

# District of Columbia Public Space Activation & Stewardship Guide

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District of Columbia  
Office of Planning





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## Introduction

The past ten years have seen pop-ups, tactical urbanism and creative placemaking take center stage in cities across the world. Once unsanctioned and impromptu, these events and installations have become a more regular part of the urban lexicon, adopted by municipalities as a means to celebrate and enliven their cities. In every location, these happenings have assumed a different character, reflective of local culture and environment. These events and installations have helped put the public back into the public realm.

In soliciting feedback and input for this document, we asked the question: what makes public space in the District unique? Is it the physical form of the District's hub and spoke urban plan, the regulatory overlays between federal and city agencies, or the way communities use public space? Though all of these forces are contributors, what we repeatedly heard from stakeholders is this – public space in the District is both well-regulated and activated. There's the need to organize, regularize, and streamline the process of making these places, but in the best interest of serving communities and celebrating the arts and heritage of the city.

This common ground between regulation and activity is a hallmark of what makes a space activation project successful in the District. This guide provides resources for understanding both.

**Space activation** focuses on how the space between buildings can be used for community-building. **Spatial stewardship** treats the public realm as a public resource and promotes the responsible use, management and maintenance of this space by communities.

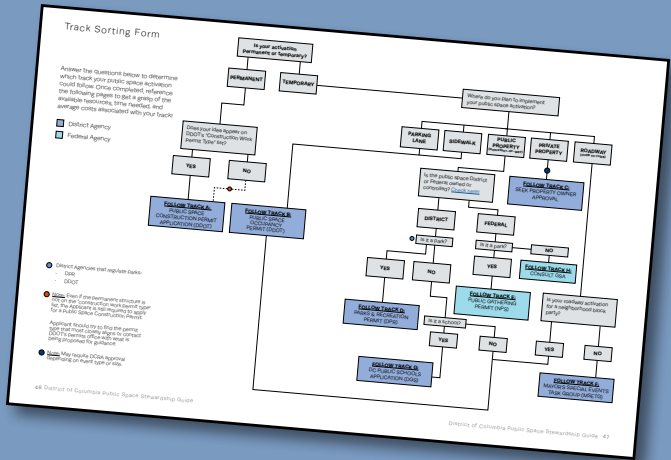
Throughout this guide, the idea of “impact” is repeatedly referenced. “Impact” is that concept that any spatial activation has the potential to affect a community, the environment, and the city in different ways. The narrative and text in this guide is written with the objective of helping activation and stewardship projects maximize their individual “impacts”, creating a network of successful and sustainable public realm projects throughout the District.

There are many people and organizations involved in activation and stewardship of public spaces in the District. These include, but are not limited to: residents and resident groups; Main Street organizations; Business Improvement Districts; community and arts institutions; District government agencies; and federal agencies. This guide is intended for use by anyone and everyone engaged in maintaining and activating neighborhood places.

# How to use this guide.

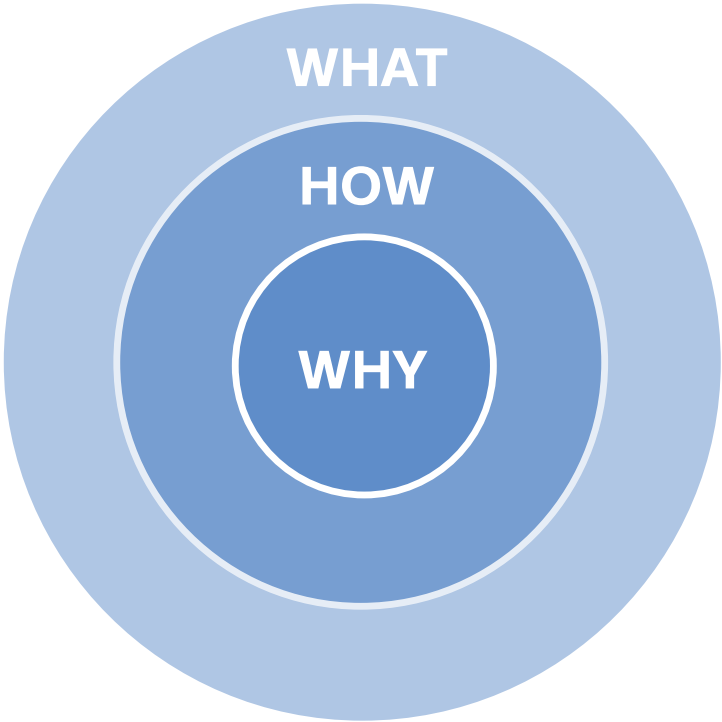
This guide is organized into three parts:

- In **PART ONE**, the District’s specific context is addressed, providing local and historical background and providing definitions and identification of those involved in regulating and reviewing activation and stewardship of public space.
- In **PART TWO**, physical context is discussed. What are the different components of the public realm and what are the unique characteristics of public space inherent to the District? Case studies from the District and other locations from the U.S. and around the world are also included.
- In **PART THREE**, a number of worksheets are included to help provide hands-on assistance to individuals and groups who are considering activation projects. These include a **track sorting form** to help provide guidance around the regulatory process, as well as toolkits that will help inform users on spatial and cultural considerations.



Track Sorting Form (p 46)

# What, how and why.



## What...

Supplemental guidance on how to activate public space by making public space stewardship and activation more accessible and transparent.

## How...

By laying out strategies and models to support cultural expression and consumption in public spaces throughout the District.

## Why...

To advance the District's practice in using the public realm for purposes other than vehicle movement, including as places for placemaking around community and culture.

# District of Columbia Context



# District of Columbia Context

Washington, D.C. has always been a place with a public realm designed for the public. The District of Columbia’s Comprehensive Plan notes that the city was designed as a model for growth, where “streets were deliberately aligned to take advantage of natural topography and vistas, providing sites for monuments and important buildings and creating grand ceremonial spaces.”

This emphasis on planning for the civic aspects of the public realm have resulted in an urban core consisting of more formal public spaces, sized and shaped for gathering and processional events. Ample sidewalks support and connect this network. Even in residential neighborhoods “front yards” are often part of public space and regulated so that their design can be

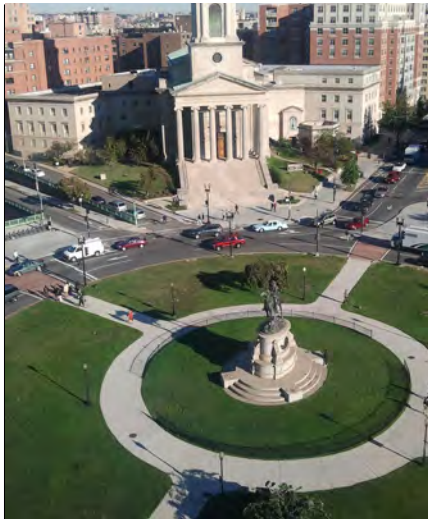
enjoyed by all as an extension of the parks system. In some locations, buildings engage their lot lines, resulting in a clear delineation between public and private space.

At the same time, the District is a city of neighborhoods. These neighborhoods have often been developed with more informal layouts, different scales of street grids, and more intimate green spaces supporting lower density uses. With this finer grain of development comes a more nuanced relationship between the public, semi-public, and private space between buildings. The public realm in neighborhoods outside of the core may actually be perceived as a combination of streets, sidewalks, front yards, porches and front steps.

Both the formal and more informal public spaces in the District lend themselves to a wide variety of public space activation and stewardship opportunities. Frequently, these are inspired by the historic or cultural context of a place. Other times, these assume a civic function that reflects a larger community or issue. As the population of the District continues to grow, there will be an increasing opportunity to use the strong framework of the District’s public realm as a place for gathering and celebration.

**The way public space is used and designed impacts residents, workers, and visitors. Consistent application and enforcement of public space policies and regulations give our city a distinct character defined by open spaces and results in a greener and more walkable city.**

*– Public Realm Design Manual (DDOT/DCOP)*



# Activation & stewardship is important everywhere.

## The concept of public space activation and stewardship is not entirely new.

By embracing space activation and stewardship, communities have found ways to use the spatial resources of their neighborhoods to:

- improve the quality of life for residents, workers, and visitors;
- address issues of spatial equity and social justice;
- increase health, safety and security;
- bring people together in new and different ways;
- create a sense of identity;
- promote play, recreation, respite, and enjoyment;
- bring vitality to streets; and
- aid in environmental greening.

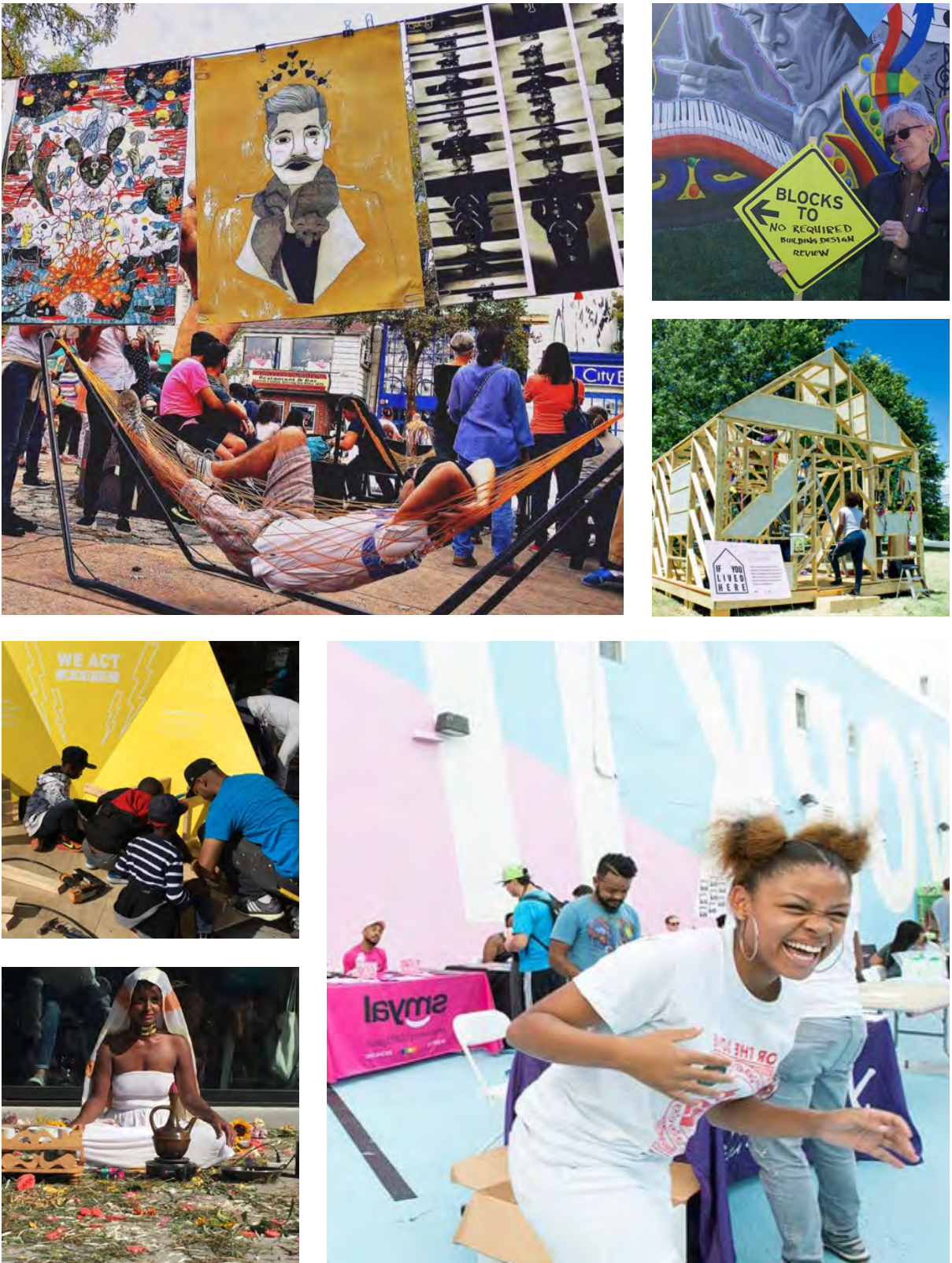
Throughout history, the District has been a leader in using public space with a clearly defined public benefit. For example, parking and projection regulations were considered incredibly innovative for their time. During certain periods, the District prohibited the active use of public spaces. However, in recent years, the District has been a leader in public space activation. This guide provides supplemental guidance to a variety of stakeholders on how to activate public space by making public space engagement accessible and transparent.

