

# Rapid Placemaking to Bring Back Main Street

A Pandemic Recovery Toolkit for Local Communities

MODULE 04:  
INTERVENTION GUIDE



BRING  
BACK

MAIN  
STREET



Canadian  
Urban  
Institute

Institut  
Urbain du  
Canada

Happy City

# INTERVENTION GUIDE

Altering the design, makeup and use of main streets can help to fulfill public health directives, support local business, and make space for people to linger or meet in comfort. These interventions can communicate a powerful message about your commitment to pandemic recovery and the communities you serve.

Once you've clarified the goals of your intervention(s), and which businesses and communities will be served, you'll need to create a process to move from idea to inclusive action.



# Creative Barrier Hacks

## WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



EASE



BELONGING



JOY

## COST

\$\$\$\$\$

## LENGTH

Days Weeks Months

## WINTER FRIENDLY?

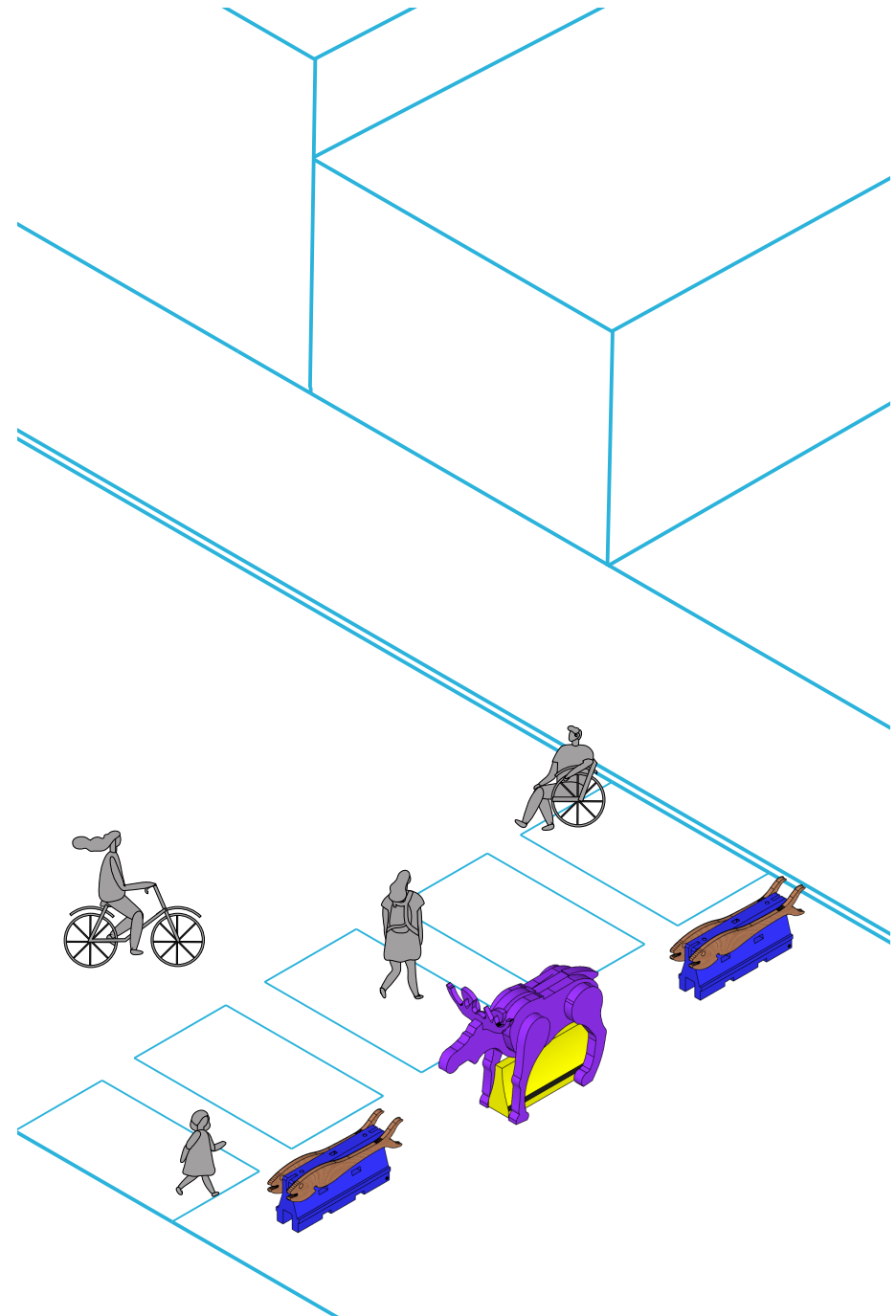
Yes. Winter barriers can be made of snow and ice, which can be carved into distinct and context-sensitive shapes.

