

To Community-Based Organizations

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If your organization works in any area across the community development landscape – affordable housing development, small business support, tenant advocacy, industrial development, access to and accountability of financial institutions, and more – you are likely acting as stewards of public space in some capacity, whether you are a DOT plaza partner, have conducted a Commercial District Needs Assessment with SBS, or use your local park for rallies and tabling.

Thriving, equitable neighborhoods across New York City should include world-class parks, plazas, and other public spaces, alongside affordable housing, local jobs, and robust social services. We want

to support your grassroots efforts and leadership in cultivating these spaces in your neighborhoods. Here are the steps you can take to start:

1. Imagine what's possible

With the communities you serve, develop a vision of your public spaces. Imagine them as thoughtfully designed, culturally representative, and inclusive places where your community is excited to gather. Consider how you could activate and organize your community around these spaces.

2. Pitch your ideas

Tie your ideas to housing and economic development, sustainability and resilience, and community development broadly and turn to public and private funding sources to implement a pilot project. With funding and pro- and low-bono technical assistance, you could build a stage, a lighting installation, or a storage structure in your local park or plaza.

3. Find the right collaborators

While designers, lawyers, engineers, fabricators, and other technical experts are critical to the success of your projects, you are the experts in your community's vision. Lead with your expertise to find collaborators you can trust.

4. Identify the appropriate pathways

While the permitting process can be a complex web to navigate, there are a number of tools and resources available to support you. Contact city agencies, legal experts, or the Local Center to understand site control, learn what's possible, and determine timelines. Make you sure you start on the permitting process as soon as possible and build in time for bureaucratic delays.

5. Build community power at every stage

In order to create lasting changes to your public spaces and ensure that they can evolve according to community priorities, engage residents, tenant and merchant associations, schools, religious institutions, partner organizations, the community board, local electeds, and other stakeholders in programming, collect their feedback, and continuously vision and plan for the future.

6. Join us in advocating for community-led public space solutions and structural change

The Local Center is committed to advocating for both immediate resources from public and private funders to support your efforts in public space and fixing how our city manages and allocates resources through. We invite you to join us in advocacy efforts to expand possibilities for public spaces in your neighborhoods.