to kick back, read a book or play without crossing busy streets. Usually you have to drive to somewhere like that. It's a place where people can go! ...[I would] love to see theater group practice, tai chi classes, a marimba class, people playing instruments, just things

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that could happen! The space is really nice. It seems like such an inexpensive and nice way to improve the city.”

Janis was part of a neighborhood group to bring improvements to the park in a “Park Repair.” Working with Portland Parks and Recreation and the Intersection Repair process, they were able to design and build benches and planter boxes for the park and plant new trees, and are currently planning other amenities.

Another example, “Le Jardin des Anarchistes,” (The Garden of the Anarchists), on NE Alberta Street is an effort where a property owner allowed the neighbors to remove the paving from a parking space in his parking lot—both to beautify and to help catch stormwater runoff. The soil was amended and plants such as bamboo, grasses, and miniature roses were planted by neighbors. Artistic paving, a seating sculpture and garden gnomes were created and placed by locals.



Le Jardin des Anarchistes on Alberta St. in Portland

## COMMUNITY GARDENS

Sharing space to grow food can be a powerful mechanism for community building. Gardening has many benefits, including increasing access to vegetables, improving diet overall, reducing stress, increasing exercise and providing connection to nature. Gardening offers opportunities to connect with neighbors and others in our communities.

Developing community spaces for growing food can happen in conjunction with Intersection Repair projects. Planting strips between the sidewalk and street can be used to grow “public” food, or food available for harvest to passers-by. Cherry tomatoes, peas, green beans and other fruit-bearing plants work well.



The City of Portland has demonstrated interest in using City-owned properties for growing food through the Diggable City inventory conducted in 2005. Pilot projects for using City-owned property for local food production are underway in 2006. Community groups may be able to find out how to access local land through this project.



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### PUBLIC ART



Artwork in our neighborhoods can also create a strong sense of place, whether it is a mural, a sculpture, temporary art such as chalk drawings or functional art pieces like benches or lampposts. Public art presents an opportunity for a neighborhood to tell its history, express local culture and have a fun project for anyone to get involved! Look around and think about all of the potential places for art—lights, trash cans, sidewalks, streets, steps... Other ideas include: sandblasting stenciled images into concrete pavement, colorful ceramic tiles adhered to curbs, shaped wireframe forms with plants that grow into living green sculptures and wind-activated kinetic whirligigs that catch the eye.



### Murals

In Portland, we enjoy many colorful murals. Leslie Rosenberg from Metro Murals explains:

“Murals tell the stories that we do not always have access to. They bring people together toward a common goal and create pride and ownership in neighborhoods, where there once was none. They provide for community discourse and change and enhance the area in which they exist. Murals become community landmarks and in turn create beauty and cleanliness and discourage vandalism.

“Usually art making takes place within an artist bubble. Many artists live and work in an artist community that creates a kind of exclusivity to the art they produce. Murals are different. You don’t have to be an artist to participate in the making of a mural. You just have to take interest in your community. In order to create a mural, people must come together, talk to their neighbors, collect donations and think about the stories they have to share. Find an artist and take action.

“Murals are not found in museums. You don’t have to pay to see a mural. Murals are accessible and anyone can get involved.

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This mural on Alberta Street in Portland commemorates real people in the neighborhood.

“When a mural is finished, it leaves an impression on a community. It acts as a lasting reminder of the community and friendships created there. It becomes a community’s legacy and an historical and social watermark.”

Jane Golden of the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program writes, “Murals are autobiographies of communities. They represent the collective unconscious of a neighborhood. They create a community that is beautifully and functionally – even psychically – more responsive to individuals. Murals fill, what we have discovered to be, a primal need to leave a trace, to find meaning, to give voice to all our hopes, fears and concerns, to envision a kind of community we want to live in and to put it on a wall.”

*Try to design a project in which some parts can be spontaneously created during the building process. Graphics, mosaics, murals, sculptures and earthen structures all facilitate creative spontaneity and give community members who show up for work parties the opportunity to contribute to the design.*



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### BUSINESSES AS PUBLIC PLACES

While businesses are considered to be private places, many can offer important amenities and activities that support great public places in our neighborhoods. The simple act of putting tables and chairs outside on the sidewalk not only creates an atmosphere of festivity on our streets, but it also allows for a comfortable spot to sit and “people watch.” Many people love to sit out on streets, enjoying the activities that pass by. People often travel to places specifically because of the street life and businesses are an integral part of street culture! Have you ever heard someone talking about the piazzas in Italy, the cafés in France or street life of Manhattan? Ask your local café, restaurant or other business to put out a table and chairs!

Local businesses could install sidewalk amenities like seating, shade, water fountains, food and coffee carts, weather protection like umbrellas or canopies, trash receptacles and a focal point such as a fountain or a public art piece.



The “Bombay Cafe” at Share-It Square. Neighbors create this cafe on their streets for special events.



## WHAT GOOD PUBLIC PLACES NEED

By M. David Lee, 4/22/2002

I was once asked to offer my top ten list – David Letterman-style – of the qualities that good public places must have. I think those principles might be a useful guide for thinking about the future of the Big Dig parcels.

10. A great place is not anyone's turf.
9. Music, dance, art, poetry and speeches should happen there anytime of the year.
8. A great public place must include or be directly linked to a public purpose . . . people just need to go there.
7. The architecture must symbolically reinforce the purpose of the space, whether that purpose is formal or informal.
6. A great public place should be clean but not "tidy."
5. Sunlight should be found there sometime everyday.
4. It should not cost a lot of money to get there.
3. A great public place should be memorable enough that you would want to have your picture taken there.
2. It should be a place that you couldn't wait until you were old enough to go to without your parents.
1. A great public place must have enough visual drama and/or activity that you can send out of town guests there to amuse themselves while you try to get some work done.

*M. David Lee is a partner at Stull and Lee Architects and adjunct professor in the Department of Urban Planning and Design at Harvard Graduate School of Design.*

## Se Hace Camino Al Andar

*by Antonio Machado*

Caminante, son tus huellas  
El camino y nada más;  
Caminante, no hay camino,  
Se hace camino al andar.

Al andar se hace camino,  
Y al volver la vista atrás,  
Se ve la senda que nunca  
Se ha de volver a pisar.

Caminante, no hay camino  
Sino estrellas en la mar.

## We Make the Road by Walking

*(rough translation)*

Walker, these are your footprints  
The path and nothing more;  
Walker, there is no path,  
One makes the path by walking.

By walking one makes the path,  
And upon return the view behind,  
One sees the path that never  
Has had footstep weigh on it.

Walker, there is no path  
But rather stars in the sea.

*Than you for caring about your neighborhood and approaching life  
from a localized viewpoint. You are creating a healthier world for us all.  
Blessings on your neighborhood journey.*