## MATERIALS

- Standard barricade
- Paint, wood, or vinyl covers

## What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?

Creative Barrier Hacks. Creative barricade hacks enable main streets to safely expand space for people, without looking like a construction zone. The aesthetic upgrades provide an opportunity for co-creation with those around main street, and can enhance the sense of place by celebrating local stories and icons.



# Creative Barrier Hacks

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

People moving and lingering on main streets, restaurants, cafes, bars, communities who are showcased on the barriers, and people engaged to create the barriers will benefit. Drivers and businesses who do not attract customers on foot are unlikely to benefit.

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility and accessibility needs?

It is important to ensure that the barricades provide enough space for people using mobility aids to move around them without being obstructed by a curb. Depending on the length of street that is barricaded, consider parking spaces for people with disabilities, as well as wheelchair-friendly pick up and drop off locations.

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

Yes, it could. When locating the barricades, ensure that they do not encroach on the sidewalk or bike lanes. If placed in public space, ensure they do not impede the flow of people with wheelchairs, strollers or other rolling devices.

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

Potentially. This can be reduced by maintaining the street-facing aspect of the barricade as a standard traffic item, while creatively hacking the people-facing side of the barricade.

What maintenance does this intervention require?

Minimal. Cleaning and repainting are optional.

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire, get advice or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Artists, craftspeople, youth groups and summer camps, interested community members and businesses, historical societies.

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

Yes, if the street reallocation became permanent, the creative barriers could also be upgraded for long-term use.

How would you measure success?

Number of creative barriers deployed, number of people engaged in process, number of communities represented, community feedback.

# Movable Seating

## WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



EASE



BELONGING



SOCIABILITY

## COST

\$\$\$\$\$

## TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Days Weeks Months

## MAINTENANCE

Repair or replace if needed.

