



[ABOUT](#) [WORK](#) [IDEAS](#) [OFFICES](#) [NEWS](#) [CAREERS](#) [CONTACT](#)

Adapting Public Spaces During COVID-19: 3 Examples of Tactical Urbanism Projects

By Fabian De La Espriella



[ABOUT](#) [WORK](#) [IDEAS](#) [OFFICES](#) [NEWS](#) [CAREERS](#) [CONTACT](#)

“Everyone wants to know when this will end. That’s not the right question. The right question is: How do we continue?” – Devi Sridhar, public health expert at the University of Edinburgh

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced cities around the world to come up with response measures to meet the needs of a changing environment. This includes adapting our public spaces and streets.

As cities seek to keep up with the rapid changes brought by the pandemic and support both local economies and healthy habits, it’s been a time to experiment, using streets as testing grounds for change. This new reality has challenged cities to think about how they can best provide for an increased demand for people walking and biking around neighborhoods while adapting to physical distancing recommendations.

Tactical urbanism is a methodology used to implement quick-build projects aiming to demonstrate through a proof of concept the transformative power of interventions in the public space. It’s been a popular choice to install temporary measures that improve spaces for people, and during COVID-19, it’s been a response tactic to challenges that include:

- Sidewalks being too small to maintain physical distancing
- Increase in vehicular speeds
- Need for safe and accessible bicycle and public transit routes
- Access to public spaces



[ABOUT](#) [WORK](#) [IDEAS](#) [OFFICES](#) [NEWS](#) [CAREERS](#) [CONTACT](#)

to rapidly and effectively meet the needs of its residents.

Tactical urbanism is not about achieving perfection; it's about implementing impactful interventions that leverage short term action for long term change.

Across the world in the past few months of COVID-19, there have been a variety of livable streets response strategies, from pop-up bikeways to temporary parklet programs to operational changes at signalized intersections. These strategies are helping residents get comfortable during reopening phases as more people navigate streets at a time when being out in public poses health risks.

As the [Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) (Broward MPO) prepares to roll out their own tactical urbanism program, they've started engaging with partner agencies to understand how they can best support tactical urbanism efforts in those communities. On June 24, Kittelson supported the Broward



[ABOUT](#) [WORK](#) [IDEAS](#) [OFFICES](#) [NEWS](#) [CAREERS](#) [CONTACT](#)

Phased reopening of restaurants and retail in the City of Tampa, FL began on May 4. In order to increase capacity limits from 25% to 50% so businesses could safely serve more patrons, the City of Tampa launched the City of Tampa Business Recovery Initiative, which began as an initial 14-day pilot but is still active at the time of this writing.

An executive order temporarily waived permitting fees and applications to allow restaurants and retail businesses to expand their business footprint onto the public right-of-way or into privately owned parking facilities.

Businesses are required to maintain six feet of separation between patrons as well as ADA and other access standards. The recovery plan, branded as “Lift Up Local,” is communicated to Tampa residents through a website and guidebook, along with materials to help businesses focus on hospitality rather than enforcement.

In addition, **the City of Tampa implemented a few full street closures, which they refer to as café and retail zones.** Locations for these street closures were selected based on clusters of economic activity, safety considerations, and parallel activity. Business hours were modified and restaurants are allowed to sell alcohol in the street closure areas. Social distancing is encouraged through spray chalk art and signage.

“We’re not looking for a party atmosphere. We’re looking for people to sit, eat, and leave,” noted Danni Jorgenson, City of Tampa Chief Transportation Planning Engineer. “This is intended to help restaurants expand capacity. Reservations are required for restaurants participating in use of expanded outdoor space.”



- ABOUT
- WORK
- IDEAS
- OFFICES
- NEWS
- CAREERS
- CONTACT



Image credit: City of Tampa



Image credit: City of Tampa

City of Charlotte Raises Spirits With Public Art

Similar initiatives are seeing success in Charlotte, NC. Many neighborhood streets in Charlotte were closed to through traffic to support pedestrian and bicycle activity while encouraging social distancing. **The City of Charlotte also created a Streateries Program that allows for restaurants to utilize parking spaces and extra sidewalks/street space for temporary outdoor dining conversion** as long as six-foot separation is maintained, occupancy does not exceed 50%, and bilingual signage is posted. The City decided to do this for a 90-day period and allows for restaurants to apply for permits.



ABOUT WORK IDEAS OFFICES NEWS CAREERS CONTACT



Image credit: City of Charlotte

Taiwo Jaiyeoba, City of Charlotte Assistant City Manager and Director of Planning, Design and Development, noted that evaluation is continuing on a rolling basis, but so far most of the feedback from Charlotte residents is in support of the Shared Streets program and the Streeateries program.

In addition, **COVID-19 has brought more art into the streets of Charlotte.** The City of Charlotte has had a Placemaking Program since 2018 to support tactical urbanism ideas, one of which has been was inviting art into the public realm.

“It’s one thing to get people out on the street, but make it attractive,” said Taiwo. “Make it vibrant and enjoyable. Colors and pictures and art has a way of lifting the spirit up.”

Local artists from the City’s Placemaking Artist Pool proposed 21 concepts to capture the impact of COVID-19 and the resiliency of the city. In total, 15 murals were painted in 15 neighborhoods, each one 15 feet long, by 15 local artists. Each mural is restricted to one traffic lane and was all funded by the City.

In uptown Charlotte, one very special mural was painted on June 9. 17 artists gathered and worked nearly all day to paint the phrase “BLACK LIVES MATTER” on Tryon Street in the urban center of the city. Taiwo says the mural, known as “The Message on the Street,” has become a major gathering place



- [ABOUT](#)
- [WORK](#)
- [IDEAS](#)
- [OFFICES](#)
- [NEWS](#)
- [CAREERS](#)
- [CONTACT](#)



- ABOUT
- WORK
- IDEAS
- OFFICES
- NEWS
- CAREERS
- CONTACT

Black Lives Matter Street Mural - Charlotte, NC





- [ABOUT](#)
- [WORK](#)
- [IDEAS](#)
- [OFFICES](#)
- [NEWS](#)
- [CAREERS](#)
- [CONTACT](#)



- [ABOUT](#)
- [WORK](#)
- [IDEAS](#)
- [OFFICES](#)
- [NEWS](#)
- [CAREERS](#)
- [CONTACT](#)



[ABOUT](#) [WORK](#) [IDEAS](#) [OFFICES](#) [NEWS](#) [CAREERS](#) [CONTACT](#)

[Previous](#)

[My Virtual Internship Experience: Midway Update](#)

[Next](#)

[Catalyzing Context-Sensitive Shifts in Transportation Planning & Engineering](#)



- ABOUT
- WORK
- IDEAS
- OFFICES
- NEWS
- CAREERS
- CONTACT

CORPORATE CORRESPONDENCE

851 SW 6th Avenue, Suite 600
Portland, OR 97204 USA

P: 800.878.5230

F: 503.273.8169

RECEIVE OUR EMAIL UPDATES!

Enter your email address

SUBSCRIBE