Throughout history, cities were formed at the crossroads of trade and transportation routes, places of movement where goods and ideas were exchanged. City spaces were activated by the visible evidence of agriculture and economy, and the labor-intensive routines of everyday public and domestic life intermixed in close proximity. Communities came to consensus on how to maintain and manage the common natural resources under their control.

Cities and industries matured, and activities that were once done in public became more discrete. Business and retail uses were tucked into buildings, and these structures were organized in ways that more clearly defined the public realm. As common natural resources were increasingly being managed by more formal agencies, communities became informal stewards of the public realm, or the space between buildings.

Today, communities realize that the public realm can be used to spur different types of human-focused activity and enhance the innate vitality of their neighborhoods.

**Space activation** focuses on how the space between buildings can be used for community-building. **Spatial stewardship** treats the public realm as a public resource and promotes the responsible use, management and maintenance of this space by communities.



Types of spatial activation

Spatial activation and stewardship can take many forms.

From temporary to semi-permanent, spatial activations frequently use a combination of programming (or, an activity component) and physical improvements. The below list is not intended to be exhaustive, but highlights some frequently seen types of spatial activation.

TEMPORARY SPACE/PROGRAMMING		PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT/BUILT ENVIRONMENT	
Street Performances	Festivals	Parklets	Murals & public art
Parades	Street markets	Pop-up commerce	Cafe seating
Marathons	Farmers' markets	Temporary beaches	Temporary pavilions
Demonstrations	Street vending	Outdoor movies	Public seating
Outdoor Sports	Vending development zones	Temporary plazas	Celebrations
Block parties		Free libraries	Commemoration



Activation vs. Enhancement

A distinction should be made between open space activation and open space enhancement. Open Space activation uses public spaces for people, in ways that improve quality of life and community awareness through dynamic engagement. Open space enhancement focuses on improving the aesthetic qualities of space.



# Concept definitions

## Public space

“A broad term that includes the area within the street right-of-way which can take on many different appearances. Typically thought of as the publicly-owned area between private property lines, it includes the roadway, tree space, sidewalk, and often what appears to be front yards. Regulations for public space are also applied to private property within building restriction lines that define additional setbacks on some streets.”

*Public Realm Design Manual (DDOT/DCOP)*

## Creative placemaking

“The intentional use of arts and culture to shape the physical, social and economic opportunities in communities. These projects deploy arts and cultural resources to illuminate new ways of utilizing places.”

*DC Cultural Plan (working draft)*

## Tactical urbanism

An approach to neighborhood building and activation using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions and policies.

## Parklet

“Parklets are an extension of the sidewalk into the street, exchanging curbside road space for additional public gathering space.”

*Parklet Program (DDOT)*

## Temporary urbanism

“[Underused urban space that is] temporarily activated by an intervention that reframes the possibilities for the space. Temporary urbanism uses faster and less expensive approaches to test concepts that would be prohibitively unproven for permanent interventions.”

*DC Cultural Plan (Working Draft)*

# Public life

Public life is what people create when they connect with each other in public spaces—the streets, plazas, parks, and city spaces between buildings.

Public life is about the everyday activities that people naturally take part in when they spend time with each other outside their homes, workplaces, and cars. Public life studies analyze observed human behavior in shared spaces to inform policy, regulations, and temporary or permanent public space design interventions.

The District of Columbia is fortunate to have a wealth of park spaces, squares, and pedestrian-friendly streets that provide opportunities for a vibrant and rich public life. As the District grows, ensuring that all groups and people can enjoy public life in our shared spaces is an important part of achieving an inclusive city.

- Public life is a driver of:
- Physical and mental health
  - Sustainable mobility
  - Social benefits
  - Culture, identity, and sense of place
  - Safety
  - Economic Development

The methodology for studying public life applies techniques developed by the Gehl Institute as adapted by the DC Office of Planning. Analysis can consist of assessing:

- urban quality in terms of its protection, accessibility, comfort, and enjoyment,
- counts of pedestrian and bicycle movements through public space,
- mapping stationary activities of the individuals and groups who are staying or lingering in public space, and
- intercept surveys that capture perceptions and desires of the people using public space.



For more information, contact Thor Nelson, Senior Urban Designer at (202) 741-5241 or by email at [thor.nelson@dc.gov](mailto:thor.nelson@dc.gov).

# Aspects of Public Space Activation

Each city is shaped by its own unique social, spatial and regulatory environments. These contexts ultimately inform the type of space activation and stewardship that is most appropriate for a location. In order to be relevant and successful, activation of the public realm needs to be highly responsive to context.

What are some of the most relevant forces shaping context in the District? The District has a long tradition of cultural engagement—both in more formal, institutional structures, and via informal, community-led interventions. The District also has a long tradition of providing excellence in both design and regulation of the public

realm, in ways that safeguard and inspire people. As both a major city and capital of the United States, public spaces are also activated by civic uses and events. When it comes to the public realm, these three sets of forces can be complementary. In total, these forces determine the overall **“impact”** that a project has on its community and environment. This guide identifies ten different aspects that individuals and groups who are interested in undertaking projects in the public realm should consider. These have been grouped under the headings of “cultural criteria”, “civic criteria”, and “spatial criteria”.

**Public space activation** resides at the intersection of cultural, civic, and spatial considerations.

**IMPACT**

A Venn diagram with three overlapping circles labeled CULTURAL, SPATIAL, and CIVIC. The central intersection of all three circles is labeled PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION and is outlined with a dashed white line. A bracket above the diagram is labeled IMPACT.

**ARTS COMPONENT**  
Activations can showcase local talent and community through art, music, spoken word, and live performances by local, national, and/or international artists/performers.

**CULTURAL/HISTORIC**  
Cultural heritage and local history can be shared in various ways in the public realm to provide a greater understanding and transparency of community identity.

CULTURAL CRITERIA

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**  
Engaging stakeholders in the process of activation can grow social capital and establish ways to reach common goals. Stakeholders can include residents, community groups/organizations, local business partners, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), and developers.

**CHAMPIONS AN ISSUE**  
Public activation can be used as a change agent, creating awareness about key issues.

**SOCIAL EQUITY**  
Equity means not showing bias or preference for one individual, group or agency. Public space interventions can help demonstrate equity in real time.

CIVIC CRITERIA

**SCALE**  
The scale of an activation or event can be measured by various metrics, including its physical area, the number of people it reaches, or the size of the issue that is being highlighted.

**COST**  
Different activations will have varying costs. These costs could include permit application, staffing, materials, and maintenance fees.

**DURATION**  
Activations can be temporary or permanent. The duration of an activation can affect its overall impact, permitting track, and stewardship requirements.

**LIFE SAFETY/SECURITY**  
Safety, accessibility, and organized methods of movement are key factors that contribute to the overall success of public space activations.

**PROTOTYPE POTENTIAL**  
Temporary public space activations can open the door for more permanent solutions, opportunities to reconsider scale, and similar installations in other locations.

SPATIAL CRITERIA

# The Creators, The Consumers, The Regulators

**Creators**, the people who produce cultural expressions.  
**Consumers**, the people who experience and support cultural production.  
**Regulators**, the agencies that safeguard the health & welfare of the people.

Space activation and stewardship projects are frequently perceived as impromptu, organic events. However, these projects often involve the same planning and implementation processes as long-term interventions. There are many groups that participate in the process of **creating, consuming, regulating**, and enjoying an active public realm.

## CREATORS

Creators are the people who envision, plan, and implement space activation projects and events. They often take the project from initial conception through maintenance and stewardship phases. Creators can include: independent citizens, neighborhood groups, institutions, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), and government agencies.

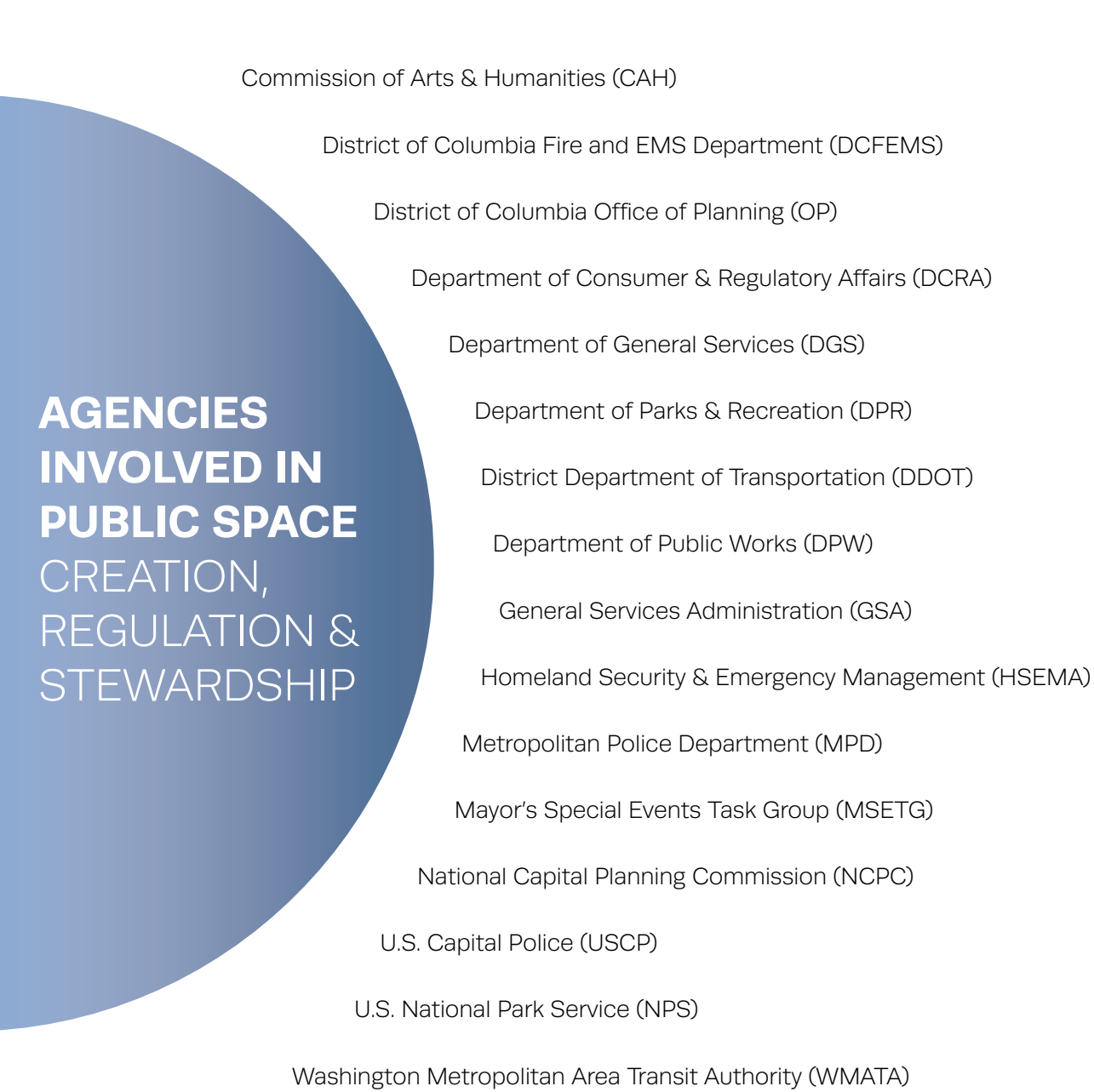
## CONSUMERS

Consumers are the people who experience and support events and activations in the public realm through participation. The level of engagement that consumers have with a project can vary widely from passive enjoyment to physical participation in an event or installation. Consumers can include: residents, workers, and visitors.