## ESTIMATED LENGTH OF TIME IN PLACE

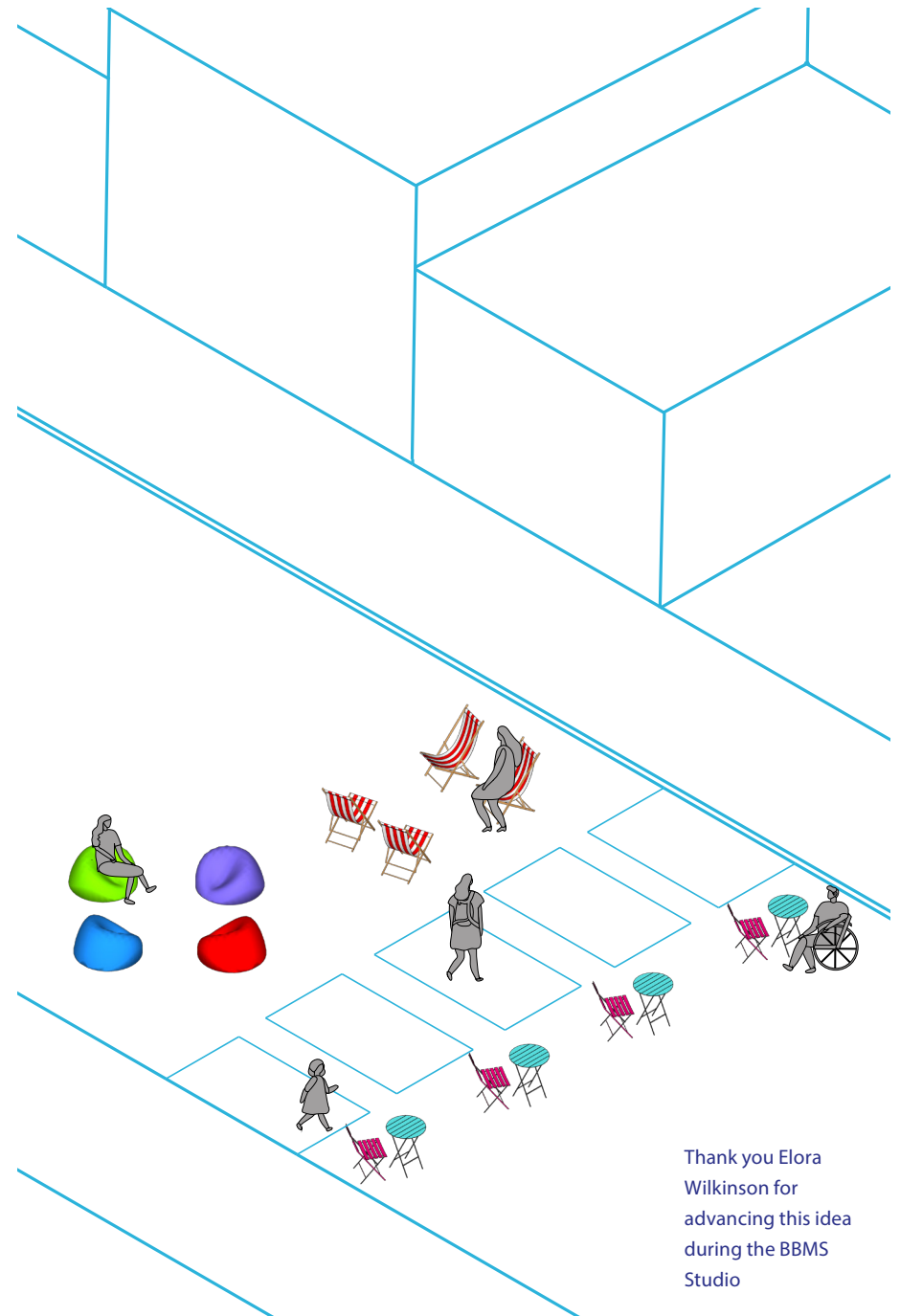
Weeks Months Years

## WINTER FRIENDLY?

Yes

## MATERIALS

- Pre-made movable chairs take many forms



## What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?

Movable seating. Movable seating is a core building block for an active public realm. It can be scaled up or down for nearly any size of space and allows people to socialize outside while respecting physical distancing guidelines.

Thank you Elora Wilkinson for advancing this idea during the BBMS Studio

# Movable Seating

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

People of all ages who are looking to sit and rest or socialize. However, when public space is reallocated to private patios, people who can't afford to buy things are excluded. BIPOC and street-involved people are also more likely to face scrutiny while using public space, whether it is sitting on movable seating, walking down the street, or nearly any other activity.

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility and accessibility needs?

Careful, if the seating encroaches on sidewalks or other pedestrian thoroughfares, it can create a new barrier.

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

Yes. Considering the location, and ensuring that businesses don't encroach on these important right of ways is important.

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

Only if combined with other interventions, such as transforming a parking space into a parklet.

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire, get advice from or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Craftspeople could build the seating, artists, kids groups or others could decorate them, seniors and other people with mobility issues can provide insight on designs that make it easier to sit and get up.

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

The seating would need to be maintained and eventually replaced, but placing movable seating in the public realm could endure. Storage or ways to secure the seating may need to be considered.

How would you measure success?

Amount of seating deployed, public life study of usage.

# Ground Murals for Physical Distancing

## WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



HEALTH



JOY



BELONGING

## COST

\$\$\$\$\$

## TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Days Weeks Months

## MAINTENANCE

None

## ESTIMATED LENGTH OF TIME IN PLACE

Weeks Months Years

## WINTER FRIENDLY?

Yes, but may be covered by snow and ice.

