

IN THE COLD



5x5
5 P PROJECTS ANY COMMUNITY CAN DO

ioby 

INTRO

UGH—wintertime again. Short days, biting winds, trudging through piles of snow... Who ever thought this was a good idea?

While it can seem difficult to do good and have fun in the coldest, darkest season, it's not impossible. Winter actually provides some unique opportunities for simple and inexpensive community projects—really!

Winter is an especially important time to get out and stay connected with our communities. Unlike warmer and lighter seasons that naturally encourage us to go outside, exercise, and see friends, winter can push us to hole up indoors and hibernate. While there's nothing wrong with a little downtime, staying active and engaged helps us keep our spirits up when the mercury is down.

The five plans we've collected below involve different amounts of indoor and outdoor time, more and less rigorous physical activity, and neighborhood to city-wide impact. They're all great ways to meet people, make new traditions, and create a positive experience wherever you live.

Okay, I'm ready to put on my hat and scarf and get moving.

Where should I start?

Just keep reading! And remember that if you need a hand, ioby can help. Find neighbors to work with by searching our projects (ioby.org/projects) or starting one of your own (ioby.org/idea). Peruse our resources for advice and info on everything from leading teams and setting goals to digital communications and fundraising (ioby.org/resources). And get inspired by loads of amazing success stories on our blog (ioby.org/blog).

Ready? Let's get warmed up.

HOW TO CAPTURE AND REPORT SNECKDOWNS

by Clarence Eckerson, Jr.



SNECKDOWNS (a contraction of “snowy neckdowns” popularized by Streetfilms’ Clarence Eckerson, Jr. and Streetsblog founding editor Aaron Naparstek) are leftover snow piles on city streets that can show us spaces where cars don’t drive—spaces that can easily be reclaimed, by sidewalk extensions or other improvements, for pedestrian use.

1. Gather some info

A few weeks before the first snowfalls hit your area, research and make a list of places that are “overbuilt” for cars: wide expanses of asphalt where it’s dangerous to cross, long straightaways that encourage speeding, or locations where pedestrian fatalities have occurred. This will familiarize you with the kinds of areas that make for good sneckdowns.

2. Secure pals!

Though this project can be easily be done solo, it will be more fun if you identify a few other people interested in safe streets and get them excited about documenting sneckdowns with you.

3. Tune in

Monitor the weather, and when a snow storm approaches, be ready to go into action. Although wet/light snow works okay, what you’re really hoping for is a heaping helping—at least three or four inches.

4. Get snapping

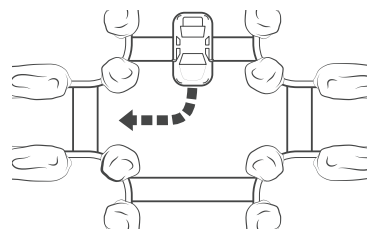
Once there’s snow on the ground, go out and take photos of streets where areas of snow remain largely untouched. Ground-level photos are great, but a second- or third-story perspective can show more (an outdoor subway platform, the window of a department store, etc). Visiting the places on your list in Step 1 is ideal, but be open to improv! Just while you’re going about your day, you’ll see how little room cars use in many intersections.

5. Spread the word

Tweet your photos with a #sneckdown hashtag. Email them to stakeholders: relevant nonprofits, elected officials, the department of transportation. Get local news attention by writing to “breaking news” email addresses and linking to other coverage of the phenomenon. Keep track of your photos on your own blog or Instagram, and post everything on related Facebook accounts (your own, advocacy groups, Streetfilms, etc).

ABOUT NECKDOWNS

A neckdown is a raised curb or sidewalk extension that reduces road width and “pedestrianizes” intersections by shortening crossing distances. Neckdowns also help calm traffic by reducing the speed of turning vehicles.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Clarence is frequently referred to as “the hardest working man in transportation show biz” for his dedication to making wonky concepts more accessible and entertaining to the public. He’s been documenting transportation advocacy for over ten years with no formal background in video or urban planning. Clarence attributes much of his knowledge to never holding a driver’s license—99% of his footage is shot by bike, foot, train, or bus.

