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Useful Community Development... quick notes

Low-Stakes Ways to Try Something New: Five Reasons, Brownfields Webinar
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"Proof of Concept" in a Community Setting

If we look at this photo longer than a couple of seconds, we recognize that these young women are not shopping in an ordinary florist shop, where any composed bouquets are tucked securely into a refrigerated case.

In fact, this shows a "pop-up" temporary shop installed for a day in a vacant storefront. Quick, cheap, temporary experiments enliven space and start conversations in any type of neighborhood or town.

Why would a community want to encourage a one-day or one-month shop? Five reasons stand out:

1. The community wants to publicize the availability of commercial property and call attention to its attractive features.
2. An entrepreneur wants to generate buzz about a new product, test a possible new location, or perhaps understand the appeal of a potential additional product line at an existing shop elsewhere.
3. A neighborhood or community wants to check out a particular operator or a type of business.
4. A commercial property owner wants to activate and show off his or her space.
5. Your high-end neighborhood or successful commercial district needs to perpetuate excitement through continuous innovation.

The following types of businesses are especially appropriate for the pop-up:

- Jewelry or other crafts
- Restaurants, including one-night or one-month dinner clubs
- Shops selling a particular food delicacy, from pretzels to homemade chips to ice cream to hot chocolate
- T-shirts
- Seasonal specialties, which might include shops for Christmas, Mardi Gras, Day of the Dead, Valentine's Day, back-to-school, beginning of classes for campus towns, tax season, calendars, the birthday of a famous person in your community's history, or tie-in to a major sports event
- Specialties especially appropriate to your area and its architectural character, such as Victorian, Arts and Crafts, mid-century modern, or colonial
- Farmer's markets
- Grocery essentials, if your neighborhood lies in a "food desert"
- Short-term experiments such as researching the market for vintage clothes or even locally-designed clothing

In the largest cities, pop-ups may refer to elaborate marketing stunts by major corporations testing a new concept, or to movie or product launches. Sometimes pop-up shops are experimental stores-within-stores or even shops within other people's stores. But here we're talking about ideas that are practical for average cities, towns, and neighborhoods.

In addition to retail opportunities, pop-up installations have been used extensively in recent years to experiment with changes in traffic patterns or use of open space. Common applications have included temporary bike lanes, temporary planter boxes along sides of streets to simulate lane narrowing, and traffic calming devices (such as lane restrictions, temporary roundabouts, speed bumps, or ultra-curved driving lane patterns called chicanes).

Tiny temporary open spaces, gardens, and outdoor seating for restaurants also have become popular. You could also try a pop-up bocce court, croquet court, washers or horseshoe game, table tennis tournament, or piano talent show.

Collectively, projects such as these are often called tactical urbanism. (See our new [what is tactical urbanism](#) answer to a site visitor question).

Motivations for these short-term innovations to transportation or unused public land range from an entrepreneur trying to convince a government to grant a permanent change, to the government trying out changes to test public reaction, gather comment, and anticipate problems so they can be resolved before a permanent change is implemented.

Sometimes it's just about having fun as a community too. Or inspiring the public to see boring, deserted, or underutilized land or pavement as a potential asset.

Grouping several of these ideas into one weekend event (or one held on several consecutive weekends) can yield especially good results. Try pairing serious commercial and street usage experiments with some street entertainment, food trucks, or snack food pop-ups, and suddenly you have an event. You also may want to make your pop-ups part of a community planning process.

If your pop-up is designed to persuade, be especially conscious of the visual appeal and creativity of your event. Cheap materials are to be expected, but don't skimp on dramatizing your idea.

For more inspiration, [Better Block](#) is an organization that has been promoting these types of activities under the umbrella term rapid urban prototyping, in the belief that "trying it out" is cheaper and faster than expensive consultant-led urban planning exercises. [MEMfix in Memphis](#) is a particularly memorable adaptation of Better Block ideas to generate discussion about local challenges.

Free Brownfields Webinar February 28, 1-2:30 p.m. U.S. Eastern time

([Brownfields](#) refers to properties that are suspected of being contaminated.)

The title says it all. "Leveraging Resources for Brownfield Revitalization: Meet the Funders: Parks, Community Health, and the Arts." [Register here](#). (Probably this is relevant only in the U.S.)

Additions to the website this month have been solely in the area of these notable visitor questions that were submitted and answered: [Is There a List of Current CDCs](#), [Does Foreclosure Erase Deed Restrictions](#), [Must Screened Porches Be Clean](#), [New Construction Causes More Noise Emissions and Traffic](#), [Improper Notification of Zoning Variance](#), [Does Church-Related School Require a Conditional Use Permit](#), [Role of Natural Resources in Economic Development](#).

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