## REGULATORS

Regulators reinforce the District's goal of making public spaces inclusive, equitable, aesthetically pleasing, and safe. Correspondingly, there are a number of agencies that review public space applications and others that create and develop space activation and stewardship strategies. These agencies and their specific roles in regulating the public realm are listed on the following pages.

# Supporters and Facilitators



- CAH**

CAH provides grants, plans events, and commissions public art installations. Murals DC is a key initiative in partnership with DPW.
- DCFEMS**

DCFEMS is responsible for providing public safety guidance as part of the Mayor's Special Events Task Group (MSETG).
- OP**

OP guides physical development in the District, planning for neighborhoods, corridors, districts, community visioning, parks, and open spaces. OP has a number of ongoing initiatives supporting creative placemaking.
- DCRA**

DCRA is a consumer protection agency and permitting authority. They are a key member of the MSETG and issues Special Event Licenses for festivals and stationary events in the public realm.
- DGS**

DGS is responsible for construction, management, and maintenance of District facilities and land.
- DPR**

DPR operates and programs District's parks, playgrounds, and community centers.
- DDOT**

DDOT has management and oversight authority over the use, design, and occupancy of public space (all publicly owned property between the property lines on a street).
- DPW**

DPW contributes to making public spaces and streets in the District clean, safe, and accessible through parking enforcement and environmental services/solid waste management.
- GSA**

GSA leases and maintains Federal Government property and buildings.
- HSEMA**

HSEMA safeguards the District from all threats and hazards, and leads and manages the MSETG procedures.
- MPD**

MPD is responsible for keeping peace and order in the public realm without prejudice to event content. MPD is the sole permitting agency for parades.
- MSETG**

MSETG organizes the city's public safety planning efforts for events requiring inter-agency coordination.
- NCPC**

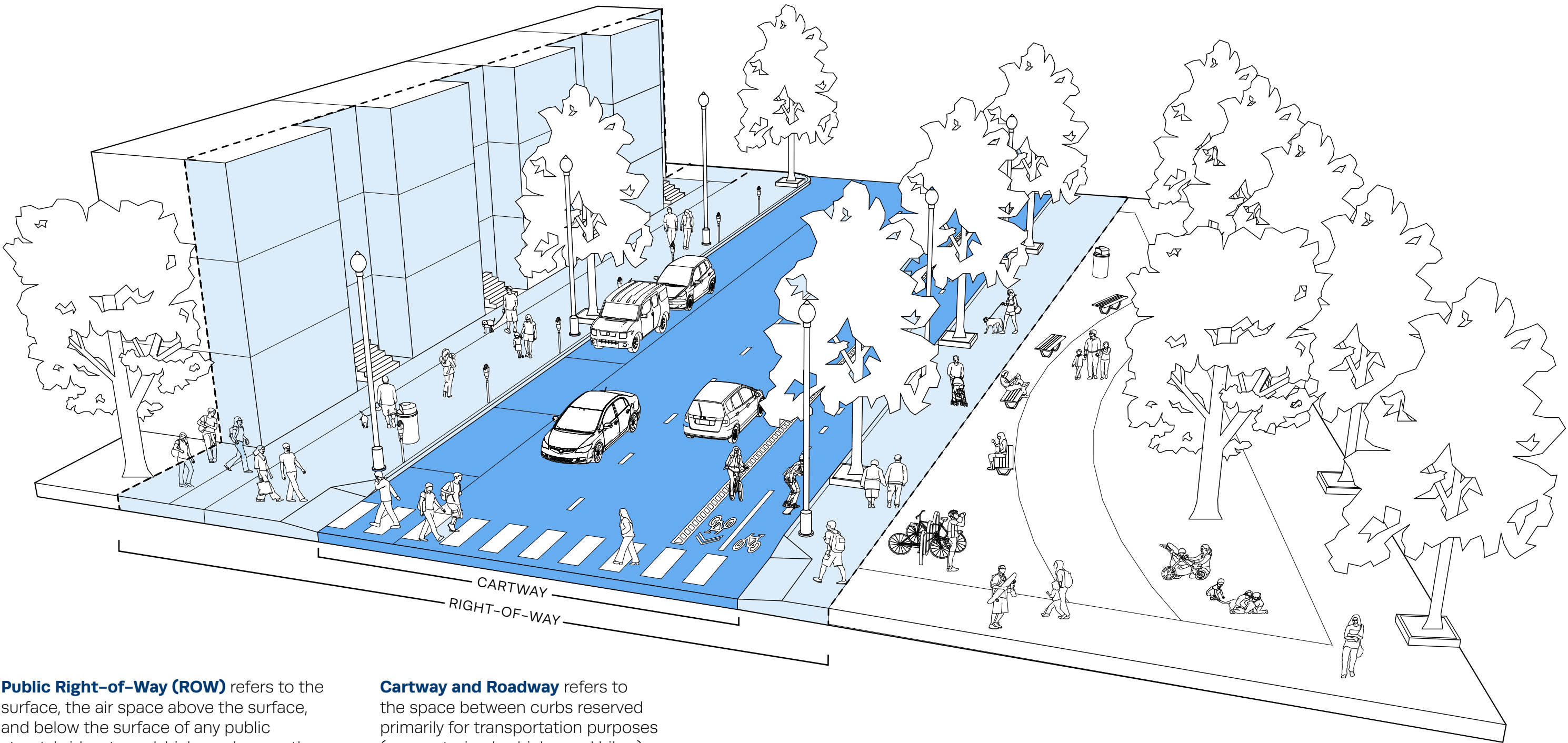
NCPC works with federal agencies to preserve and enhance the extraordinary historical, cultural, and natural resources and federal assets of the National Capital Region.
- USCP**

USCP is responsible for maintaining a safe and secure environment throughout U.S. Capitol Grounds, spanning 270 acres and including Congressional buildings and grounds. USCP is a member of MSETG.
- NPS**

NPS manages national parks, national monuments, and other conservation and historical properties.
- WMATA**

WMATA manages the space in and around metro stations, and owns or controls real estate assets to promote ridership and enhance communities.

Defining public space  
in the District



**Public Right-of-Way (ROW)** refers to the surface, the air space above the surface, and below the surface of any public street, bridge, tunnel, highway, lane, path, alley, sidewalk, or boulevard. The ROW is maintained by DDOT and remains the most valuable public asset of the city.

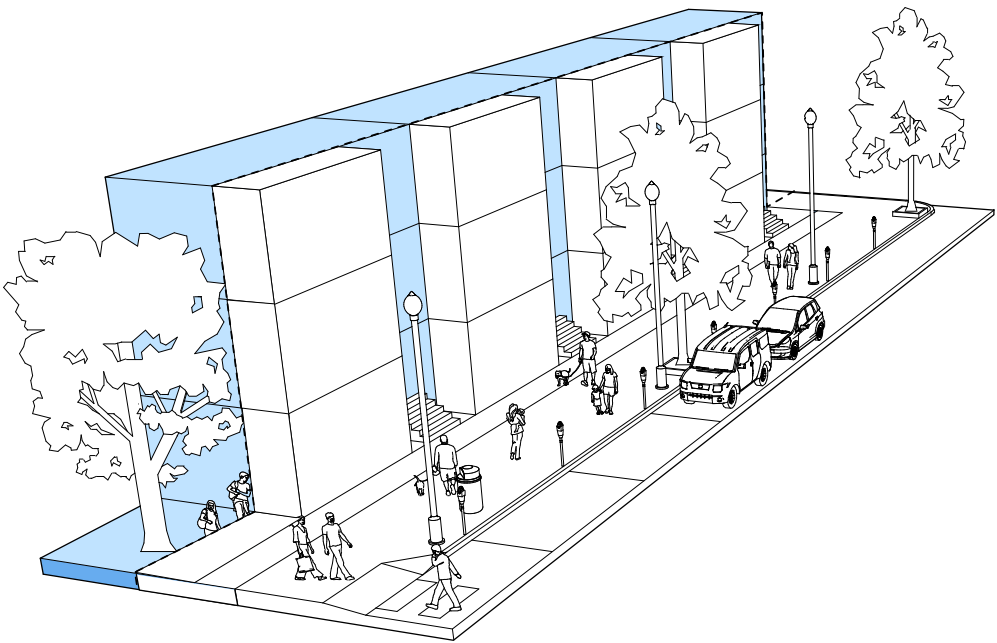
**Cartway and Roadway** refers to the space between curbs reserved primarily for transportation purposes (e.g., motorized vehicles and bikes).

# District of Columbia— spatial typologies

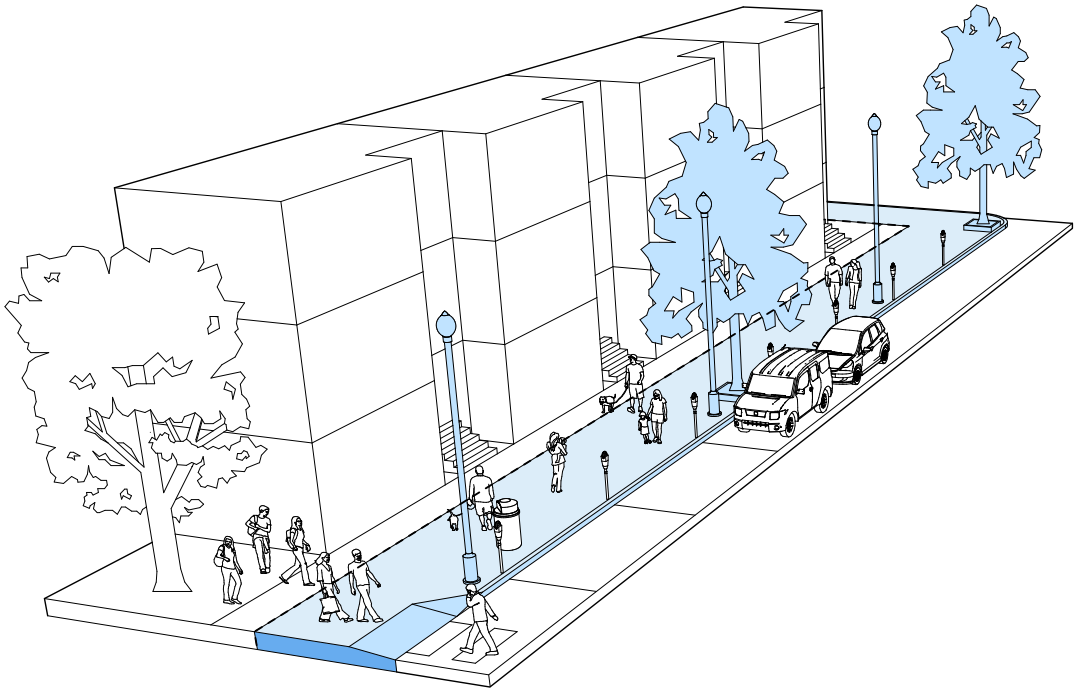
A **sidewalk** is made up typically of a curbside treebox zone where street trees, street lights, meters, hydrants, signage, and similar fixtures are located; and a clear pedestrian path that is free of fixed obstructions but may have sidewalk cafes, wayfinding, and other pedestrian-oriented uses.