Time/timing:

All winter long!

Budget:

Close to zero. Just your cell phone or a camera.

Supplies:

A cell phone, or a digital camera, and a Twitter account is all you’ll need. Instagram, a blog, or a website is a bonus.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Original Streetfilm video:

www.vimeo.com/19607481

The sneckdown origin story:

www.streetfilms.org/the-complete-origin-of-the-sneckdown/

Sweet successes:

www.streetfilms.org/sometimes-sneckdown-dreams-come-true/

BEYOND SNECKDOWNS:

Other street conditions you can document:

www.streetfilms.org/beyond-sneckdown-five-other-street-conditions-you-can-observe/

HOW TO ORGANIZE A HOLIDAY POP-UP SHOP

by Joseph Marinucci



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph is President & CEO of Downtown Cleveland Alliance, which oversees numerous initiatives designed to improve the pedestrian experience and attract new investment to Downtown Cleveland. Prior to being named DCA's president in 2006, Joseph held a variety of positions with the City of Cleveland, the state of Ohio, and national and international development councils.

HOLIDAY POP-UP SHOPS are part of a larger annual event we host to kick off the holiday season in Downtown Cleveland, called Winterfest. For the Shop, we invite more than 20 local artisans and jewelers to fill a large heated tent in front of our main event space and offer their wares to holiday shoppers.

1. Identify your market

Who will your shoppers be (neighborhood residents, commuters, tourists)? Are you catering to a certain holiday (Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa)? What do you think they'll want to buy (food, crafts, artwork, clothing, toys)? Research local merchants (maker groups, restaurants, artists). Are you planning for a one-day event or a series?

2. Identify your space

For outdoor spaces, think about: Applying for any necessary city permits (event, street/sidewalk obstruction); renting power for merchants (and making sure your generator has permits); researching tent options: small pop-ups or one large?; heating the tent, if necessary; on-site signage. For indoor spaces, think about: What's included—water/power for food merchants, tables and chairs, etc?; any restrictions on what can be brought in?; will the venue help you draw a floor plan? For both, think about: Any special insurance requirements; restroom availability or rental; parking and/or transit.

3. Line up your labor

You'll need people (try for volunteers!) to do some or all of the following: liaise with equipment vendors, merchants, the city, the neighborhood; set up (tables, chairs, tents, lights) and clean up the day of the event; advertise in local media (create posters, field questions on Facebook). Think through all the tasks you'll need done and start recruiting—in your networks, on volunteer websites, through neighborhood associations.

4. Line up your merchandise

Determine how many merchants you'll want, and whether you'll ask them to pay a table fee to participate (this is customary). If so, how much? Visit other pop-ups and connect with those merchants; look online; ask for referrals from your social circles. Find out if they have any special requirements (power, water, tables/chairs, heat). Consider inviting a few food trucks to recharge the hungry crowds!

5. Promote!

Free, easy to use social media will be key for spreading the word; ask your merchants to share with their online networks, too. Consider buying an ad in a local newspaper if you think potential shoppers will see it. Printing and distributing postcards to local gathering places like libraries, coffee shops, and laundromats can also get attention.

Time/timing:

One or more weekend days or evenings between Thanksgiving and Christmas works well.

Budget:

Approximately \$4,265 (with mostly volunteer labor; merchant fees can help offset the total)

Supplies:

- 110' x 20' tent with walls and heat: \$2,265 (includes installation, pickup, basic lighting)
- Tables and chairs: \$250
- Generator for light and heat: \$500 (includes delivery and pickup)
- Power distribution: \$200-300 (plus labor for setup and strike)
- Signage: 20' x 6' banner: \$950
- Labor: free if you can get volunteers!