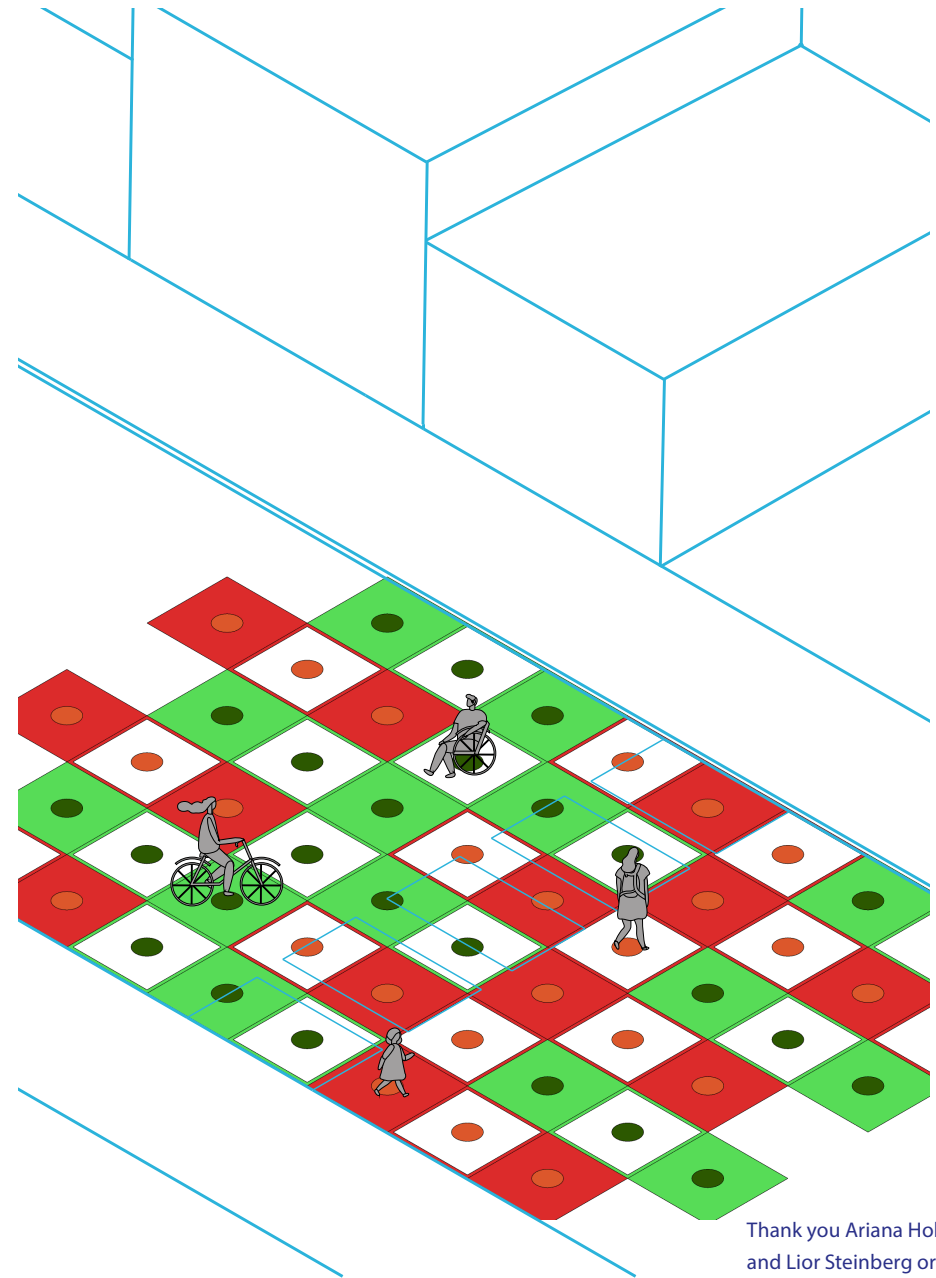
## MATERIALS

- Paint

## What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?

Physical distancing doesn't have to be boring. With some careful planning and paint, markers that help people stand apart from one another can be turned into a beautiful ground mural.