**Public Parking or Building Restriction Line (BRL)** refers to the area that is legally part of the city's parks system. This area located behind the sidewalk zone, should remain park-like in nature, but allows for building projections, such as bay windows, steps, etc. The BRL is private space but falls under the public space regulations.

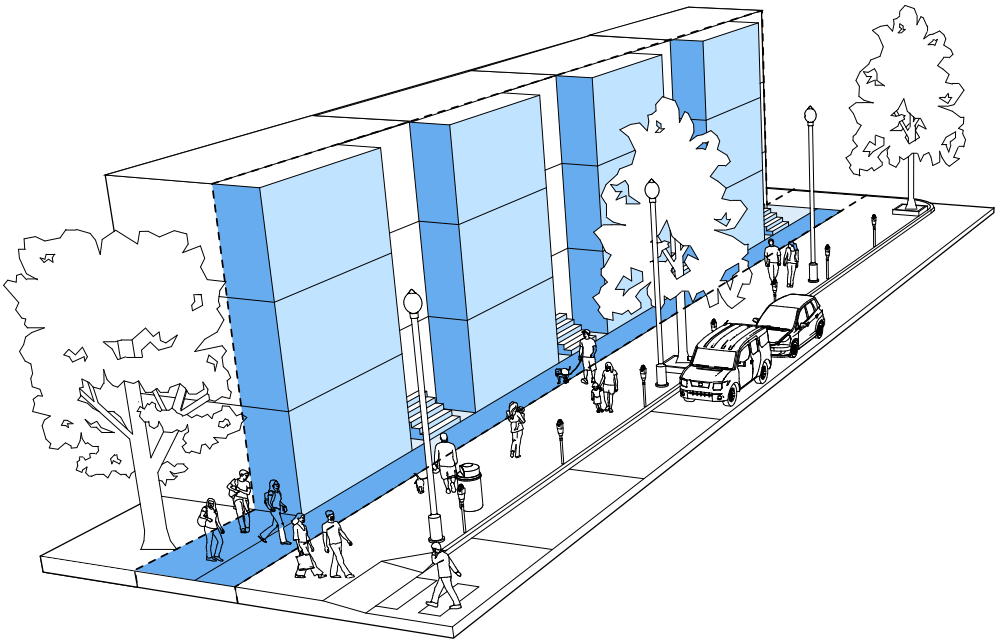
**Parks** are typically public spaces owned by the city or the National Park Service (or privately held but required to be publically accessible) that are not part of the street ROW. Many different agencies maintain responsibility for these such as DPR, DOH, DDOT on the local side, or NPS on the federal side.



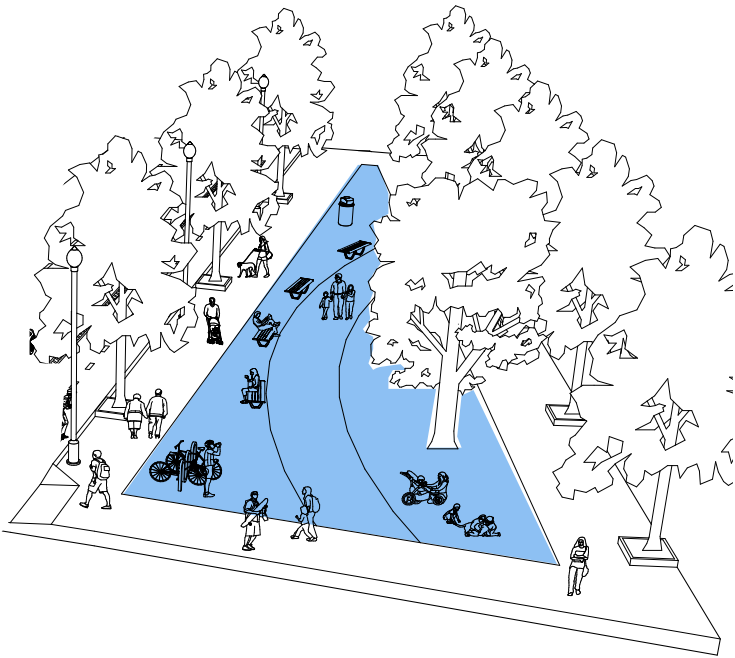
*Private Property*



*Sidewalks (may extend to property line on commercial streets)*



*Public Parking & Building Projection  
(primarily on residential streets)*



*Parks*



# My DC at 14th Street NW

Washington, DC

**WHO:** Murals DC

**WHAT:** Mural project – through Murals DC and artist Tim Conlon, this project engaged the Petworth community through a partnership with the District Department of Public Works and the District Commission on the Arts & Humanities.

**WHERE:** Petworth, Washington D.C.

**IMPACT:** Encouraged expression and engagement in the Petworth community– the site was identified by community members, who were also instrumental in the planning, design, and creation of the mural.



# Ward 7 Superstops

Washington, DC

**WHO:** Gehl Architects, Nick Nawa, and the Ward 7 Community

**WHAT:** Temporary use of wide sidewalks for ephemeral events and temporary structures. The public realm was activated with playable structures, a musical bench, and a mobile storytelling porch as a fun destination for community building for play, physical activity, and interaction.

**WHERE:** Ward 7, Washington D.C.

**IMPACT:** A collaborative design-build process allowed the neighborhood to take an active role in creating a sense of place, enhancing safety, and creating alternate conditions in the public realm. Stories came to life by providing space for longtime residents to engage with fellow residents, youth, and morning and evening commuters.



## Duration

Activations can be temporary or permanent. The duration of an activation can affect its overall impact, permitting track, and stewardship requirements.

# Beyond the Renwick

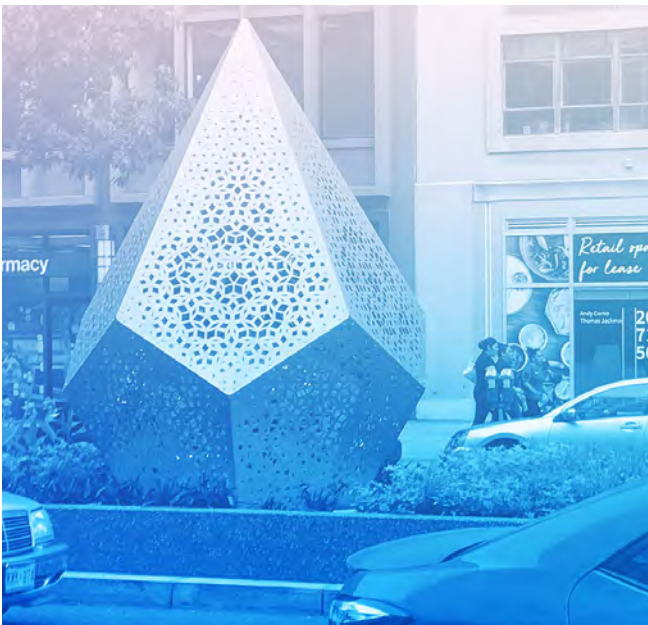
Washington, DC

**WHO:** Partnership between the Golden Triangle BID and the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Renwick Gallery

**WHAT:** The central business district was activated with six public art installations as an extension of the 'No Spectators: The Art of Burning Man' exhibit.

**WHERE:** Central Business District within the Golden Triangle.

**IMPACT:** Expanded the display of artwork outside the museum into streets and parks within the Golden Triangle as an extension of a museum, allowing for more visibility, interaction, and awareness of exhibits.



# Funk Parade

Washington, DC

**WHO:** U Street Cultural & Arts Community

**WHAT:** The Funk Parade is an annual public music and arts festival along the U Street corridor, celebrating the diverse cultural history of the neighborhood and its impact on the musical history of the city.

**WHERE:** U Street Corridor, Washington D.C.

**IMPACT:** The parade is an epicenter of African American arts, music, and culture, drawing together local businesses and the arts community to showcase live musical performances, visual arts, and food vendors.



# Cultural/Historical

Cultural heritage and local history can be shared in various ways in the public realm to provide a greater understanding and transparency of community identity.



# Artscape

Baltimore, MD

**WHO:** Office of Promotion & The Arts, on behalf of Baltimore Festival of the Arts, Inc.

**WHAT:** The annual festival includes live concerts, artist markets, outdoor sculpture, installations, visual art exhibits, performing arts, film, family-friendly events and entertainment, and local food and beverage offerings.

**WHERE:** Mount Royal, Baltimore, MD

**IMPACT:** The multi-day event is widely attended and contributes to the total economic impact for the city. In the past, the event has attracted an upwards of 350,000 people to the city.

## Scale

The scale of an activation or event can be measured by various metrics, including its physical area, the number of people it reaches, or the size of the issue that is being highlighted.



Artscape 2014 © Jaymyang

# Team Better Block

Nationwide, USA

**WHO:** Team Better Block

**WHAT:** The firm engages communities by planning and orchestrating short term local events to temporarily improve the physical and economic environment on a specific city block.

**WHERE:** Nationwide, USA

**IMPACT:** The firm engages communities to participate in workshops that allow residents to share their input on methods to transform respective neighborhoods, focusing on underused public spaces, for both temporary use and long-term repurposing.

## Cost

Different activations will have varying costs. These costs could include permit application, staffing, materials, and maintenance fees.



© Stephanie Zollshan, Berkshire Eagle



© Stephanie Zollshan, Berkshire Eagle

# Life in My Shoes Walkway

London, UK

**WHO:** Body & Soul's Youth Program

**WHAT:** 'Life in My Shoes' is an interactive public exhibition for HIV charity.

**WHERE:** Southbank, London, UK

**IMPACT:** The exhibition creates portraits of those living with HIV as a means to create empathy and understanding with passerbys on the Southbank of London.

## Champions an Issue

Public activation can be used as a change agent, creating awareness about key issues.



# Smithsonian Folklife Festival

Washington, DC

**WHO:** The Smithsonian Institution

**WHAT:** The Smithsonian Folklife Festival is the largest public annual event in the District celebrating contemporary living cultural traditions, encouraging cultural exchange and attracting more than one million visitors yearly for two-weeks – overlapping with the July 4th festivities.

**WHERE:** National Mall, Washington, D.C.

**IMPACT:** The festival includes daytime and evening programs that range from musical and performing arts performances, to craft and cooking demonstrations.

## Life Safety/Security

Safety, accessibility, and organized methods of movement are key factors that contribute to the overall success of public space interventions.



# Market St Prototyping Festival

San Francisco, CA

**WHO:** Yerba Buena Center and the San Francisco Planning Department

**WHAT:** Festival for testing innovative approaches for redesigned sidewalks that are more active and engaging.

**WHERE:** Market Street, San Francisco, CA

**IMPACT:** Fifty models, or prototypes, are on display over the course of three days that range as performance spaces, art installations, spaces for relaxation and education, and green spaces, bridging together people and community.