HOW TO BUILD AN ALL-SEASON OUTDOOR PAVILION

by David Jurca



AN ALL-SEASON PAVILION is an inviting wooden outdoor space that can be used all year: as a shaded oasis on summer days and an inviting snow shelter in winter.

1. Assess your site

Involve your neighbors or other community to think about how the pavilion will be used and where it should be made. Could it provide shelter for an outdoor winter art exhibit in a vacant lot? Could it be a sunshade in a community garden? Determine a location based on expected use and available space. You may want to deputize one person as the project leader to help streamline the process.

2. See if you need a permit

In some cities, a one-story open frame structure with a floor area of less than 120 square feet does not require a building permit. Check with your city's building or planning department to determine its requirements before you begin designing.

3. Design and fabricate

You'll need help from a designer, preferably someone with an architecture or carpentry background. Search ioby to find a volunteer or low-cost designer familiar with fabricating outdoor structures. It may be a good idea to design the pavilion as several components that can be assembled on site. If the design calls for many pieces made from plywood sheets, consider paying a local routing shop to fabricate the parts. Using a machine (CNC) to cut the pieces can be much faster than sawing by hand!

4. Install the pavilion

Once the pavilion's main components are fabricated and assembled, the structure can be transported and installed on-site. Get some friends or neighbors to help on installation day—you'll probably need between four and six people.

5. Activate your pavilion!

Organize events throughout the year so your community can enjoy it. Plan a range of activities to highlight the structure's weather versatility: think summer cookout, winter tree lighting, spring graduation party, fall pumpkin carving...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David is the Associate Director at Kent State University's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (CUDC). In 2013, David launched the Center for Outdoor Living Design (COLD) and the COLDSCAPES Design Competition, a multi-disciplinary ideas competition intended to reveal the often-overlooked potential of cold climate cities. He teaches in the graduate urban design program at Kent State and taught urban green space design at Case Western Reserve University.

Time/timing:

Any time of year, for all seasons! Plan about two months for design, fabrication, and permit approvals. Once the parts are fabricated, the pavilion could be installed in a few days.

Budget:

Approximately \$3,000, though many costs are variable.

Supplies:

- Plywood sheets (marine grade is more durable, but also more expensive): \$1,500
- Bolts and hardware: \$200
- CNC wood routing: \$1,200 (optional)
- Building permit: \$100-200 (depending on the size of the structure)
- Designer: volunteer or varying cost

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

COLD's Snowball Pavilion:

www.cudc.kent.edu/cold/about/updates/

CONSIDER PREPPING FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECT IN OCTOBER...

HOW TO ORGANIZE A POST-HALLOWEEN PUMPKIN SMASH

by Claudia Joseph



1. Collect your equipment

You'll need one or more compost bins to store your chopped pumpkins (with adequate ventilation and lids to keep out water), several flat-ended shovels (sharpening the edge with a metal file will help), and a few troughs in which to chop. Prepare some educational materials about composting to hand out, and plan to provide water to your thirsty smashing crew (cooler with cups or store-bought bottles).

2. Prepare your carbons and nitrogens

Leaves, coffee husks, and sawdust are all good carbon options. Leaves are easy to collect in fall, but should be shredded with a lawnmower or leaf shredder, or with a weed whacker in a large trash can. If you can't shred, get sawdust from hardwoods (ask a staircase or furniture maker), or coffee husks from a roaster instead. Adding nitrogen-rich coffee grounds to your compost will help it break down; most coffee shops are glad to get rid of them if you bring a container.

3. Advertise your smash!

Make a poster and call it a smash! This is a great event for a neighborhood garden or Meetup group, and of course kids love it. Set the date for when pumpkins will start to rot, between four and nine days after Halloween. Make it a festive, family-friendly affair, with activities like face painting, garden tours, cider drinking, etc.