Since pandemic recovery is a long-term project, working with local artists to demarcate sidewalk space ensures we can maintain public health standards while increasing joy in city space.



Thank you Ariana Holt and Lior Steinberg for advancing this idea during the BBMS Studio

# Ground Murals for Physical Distancing

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

This initiative is a great way to work in collaboration with local artists, to ensure everyone (including any city's most vulnerable residents) can stay safe from COVID-19. It can be used to highlight messages of inclusion and solidarity created by BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and other communities.

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility and accessibility needs?

It's important to ensure any art added to the street does not compromise the physical accessibility of the streets.

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

Any aesthetic additions to the street should support delineation of street space, so it becomes increasingly clear where people, bikes, and cars should go.

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

Yes. You are likely to require permits from your City.

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Collaborate with diverse local artists and/or local mural groups to create a ground mural that reflects your community.

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

Yes. The ground mural can be maintained over the long-term.

How would you measure success?

Diversity of artists engaged, feedback from community and businesses, number of posts on social media, subjective wellbeing intercepts.



# Outdoor Reading Room

## WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



EASE



SOCIABILITY



RESILIENCE



BELONGING

## COST

\$\$\$\$\$

## TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Days Weeks Months

## MAINTENANCE

Requires regular clean-up and maintenance from staff, could be stewarded by the public.

## ESTIMATED LENGTH OF TIME IN PLACE

Weeks Months Years

## MATERIALS

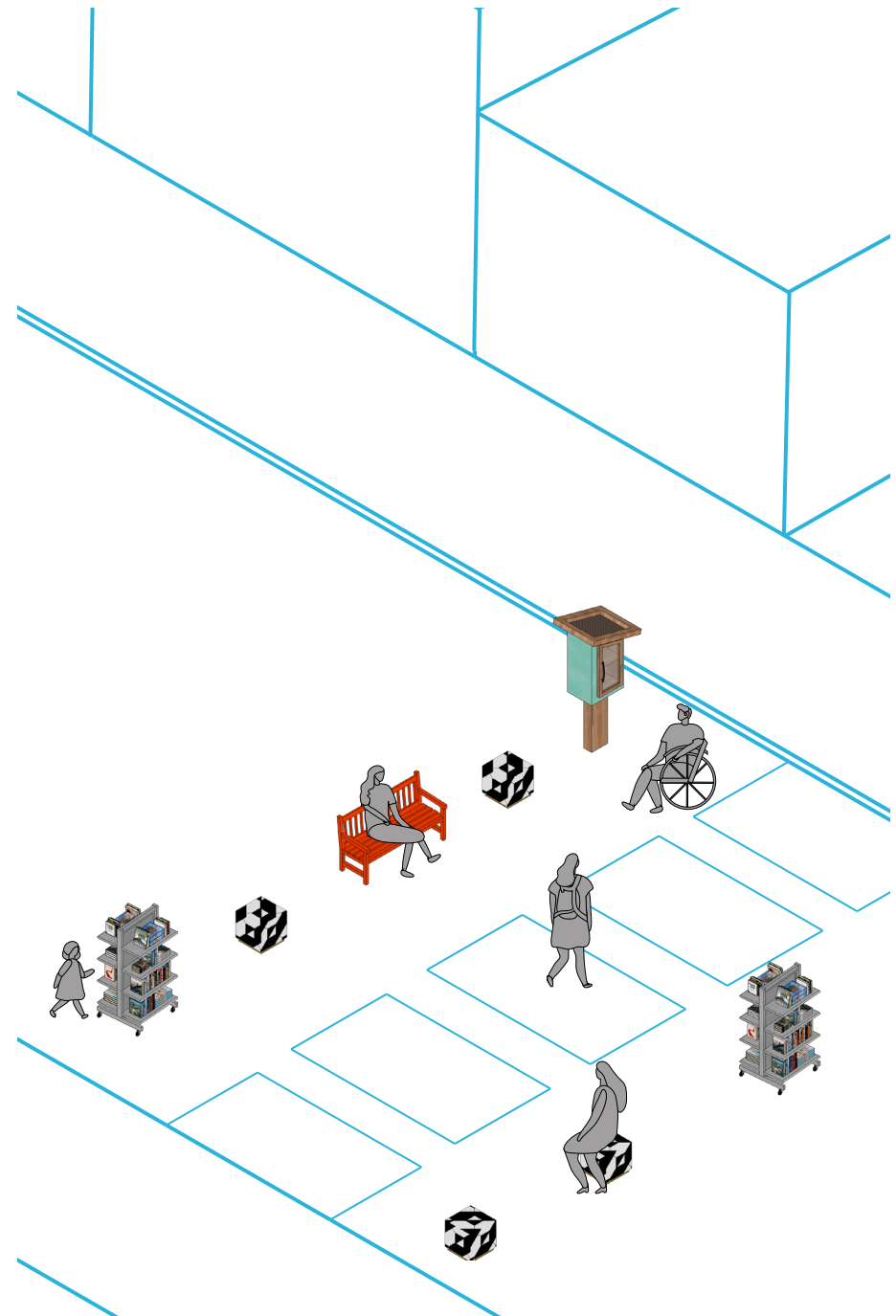
- Movable seating
- Signage
- Outdoor shelves or storage for books
- Umbrellas, tents or other sun and rain shelters