## Prototype Potential

Temporary public space interventions can open the door for more permanent solutions, opportunities to reconsider scale, and similar installations in other locations.



© Joaquin Tobar & Adam Marcus



© San Francisco Design Week

# SEE/CHANGE

Washington, DC

**WHO:** Pink Line Project

**WHAT:** Curated by the Pink Line Project to create social equity by promoting community awareness, See/Change was a series of recorded video interviews of both old and new community members that were turned into video portraits that were displayed on vacant storefront windows and projected on walls of neighborhood buildings.

**WHERE:** Park View and Pleasant Plains neighborhoods, Washington, D.C.

**IMPACT:** The project built empathy and visibility of community members to highlight the effects of population change and redevelopment in the Park View and Pleasant Plains neighborhoods.

## Social Equity

Equity means not showing bias or preference for one individual, group or agency. Public space interventions can help demonstrate equity in real time.



# DC Community Block Party

Washington, DC

**WHO:** Neighbors

**WHAT:** Neighborhood Block Party (NBP) is a way to rediscover the art of neighboring. Typically held in residential neighborhoods NBPs are small-scale events that use the public right-of-way as a platform for neighbors to gather.

**WHERE:** Throughout Washington, D.C.

**IMPACT:** NBPs are characterized as fun, age-friendly gatherings to meet neighbors, build friendships, and develop a sense of belonging and security among residents. Participatory by design, NBPs strengthen the social fabric of neighborhoods and build community through positive interactions among residents.

## Civic Engagement

Encourages the use of neighborhood streets for safe play and social interaction between neighbors of all ages.





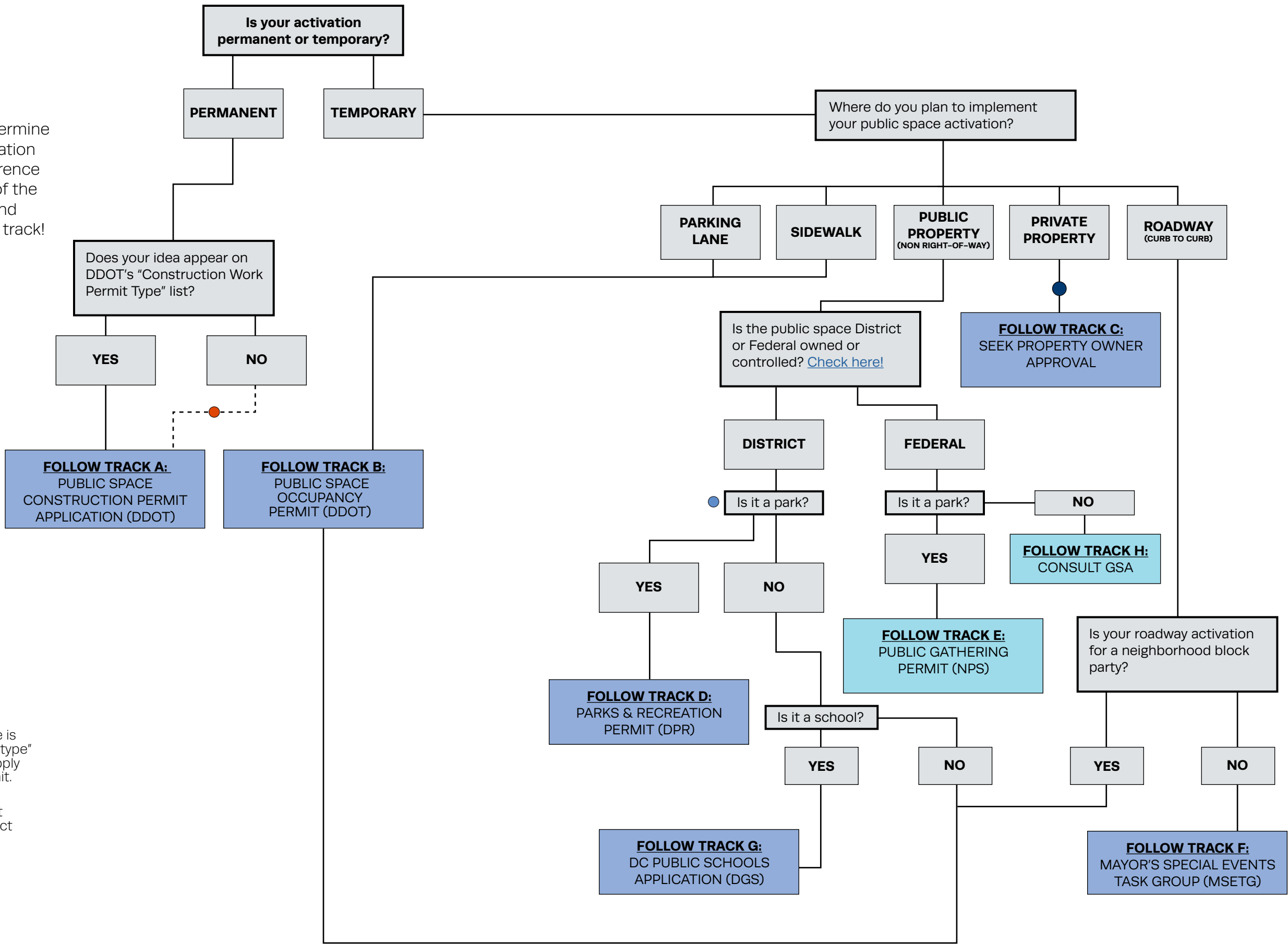
**Activation & Stewardship Tools**

# Track Sorting Form

Answer the questions below to determine which track your public space activation could follow. Once completed, reference the following pages to get a grasp of the available resources, time needed, and average costs associated with your track!

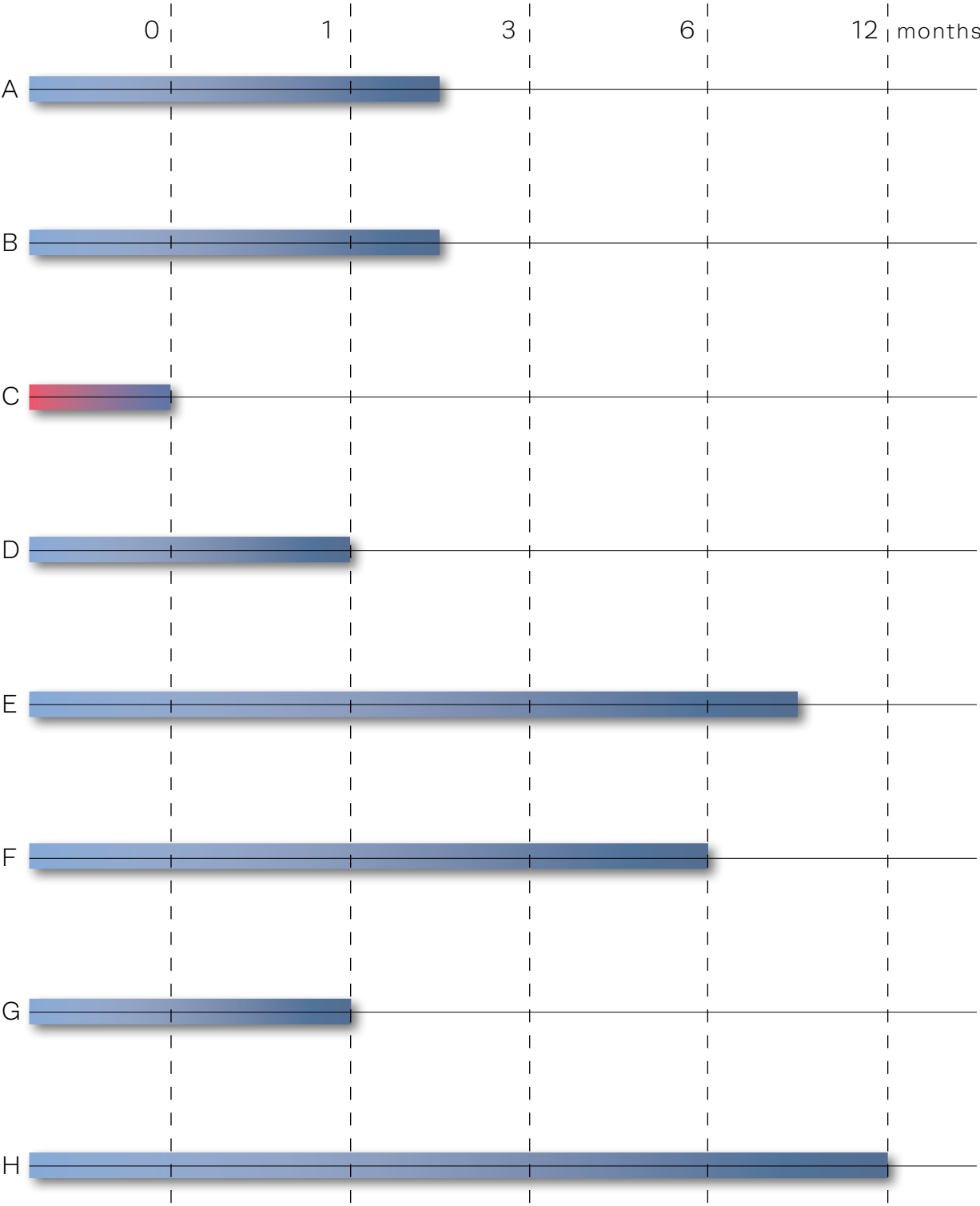
- District Agency
- Federal Agency

- District Agencies that regulate parks:
  - DPR
  - DDOT
- Note: Even if the permanent structure is not on the "construction work permit type" list, the Applicant is still required to apply for a Public Space Construction Permit.
- Applicant should try to find the permit type that most closely aligns or contact DDOT's permits office with what is being proposed for guidance.
- Note: May require DCRA approval depending on event type or size.



# Tracks by Minimum Lead Time

\*approximate permitting durations only



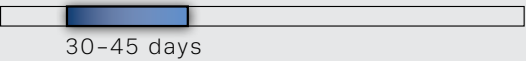
# Track Summary

Track	Agency	Permit
Track A	DDOT	Public Space Construction Permit <a href="https://ddot.dc.gov/page/permit-applications">https://ddot.dc.gov/page/permit-applications</a>
Track B	DDOT	Public Space Occupancy Permit <a href="https://ddot.dc.gov/page/permit-applications">https://ddot.dc.gov/page/permit-applications</a>
Track C	N/A	Property Owner Approval <i>May require DCRA approval depending on event type or size.</i>
Track D	DPR	Parks & Recreation Permit <a href="https://dpr.dc.gov/permits">https://dpr.dc.gov/permits</a>
Track E	NPS	Public Gathering Permit <a href="https://www.nps.gov/nama/planyourvisit/permitsandreservations.htm">https://www.nps.gov/nama/planyourvisit/permitsandreservations.htm</a>
Track F	MSETG	Mayor's Special Events Task Group <a href="https://hsema.dc.gov/service/plan-special-event">https://hsema.dc.gov/service/plan-special-event</a>
Track G	DGS	DC Public Schools Application <a href="https://dcps.dc.gov/publication/application-use-facilities">https://dcps.dc.gov/publication/application-use-facilities</a>
Track H	GSA	Consult GSA's Office of Portfolio Management <a href="https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/public-buildings-service/office-of-portfolio-mgmt-customer-engagement/office-of-portfolio-management">https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/public-buildings-service/office-of-portfolio-mgmt-customer-engagement/office-of-portfolio-management</a>

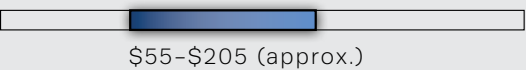
**Note:**  
The following pages have more information on implementation based on individual tracks.

