

ETIQUETTE GUIDE TO DOING-IT-OURSELVES (DIO) NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENTS IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

People like you are making their cities better places to live by doing inexpensive and quick projects on their own. Sometimes called “tactical urbanism,” “urban interventions” or “lighter, cheaper, quicker,” these projects notably are temporary, short-term, small-scale, demonstrations that show how public spaces could be changed, without actually making any permanent physical change. Sometimes it makes sense to start a small or temporary project like these on your own.

Remember. What you’re doing is not permitted. So if you are caught in the act and reprimanded you need to accept whatever punishment comes your way. We have constitutionally protected rights to assemble and use public space, but part of tactical urbanism is, by design, disruptive.

Etiquette:

- 1. Be polite.** Hostility will get you nowhere. Be polite and friendly and recognize your role as an instigator.
- 2. Invite participation.** You’re doing this because you’re civically engaged. If others want a voice, encourage them to join you.
- 3. Be positive.** You’re trying to make your neighborhood stronger, safer and more sustainable for all. Focus on the benefits your project will bring.
- 4. Amplify your work.** Use socially connected networks like Facebook, Twitter, ioby, and blogs to make your project publicly known. Warning: this is a balancing act. Be proud, but modest – remember that you are showing that something is possible rather than proving someone else wrong.
- 5. Future-tise.** Advertise the future you want by working with a friend or colleague who is a designer or architect to produce images of what the vacant lot, parking space, or whatever space you’re working on could look like. This can help start a conversation and build a broader base of support beyond the normal naysaying neighbor or two.
- 6. Be professional.** A thoughtful and nicely designed temporary project may be permitted to stick around longer than slap down shoddy work. Conform to code wherever possible, live up to the standards you would expect from the entity that should be doing what you are taking into your own hands. Generally, there are good reasons for the rules. Educate yourself on “best practices” for what you are trying to achieve.
- 7. Be safe.** If your project entails doing something among traffic, a vest or cones and someone to help you are probably a good idea.
- 8. Know your rights and responsibilities.** Remember, you are pushing boundaries and may be breaking a rule. So if you are caught in the act and reprimanded you need to accept whatever punishment comes your way. We have constitutionally protected rights to assemble and use public space, but part of tactical urbanism is, by design, disruptive.

Here are some good reasons to undertake a DIO project and few examples.

1. To demonstrate, or show, something very new or innovative and multi-faceted that’s hard to explain another way

EXAMPLE: Want to have a party underneath a highway or in an alley? Pop-up dinner parties or activities like spontaneous bocce ball in an alley or hula hooping can activate places that most people would never want to go, and you’ll likely never encounter a police officer. As long as you don’t disturb the public, probably no one will pay you any mind.

2. To build support for an idea from neighbors

EXAMPLE: Sometimes neighbors can be resistant to change, so if you’re hoping to activate a vacant lot but neighbors are opposing you, you could consider planting fake or real flowers on the perimeter of the site, to show that your plans are to make the site nicer. It can also help outline the property you want to use. Be sure to invite participation from others, too.

3. To demonstrate public support for an idea

EXAMPLE: Where crosswalks have become faded, groups of neighbors could use chalk paint to touch up the lines to make it easier for pedestrians and cars to see.

4. To make a point about a safety hazard very visible

EXAMPLE: In an intersection where crossing the street is very difficult, a tactical urbanism approach could use chalk or temporary paint to show where a cross walk could go, or, like some parents did at McLean to get to Overton Park, families can use neon flags to cross the street and draw attention to a safety issue.

5. To have a short-term physical transformation

EXAMPLE: A little bit of chalk paint can go a long way, and with paint that washes off you can usually get away with painting a bike lane or a plaza perimeter without permission.

6. To clean a space

EXAMPLE: Picking up litter without permission will hardly ever raise eyebrows, in fact there are resources like Clean Memphis and Memphis City Beautiful who can help you. In Memphis, many citizens have mowed vacant lots and hauled the clippings to local community gardens.



PROPS THANKS Y'ALL MUCHISIMAS GRACIAS

Mike Lydon, Tommy Pacello, Nika Jackson Martin, Toni Hayes, Ellen Roberds and Sarah Newstok significantly contributed to crafting these documents.