## WINTER FRIENDLY?

No

## What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?

An outdoor reading room brings the library to the sidewalk. Reading together can still happen at a distance. By placing books (from the library or free) in protected, outdoor shelving or boxes, and providing the public with sheltered, movable seating, residents can have a quiet moment to read alone or in small groups.



# Outdoor Reading Room

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

Anyone who enjoys reading, or who simply wants a quiet place to stop! Recognize that BIPOC communities and street-involved people are more likely to be scrutinized when using public space.

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility or other needs?

Ensure that the space is physically accessible. Further, provide books of all levels and options that would appeal to residents with diverse interests. Quiet spaces in the public realm can be important for some people with brain-based differences.

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

Yes. An outdoor reading room will need to be planned in coordination with bike lanes and other public spaces.

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

Yes. This intervention may require permitting from the City. Additionally, it could occur in collaboration with the public library system.

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire, get advice from or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Public libraries and non-profit literacy organizations could be potential collaborators and also provide input on the best ways to organize this intervention.

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

Yes! Even when social distancing is no longer recommended, outdoor reading spaces could be fun, effective ways to gather in the warmer seasons.

How would you measure success?

Number of people who access the space, books loaned out, community groups engaged.

# DIY Seating: Benchlets and Bollard Seating

## WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



EASE



BELONGING



SOCIABILITY

## COST

\$\$\$\$\$

## TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Days Weeks Months

## MAINTENANCE

Basic upkeep