Track A: Public Space Construction Permit (DDOT)

Approximate Time  
(permitting duration only)



Approximate Fees



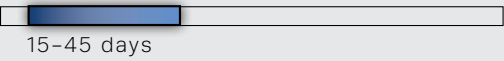
Notes

Application Review takes approximately 30 days. If Public Space Committee (PSC) is required, allot at least 45 days.

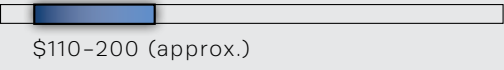
Application Fee \$50  
Technology Fee 10%  
\*Permit Fee varies

Track B: Public Space Occupancy Permit (DDOT)

Approximate Time  
(permitting duration only)



Approximate Fees



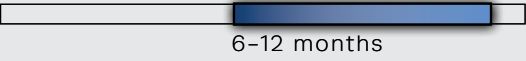
Notes

Occupancy Permits often only require 15 days lead time, with the exception of permits that require Public Space Committee approval.

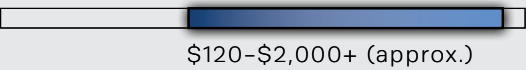
Application Fee \$50  
Technology Fee 10%  
Permit Fee \$50

Track E: Public Gathering Permit (NPS)

Approximate Time  
(permitting duration only)



Approximate Fees



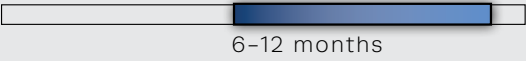
Notes

Permit application must occur 12 months prior to event. Preliminary Consultation Meeting must occur 70 days prior to event.

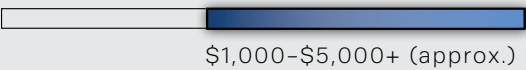
Application Fee \$120  
\*Insurance Requirement varies

Track F: Mayor’s Special Events Task Group (MSETG)

Approximate Time  
(permitting duration only)



Approximate Fees



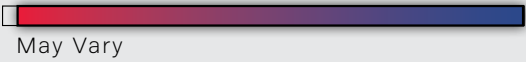
Notes

Letter of Intent (LOI) is due a **minimum of 180 days** and maximum of 365 days prior to event.

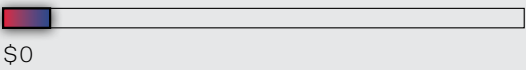
\*Permit Fees vary based on event size, location, and number of permits required by the MSETG.  
\*Insurance Requirement varies.

Track C: Property Owner Approval

Approximate Time  
(permitting duration only)



Approximate Fees



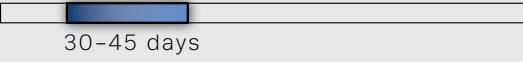
Notes

This track is the most informal and one’s activation is approved at the discretion of the private property owner.

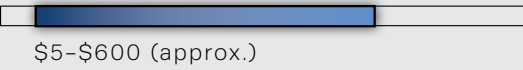
\*Reference Crossing the Street’s Superstops as a helpful Case Study

Track D: Parks & Recreation Permit (DPR)

Approximate Time  
(permitting duration only)



Approximate Fees



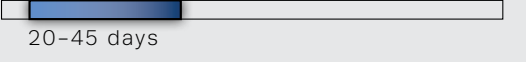
Notes

Applications are due 30 days prior to one’s event. Permits are typically processed in 10 business days.

Permit fees are hourly and vary in cost if the applicant is a resident or non-resident.

Track G: Public Schools Application (DGS)

Approximate Time  
(permitting duration only)



Approximate Fees



Notes

Required forms must be submitted to DGS a minimum of 20 days prior to the proposed use.

\*Fees and insurance varies based on event location and duration.

Track H: GSA’s Office of Portfolio Management

<https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/public-buildings-service/office-of-portfolio-mgmt-customer-engagement/office-of-portfolio-management>

General Note:

All times and fees for Tracks A-G are approximate and requirements will vary.

# Activation and Stewardship Worksheets

The following pages contain a series of worksheets that provide different approaches to looking at public space. These worksheets provide insight on how space can be used, how activation projects can take design cues from their surroundings, and how programming considerations can be built upon community culture and history.

These worksheets are optional tools that may be selected for use, dependent upon the type of project that an individual or group is interested in undertaking.

## Worksheets



Mapping Public Space



Cultural Considerations



Design Considerations



Budgeting and Funding



Community Engagement



Stewardship



Mapping Aspects of Public Space Activation

# Mapping Public Space

## Instructions

## DESCRIPTION

In order to be stewards and activators of the public realm, it is important to understand how people use space. By observing and mapping public life and public space, new understandings of public space and its possibility for activation may result.

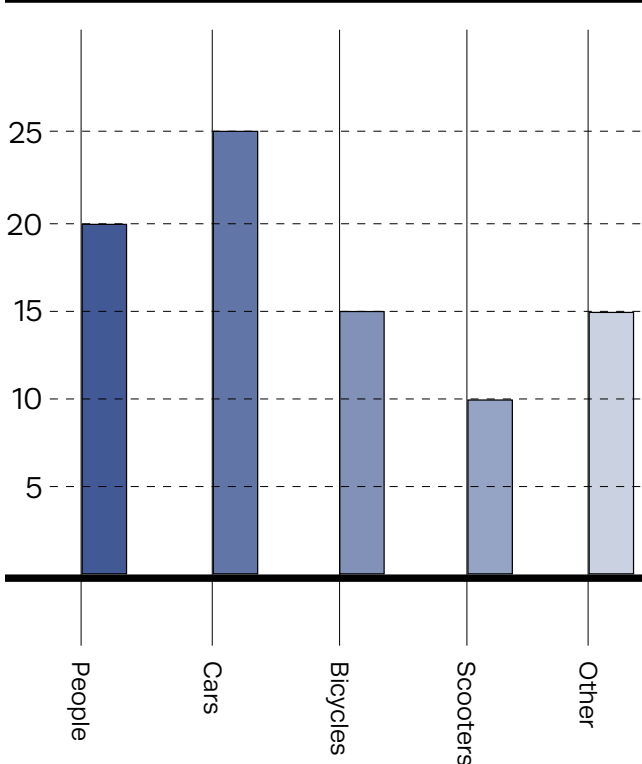


<https://www.wired.com/2014/01/space-syntax-china/amp>  
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/305048574730427146/?lp=true>  
<https://www.murdockmfg.com/photo-album.aspx?albumId=9>

## DIRECTIONS

1. Count how many people, cars, bicycles, etc.
2. Notice who is using the space (adults, school children, etc.)
3. Note key features (fountains, bus stops, benches, trees, etc.)
4. Record what people are doing and for how long (walking, sitting, etc.)
5. Reflect on your notes and ask yourself if there are any interesting patterns or opportunities for improvement.

## Mapping Public Space: How many



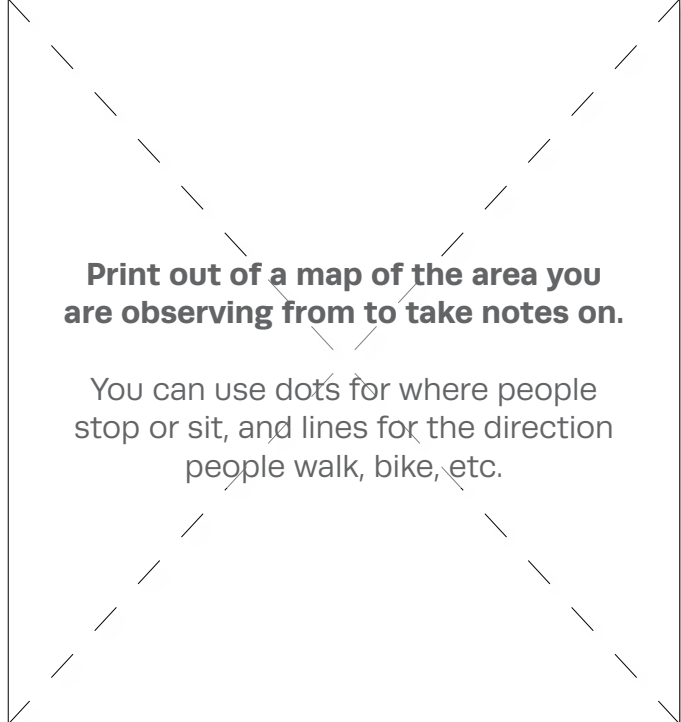
# Template Sheet

## OBSERVATIONS

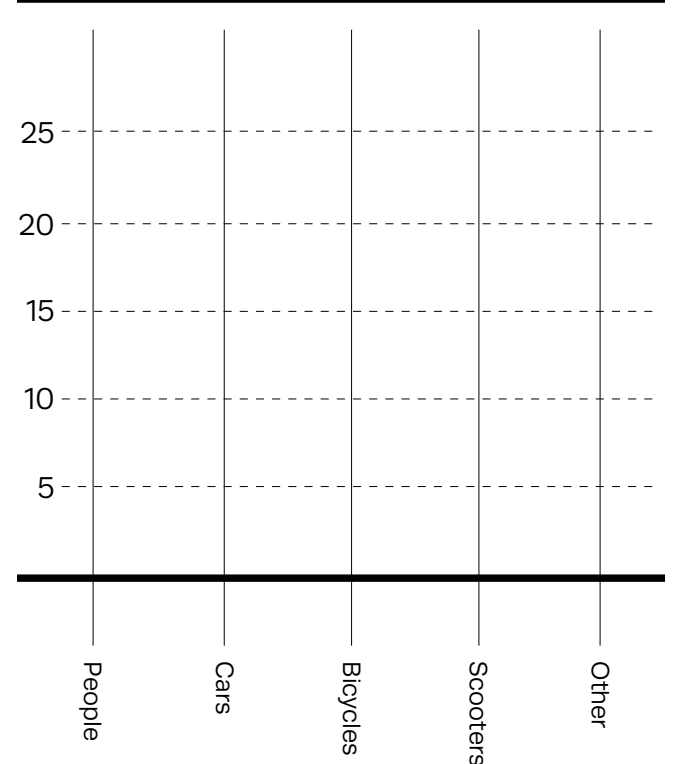
1  
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12

## IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

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## Mapping Public Space: How man

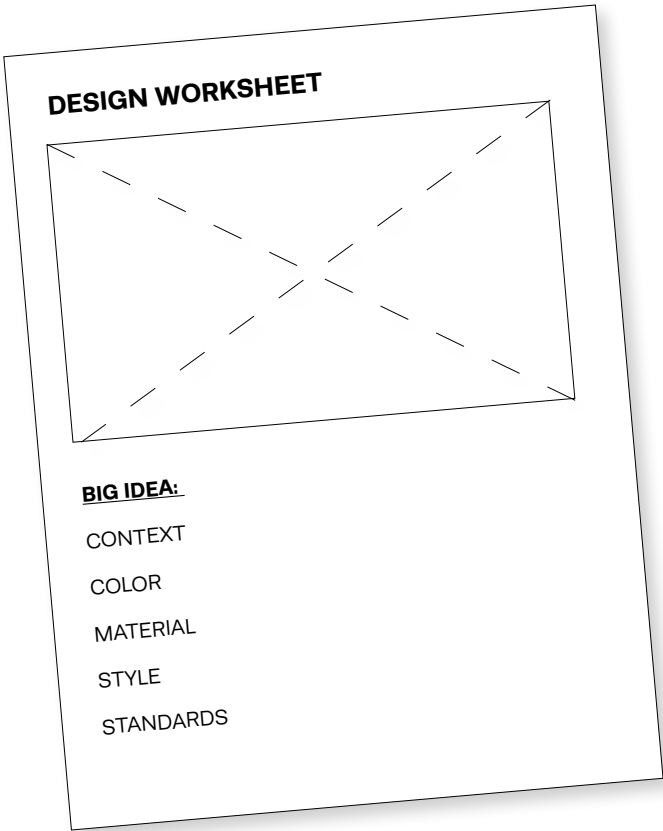


# Design Considerations

## Instructions

### DESCRIPTION

Design considerations impact the way that people will experience an activation. By following a few simple steps, a design approach can be developed for activations small and large.