4. Smash your pumpkins

Have some chopping troughs or giant buckets to throw the pumpkins in, then chop them as finely as you have patience for. Don't let people just drop off unless you have lots of extra muscle on hand.

5. Mix your compost

Mix your coffee grounds, if you have them, with the pumpkin mush. Then mix in enough shredded leaves, sawdust, and/or coffee husks to cover the pieces like a thick sugary coating. Toss it all in the compost bin and look forward to compost in the spring!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claudia is a permaculture consultant and teacher in Brooklyn, New York. She also serves as the Consultant for Environmental Education at the Old Stone House and helped build and manage the 14-ton compost system at the Garden of Union, in partnership with the Park Slope Food Coop.

Time/timing:

Early November

Budget:

\$250. It all depends on what you already have or can borrow versus need to purchase. This is a rough estimate based on having to buy about half the supplies.

Supplies:

- Compost bin: \$60 each from a botanical garden (or make your own for less!)
- Troughs or buckets for chopping: 2 at \$20 each = \$40
- Flat-ended shovels: 2 at \$15 each = \$30
- Handouts about composting: \$10 for photocopying
- Water for volunteers: \$25 for cooler and cups, or \$10 for 24 bottles
- Weed whacker: \$50

CONSIDER PREPPING FOR THE FOLLOWING PROJECT IN OCTOBER...

HOW TO HOLD A CHRISTMAS TREE MULCHING EVENT

by Brian Thompson



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A classical musician by trade, **Brian** is also an active community and environmental advocate, working locally through the Prospect Heights Community Farm and the Prospect Heights Street Tree Task Force.

Time/timing:

Very early January

Budget:

\$500-\$900

Supplies:

- If renting a large wood chipper for the day: \$350-\$600
- Refreshments: \$100
- Flier or sign printing for advertising: \$50-200

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

New York City's MulchFest:
www.nycgovparks.org/highlights/festivals/mulchfest

1. Hatch a plan

First, assess your space options. Do you have room in your local park, community garden, or other nearby green space for a large tree shredder, piles of old trees, and people to gather? Next, think about timing. Consider when people in your neighborhood typically trash their trees, and any potential conflicts with major holidays.

2. Find allies

Connect with your city's mulching program; many are happy to partner with community groups who can help extend their reach. And start early! October wouldn't be too soon to get in touch. If there's no mulching program in your area, you can get equipment another way. Contact your local parks and sanitation departments to ask if they would lend their heavy-duty wood chipper to a community event. Landscaping and tree care companies, as well as stores like Home Depot, are other options (though you might have to pay).

3. Market and recruit

Advertise your event around the neighborhood, and consider making it more festive by incorporating local music, face painting, hot cider, or other fun activities. In NYC, Parks can supply a banner for your site and fliers to spread the word. When recruiting volunteers, look for folks to: collect trees from curbs in the surrounding neighborhoods and ferry them back to your site, take pictures, get a record of attendance, help clean up after the event, and—of course—pour the hot cider!

4. Shred those trees

Set up a three-pile system: one for trees that need to be checked for leftover tinsel and ornaments, another for trees that have been picked clean, and a third next to the wood chipper for trees that are ready to go. Prior to and during the event, send volunteers to look for trees that have been put on the curb in nearby blocks. And above all, remember: safety first. Be sure the people operating the wood chipper know how to use it and wear appropriate gear.

5. Enjoy your mulch!

You might want to distribute the mulch you produce back to the people who brought trees, use it for your community garden, or donate it to a local gardening or park stewardship group. In NYC, Parks typically takes most of the mulch, but will leave some at your site if you request.

OUTRO

So there you have it! Five fabulous cold-weather projects to help you and your community thaw out and do something good this winter.

If you try your hand at one of these projects, please tell us how it went! Emails, photos, and videos of great community-led actions help us shout your successes from the rooftops and encourage others to step up.

We'd also love to hear your other great winter project ideas! The more, the merrier.

Drop us a line at hello@ioby.org.