

STARTING SMALL. HOW TO GET PERMISSION TO GET GOOD DONE IN MEMPHIS.

Are you working on an amazing project to reimagine and activate public space in Memphis? That's great! Public spaces—sidewalks, streets, plazas, riverfronts and parks—are critical pieces of the vibrant culture and community cohesion in Memphis. But, it's important to remember that when you're working in public spaces you may need permission from the managing organization or a permit from a municipal agency. Here's a quick guide to understand what you might need for small temporary projects in public spaces.

1. Decide the site for your project. Depending on the site, you'll want to seek permission from different property owners.

FOR PROJECTS IN STREETS...

Projects in streets that are moving are considered parades and require a parade permit for groups of 25 or more. Projects in streets that are not moving are considered public assemblies, and require a public assembly permit. Submit a permit application to the City of Memphis at least 14 days in advance.

CONSIDER USING PSEUDO-PUBLIC SPACES...

like the front porches of many adjacent neighbors. You can have a front porch party on private property without a permit.

FOR PROJECTS IN PARKS...

Requirements depend on the park. See below, under Contact Information to learn which entity manages which parks.

2. Consider ways to make your event 'permit lite'.

SIZE

Free events that only have less than 25 definitely attending do not need a permit. How big do you really need your event to be?

SOUND

Amplified sound often requires a permit. Consider a slightly quieter event to save time.

SAFETY

Minimize risks before you approach the permitting agency. Make sure you've thought through all potential safety issues.

3. Call 311. Remember! 311 is a tool to support citizens! Call them and ask for help!

4. Know what permits you need. The following is a list of things that may require an additional permit.

THE FOLLOWING MAY REQUIRE ADDITIONAL PERMITS

- alcohol in city parks
- electricity
- plumbing services
- litter
- portable restrooms
- security and/or traffic control
- tents
- sales

5. Prepare for your permit

Each government agency will need slightly different information, but you can assume all of them will ask you the following. Make sure you have all the answers and as many documents prepared before you start the process.

- Description of the event
- Location of the event
- Date of the event
- Duration of the event
- Will you be disrupting vehicular or pedestrian traffic?
- Who is the main point of contact?
- Proof of a certificate of insurance
- How will you secure the installation and maintain it?
- Description of how the public space will be affected

Try to think like a government, here. They're only trying to understand who needs to be involved.

Keep this as simple as possible and think in general categories like "art event" or "community fair" rather than describing the global problems you're addressing and the game-changing nature of your work. If you're not sure how, consider describing the work in terms of literally what would happen in that 12 hours, rather than the long term ripple effects. The person reviewing the permit application is looking for potential dangers and problems, and is required to think of additional permits when the project is more complex.



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TIPS BEFORE YOU START:

- 1. Decide if your project is an event or not.** Temporary use permits and event permits are a little bit different. If you're having an event, if you make it free and open to the public, have insurance and aren't serving alcohol or having amplified sound, things will be much easier. Temporary use permits could be similar.
- 2. Get a coalition of supporters.** Existing nonprofits may have a volunteer coordinator or special projects manager and existing relationships with government to host projects like yours. Build social capital and investment in your project by creating a coalition.
- 3. Communication:** social media, setting up a Facebook page or using Meet Up, filming and taking photographs of project etc. to share results are all important steps that need to be considered ahead of time.
- 4. Get an ambassador.** Many government agencies want more community engagement on projects like community gardening and park stewardship. Ask someone from a high-touch agency like Parks, Sustainability or Public Works to endorse your project or write a letter of support.
- 5. Use ioby & Livable Memphis.** Raising funds from fellow Memphians proves community buy-in and support for your project, more fodder for your proposal. And, working with ioby and Livable Memphis provides a streamlined approach to working with government. Also, this is a great first step to figuring out the question of insurance.
- 6. Attend** ioby's How to Prepare for your First Meeting with Local Government Webinar at ioby.org/resources.

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

CONTACT INFORMATION:

- 1. Call Livable Memphis:** (901) 725-3125
- 2. More help.**
 - **Division of Parks and Neighborhoods**
2599 Avery Ave.
Memphis, TN 38112
Phone: (901) 636-4241
 - **For parks with athletic fields**
Please contact Parks Athletics Office at (901) 767-4580
 - **Permits Office**
2714 Union Ave Ext. Suite 100
Memphis, TN 38112
Permits@memphistn.gov,
(901) 636-6711 for a "Special Events Application."
 - **Liquor permit and liquor liability insurance**
Contact City of Memphis Permits Office (901) 636-6711
 - **Vending permit**
Contact Memphis Shelby County Code Enforcement (901) 379-4200
 - **Tents**
Any tent larger than 10x14 will require the approval of the Fire Marshall on the day prior tthe event.
 - **Street closure**
Contact the MPD Special Events Office (901) 636-4640
 - **MPD Special Events/Traffic Division**
(901) 636-4640
 - **Office of Community Affairs**
Toni Hayes- (901) 636-6261 Toni.Hayes@memphistn.gov
- 3. Parks**
 - **Overton Park**
Overton Park Conservancy (901) 214-5450
 - **Court Square**
Downtown Memphis Commission (901) 575-0540
 - **Health Science (Forrest)**
University of Tennessee (901) 448-5500
 - **Greenbelt, Chickasaw, Memphis, Crump, Butler, Mississippi River, Martyrs, Ashburn-Coppock, Vance, Tom Lee, Mud Island River, Riverfront Development Corporation**
(901) 576-7205, Tgiuntini@memphisriverfront.com
 - **Division of Parks & Neighborhoods**
(901) 636-4200 for a "Park Use Application."

Don't forget! If you're working on a project in a school, at a library or in a hospital, you should start by getting permission from that institution. If you're working on a project on or near private property, you'll need permission from the property owner. If you're working on buildings under construction, you should seek permission from the building owner.



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.



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