### DIRECTIONS

1. Note the context. What is nearby? Are there office buildings, rowhomes, restaurants, parks? Are the buildings newer and modern, or older and historic?
2. Understand your purpose and goals. What is the big idea behind the activation? Can the project's "why" inspire its look and feel?
3. Consider your design. Does the activation blend or contrast with its context? Find some images that inspire what you see for this space.
4. Think about materials and color. What is your activation made with? Is there a color that is important to the activation's meaning or purpose?
5. Consider execution. Will the activation require help from professionals? Does the budget or schedule impact the design?
6. Use your resources. DC has robust planning manuals, reference DDOT's Public Realm Design Manual and Design and Engineering Manual (DEM) for DDOT standards.
7. Evaluations (How would you evaluate success?)
8. Maintenance and Management. Who will maintain and manage the design?

## Template Example



EXAMPLE	SIDEWALK HERB GARDEN CELEBRATING ADAMS MORGAN CULINARY CULTURE
CONTEXT	Very vibrant and colorful...historic rowhome buildings...restaurants and shops...only one tree.
COLOR	Green! To contrast with the purple while still being vibrant.
MATERIAL	Soil, herbs, re-used wooden crates from local businesses, green and white paint.
STYLE	Eclectic but modern. The crates can be various heights to mimic the heights of the rowhomes.
STANDARDS	Design must maintain minimum sidewalk width, reference Section 31.2.1.1 of DDOT's DEM.

# Community Engagement Worksheet

DESCRIPTION

Communities are at the heart of places. Engaging with individuals and organizations can strengthen an activation’s purpose, momentum, funding, and more.

DIRECTIONS

- 1. Make a list of the stakeholders and organizations in your community. Is your community made up of homeowners, small businesses, civic groups, ANCs, BIDs, commercial users, etc.?
- 2. Identify which stakeholders might be interested in participating in your activation or stewardship project. Consider flyers, emails, phone calls, going door-to-door, etc.
- 3. Devise a strategy for engagement. Successful techniques include interviews, surveys, visioning sessions, site visits, fundraisers, websites, etc.



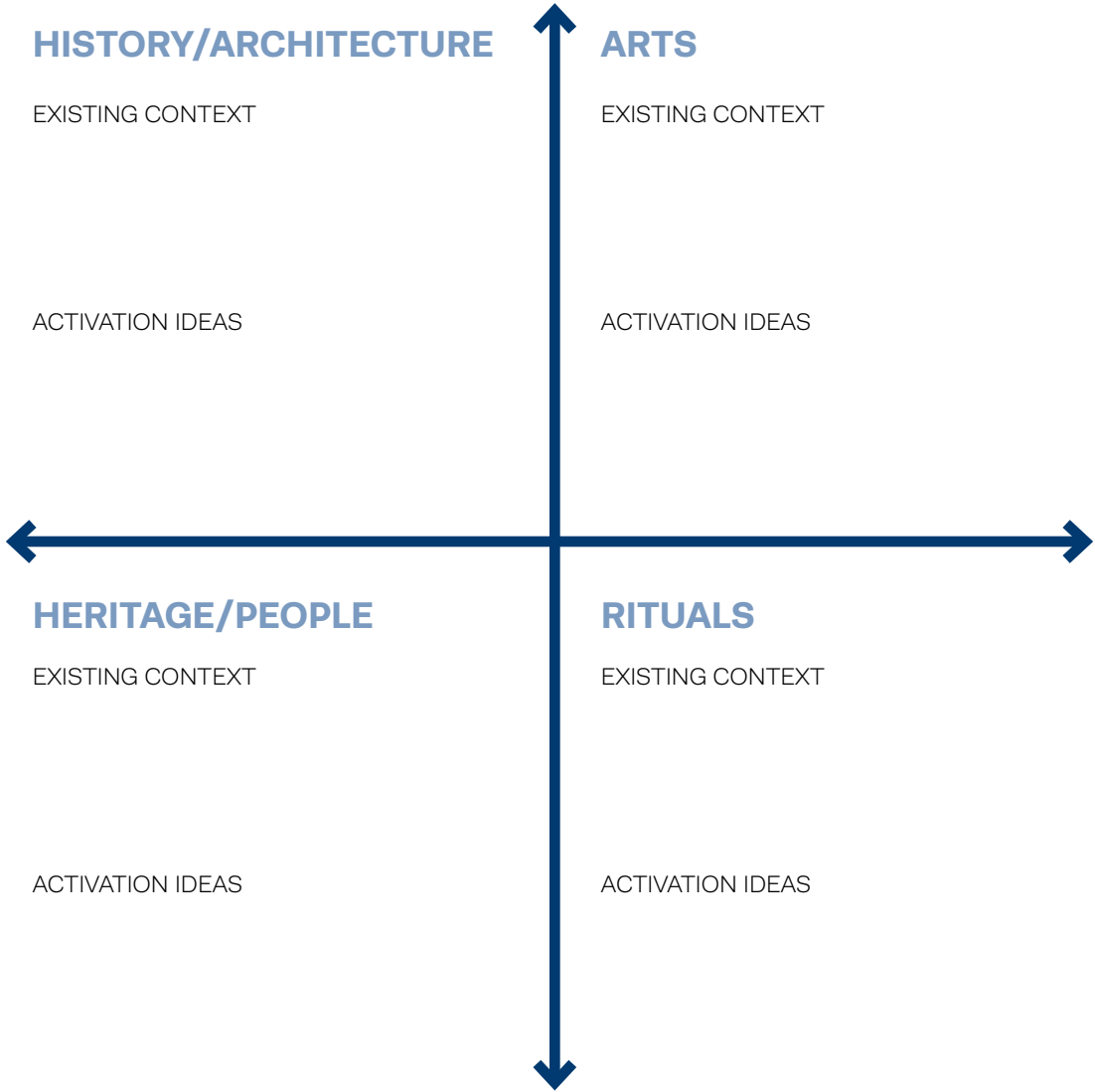
# Cultural Considerations Worksheet

DESCRIPTION

The District is rich in culture and diversity, and public space activation is an opportunity to celebrate this. Use this worksheet to begin to map the “cultural impact” of an activation.

DIRECTIONS

Fill out the Cultural Mapping chart below to determine the key cultural components in an activation. The components for this chart are History, Arts, Heritage, and Rituals. Imagine how the activation could apply to each of these sectors.



# Budgeting & Funding Worksheet

## DESCRIPTION

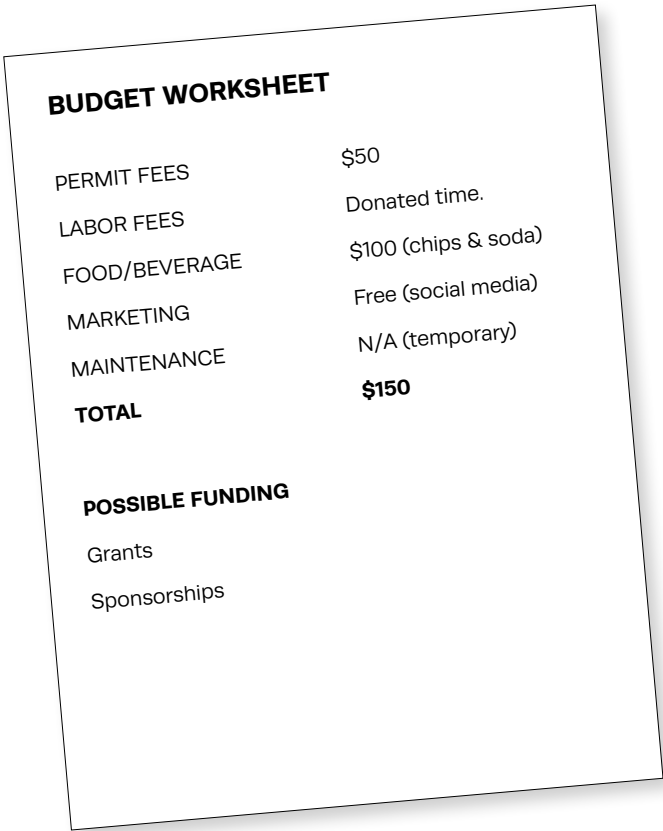
Use this worksheet to budget and apply for funding if necessary. Key considerations are listed in the right-hand column.

## BUDGETING

- Permit Fees
- Labor
- Food/Beverage
- Marketing
- Maintenance

## FUNDRAISING

- Grant Programs (Commission of Arts & Humanities, Office of Planning, Foundations, etc.)
- Creative partnerships with local businesses and/or community non-profit organizations
- Donations of labor, food, beverage, etc.



# Stewardship Worksheet

## DESCRIPTION

Stewardship is the job of supervising or taking care of something. Public space stewardship is important throughout project implementation. Use the checklist below to determine at which stages stewardship is most needed.

## DIRECTIONS

Answering “yes” means that stewardship will be a factor in that stage of activation. Permitting agencies generally ensure that proper steps are taken for stewardship. This checklist is meant to encourage public space stewardship beyond the requirements.

		Y	N	N/A
SET-UP / INSTALLATION	Will there be machinery used during set-up that could damage the grounds, street, curb, etc.?  Will the set-up impact any usual ongoings in this public space?  Will there be excessive noise?			
NEAR-TERM MAINTENANCE	Throughout the activation's duration, are there elements that need to be maintained?  Will there be re-painting, watering, trimming, sweeping, etc.?			
BREAKDOWN & REMOVAL	Will the activation leave the public space altered from its original state?  Will steps need to be taken to restore the space, and which ones?			
LONG-TERM MAINTENANCE	For more permanent interventions, will there be long-term maintenance required in terms of utilities, trash, service, etc?  Will there be agency oversight to ensure proper maintenance?			

## Creative Partnerships in Stewardship

### No Spectators: Beyond the Renwick

For the first time, the Renwick Gallery's art will extend beyond the walls of the gallery, as large-scale pieces will be showcased throughout the Golden Triangle BID. In this unique partnership, the Renwick Gallery are the curators and the Golden Triangle BID will serve as stewards of the installations, ensuring the art is well-maintained.