## ESTIMATED LENGTH OF TIME IN PLACE

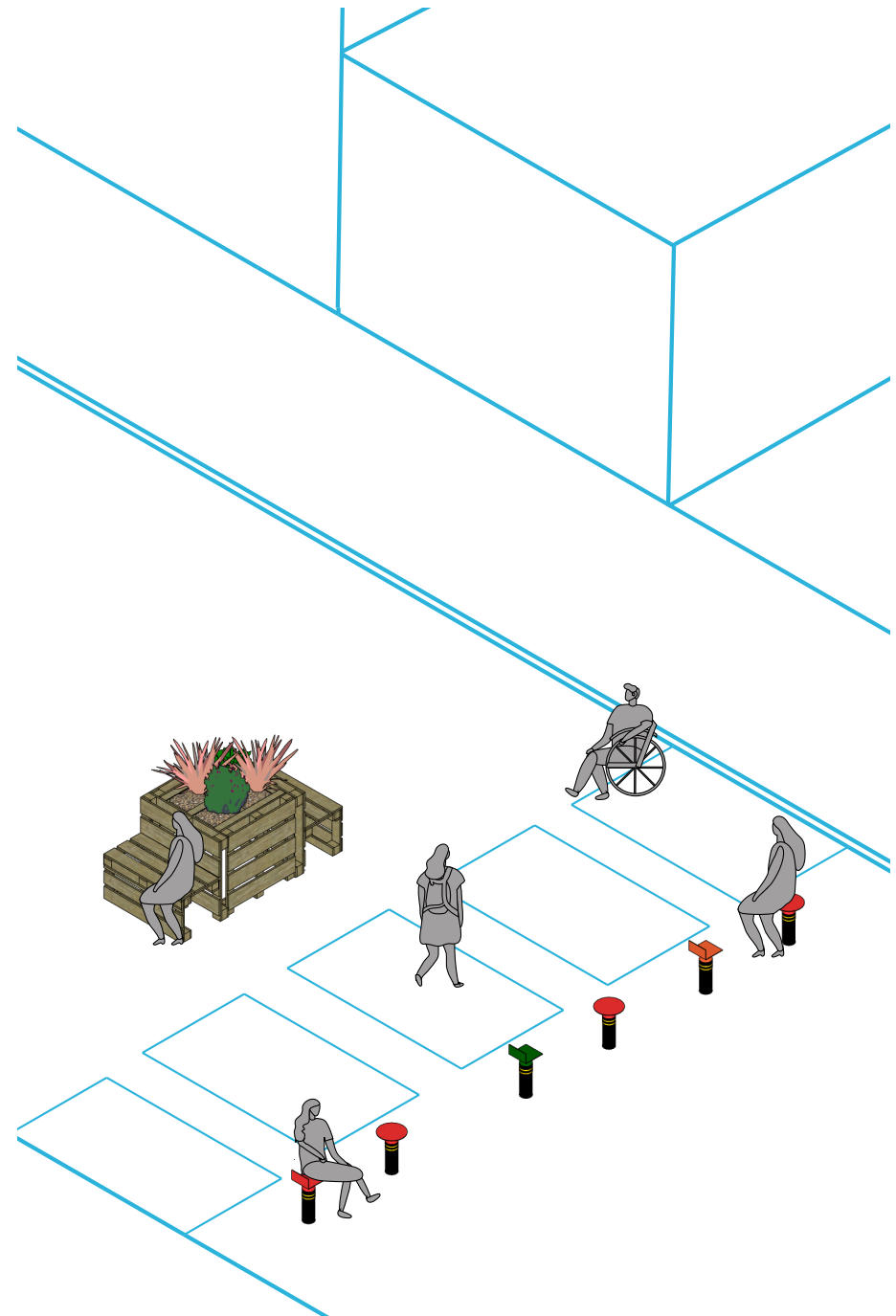
Weeks Months Years

## WINTER FRIENDLY?

Yes

## MATERIALS

- Pallets or metal



## What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?

DIY seating. It is a fast, cost-effective and versatile way to add seating to many locations.

# DIY Seating: Benchlets and Bollard Seating

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

People of all ages who are looking to sit and rest or socialize. However, when public space is reallocated to private patios, people who can't afford to buy things are excluded. BIPOC and street-involved people are also more likely to face scrutiny while using public space, whether it is sitting on movable seating, walking down the street, or nearly any other activity.

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

Depending on bylaws in place during the pandemic response, and if located on public land.

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility and accessibility needs?

Yes, if improperly located on sidewalks or other spaces that people use for transportation. Careful with bollard seating, as it reduces the space between bollards, which could impede people in wheelchairs. Deep seating can be more difficult for seniors and people with mobility issues to get up from, while varying levels of seating can make a space more accommodating for all people.

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire, get advice from or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Craftspeople who could build them and anyone interested in painting or decorating them.

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

Yes, if improperly located.

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

Yes.

How would you measure success?

Number of people using the space, number of people sitting, public life study.

# Ping Pong

## WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



## COST

\$\$\$\$\$

## TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Days Weeks Months

## MAINTENANCE

Ping pong tables may need to be maintained and moved with weather and land use changes.