# Mapping Aspects of Public Space Activation Worksheet

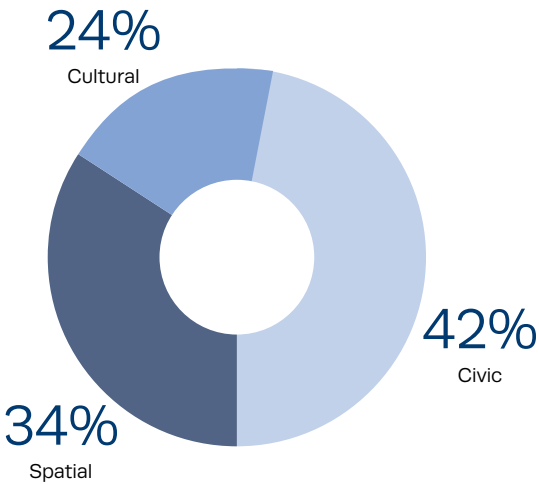
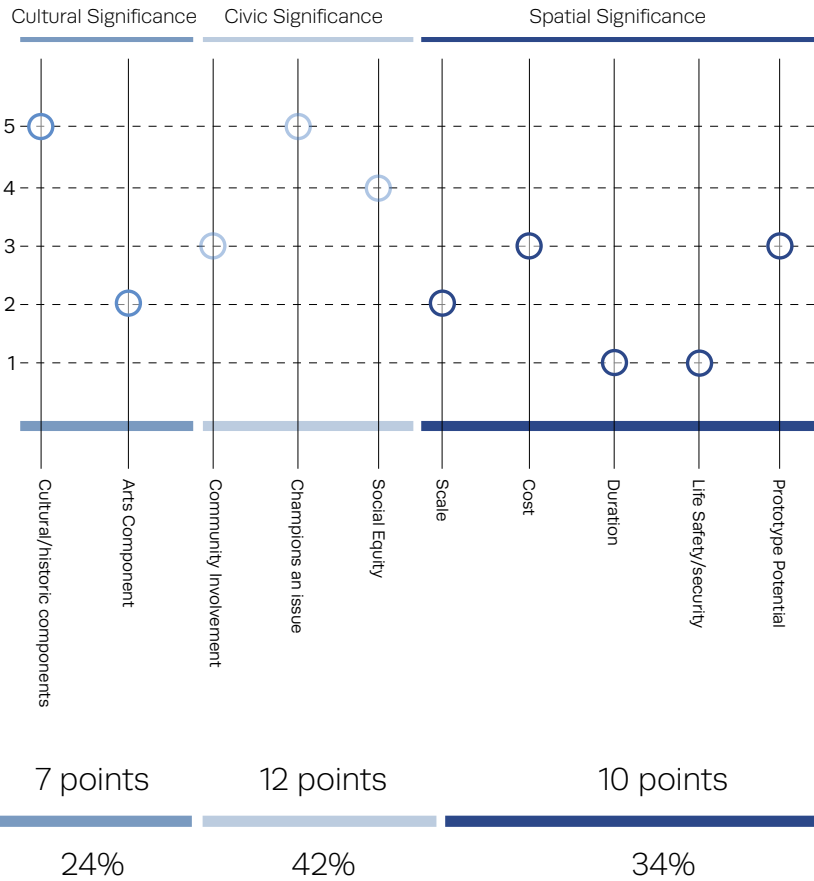
## DESCRIPTION

At the completion of any public space activation and stewardship project, it may be helpful to reflect upon lessons learned and evaluate the impact that a project had on the city and community. By completing an Impact Concept matrix, individuals can apply a quantitative evaluation rubric to determine the cultural, civic and spatial strengths of a project.

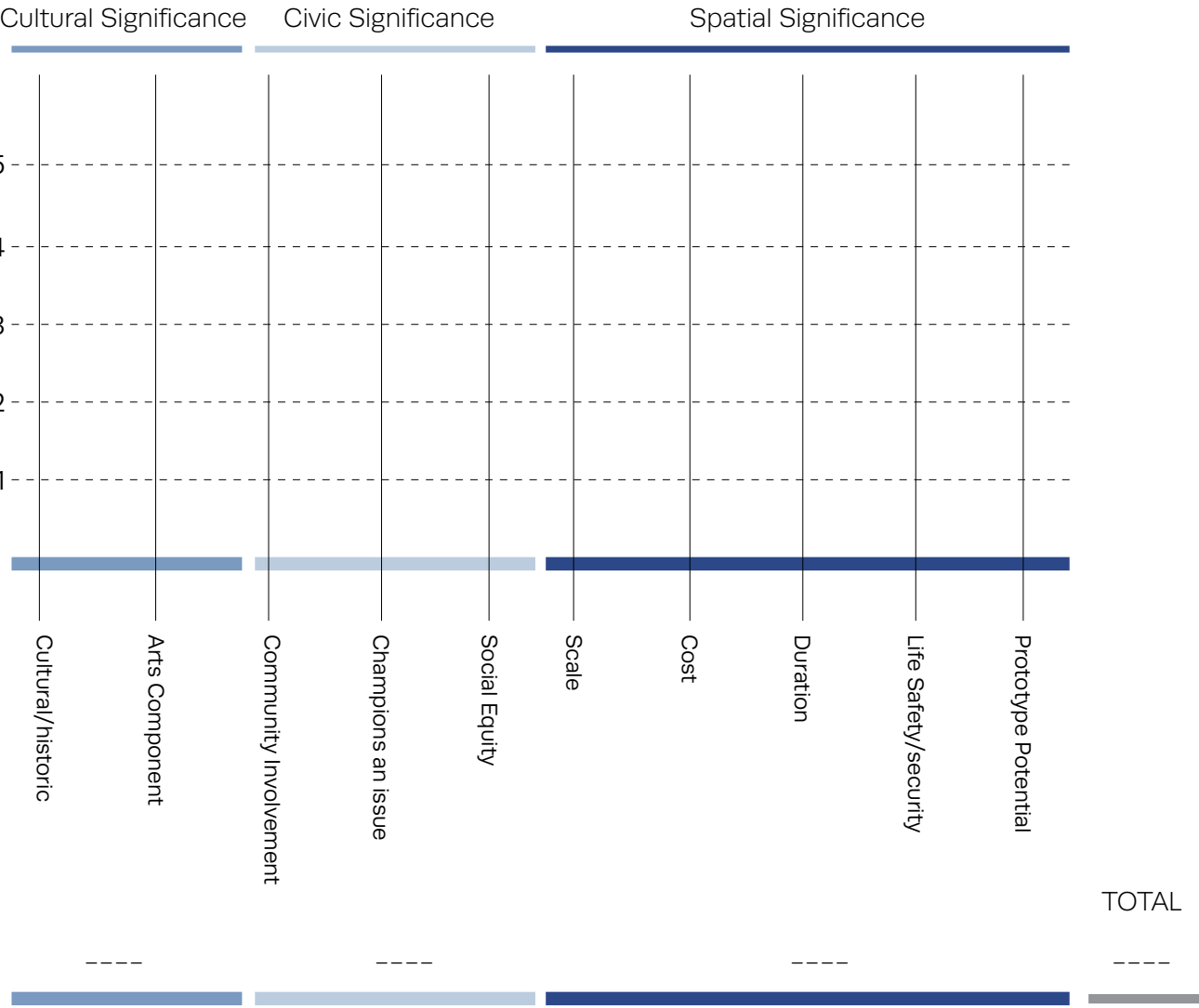
In addition, data capture should be considered to help gather information. Types of data that may be relevant include: Number of participants or visitors; Number of organizations involved; and Visitor satisfaction. This type of feedback may be helpful to measure growth of events as they are repeated over time, especially as it relates to potential funding opportunities.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Think about each aspect of the project (listed on the bottom of the chart) and rate its importance on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "not relevant or applicable" and 5 being a "main driver for intervention". Place a circle on the Impact Chart to reflect your evaluation.
2. Add the number of points for each major category heading of "Cultural Significance", "Civic Significance", and "Spatial Significance". Total the overall number of points across all three.
3. Using the total and subtotals, determine the relative weight of each, using percentages. Graph these on the pie chart.

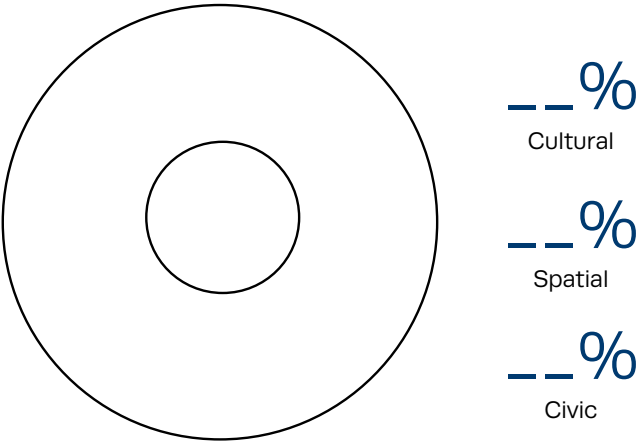


## IMPACT CHART



## IMPACT RUBRIC

- 5 main driver for intervention
- 4 complementary driver
- 3 secondary consideration
- 2 considered with low priority
- 1 not relevant or applicable



# Useful References

DDOT's Transportation Online Permit Systems (TOPS)  
<https://tops.ddot.dc.gov/DDOTPERMITSYSTEM/DDOTPERMITONLINE/Landing.aspx>

DC Atlas Plus  
<http://atlasplus.dcgis.dc.gov/>

MSETG Special Events Planning Guide  
[https://hsema.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/hsema/publication/attachments/2018%20MSETG%20Special%20Events%20Planning%20Documents\\_2.pdf](https://hsema.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/hsema/publication/attachments/2018%20MSETG%20Special%20Events%20Planning%20Documents_2.pdf)

DDOT's Permit Fee Calculator  
<https://ddot.dc.gov/page/public-space-permit-fee-calculators>

DCOP's Crossing the Street Final Report  
[https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/page\\_content/attachments/Crossing%20the%20Street%20Zine\\_Spread\\_2017.12.27%20%28NXPowerLite%20Copy%29.pdf](https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/page_content/attachments/Crossing%20the%20Street%20Zine_Spread_2017.12.27%20%28NXPowerLite%20Copy%29.pdf)

DC Historic Alley Buildings Survey  
<https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/Alley%20Survey%20FINAL.pdf>

Vending Development Zones Regulations  
<http://dcrules.elaws.us/dcmr/24-570>

DC Comprehensive Plan  
<https://planning.dc.gov/page/comprehensive-plan>

Urban Design Element  
<https://planning.dc.gov/node/574802>

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element  
<https://planning.dc.gov/node/574662>

DDOT's Design and Engineering Manual  
<https://ddot.dc.gov/page/design-and-engineering-manual>

DC PropertyQuest  
<http://propertyquest.dc.gov/>

HistoryQuest DC  
<https://planning.dc.gov/page/historyquest-dc>

DCMR – Chapter 24 – Public Space  
<https://www.dcregs.dc.gov/Common/DCMR/ChapterList.aspx?TitleId=19>

Public Realm Design Manual  
<https://ddot.dc.gov/PublicRealmDesignManual>

OP Public Life Studies  
<https://planning.dc.gov/page/public-life-studies>

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- DC Department of Transportation
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- DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
- DC Department of General Services
- DC Department of Public Works
- DC Office of Cable Television, Film, Music and Entertainment
- Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency
- Metropolitan Police Department
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

A blue-tinted photograph of a recycling bin with a net of plastic waste. The net is filled with crumpled plastic bags and is suspended from a metal frame. In the background, several people are standing near the bin, and a sign with the word "Recycle" is visible. The overall scene suggests a focus on recycling and waste management.

**EMAIL US**

[planning@dc.gov](mailto:planning@dc.gov)

**PHONE**

(202) 442-7600

**ADDRESS**

District of Columbia  
Office of Planning  
1100 4th Street SW, Suite E650  
Washington, DC 20024