## ESTIMATED LENGTH OF TIME IN PLACE

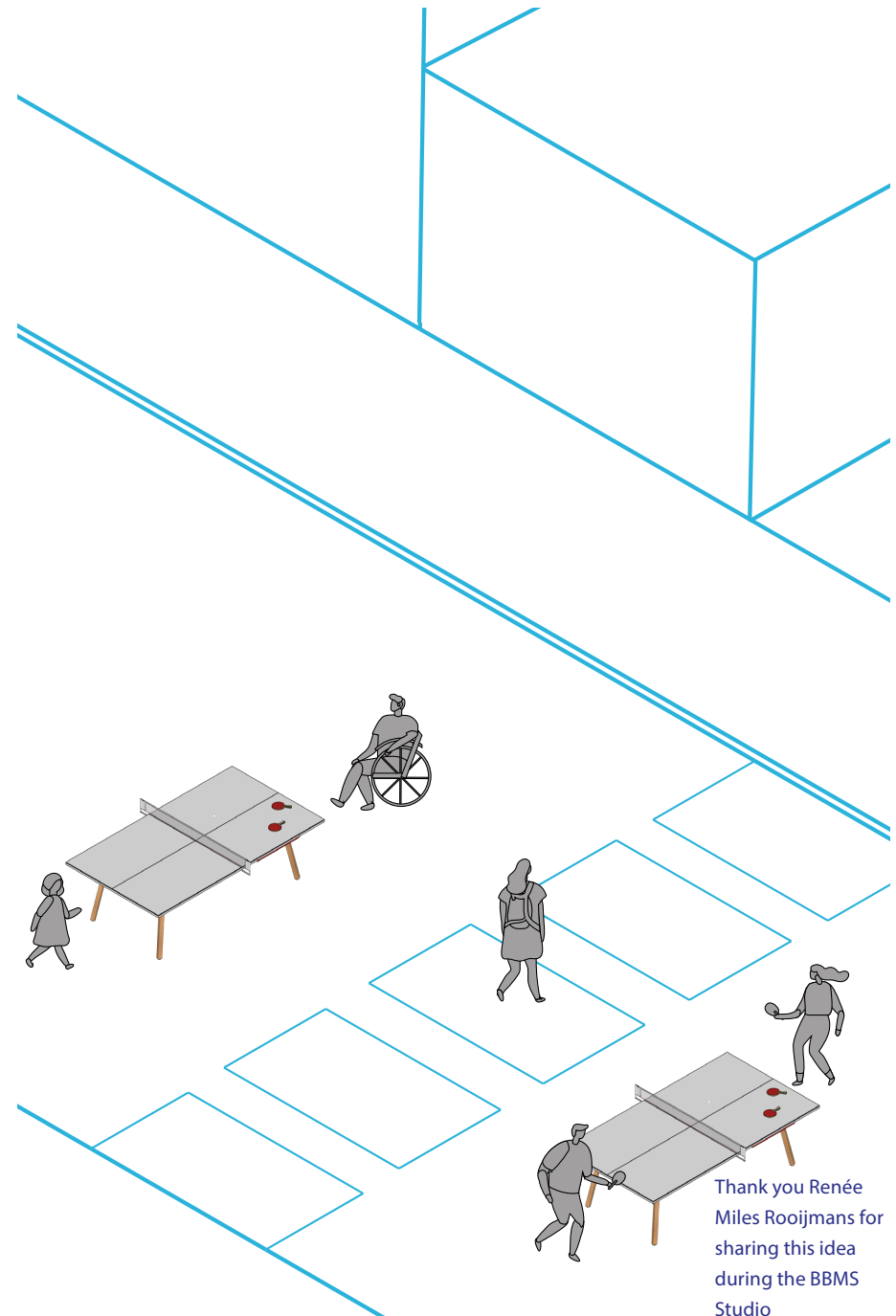
Weeks Months Years

## WINTER FRIENDLY?

No

## MATERIALS

- Ping pong tables
- Ping pong racquets and balls



## What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?

Place ping pong tables and equipment in parks, parklets and other public spaces. Table tennis is an amazing way to make a public space fun for all ages. Ping pong tables are sturdy and can last for years, requiring minimal upkeep.

Thank you Renée Miles Rooijmans for sharing this idea during the BBMS Studio

# Ping Pong

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

Folks of many ages and abilities can play ping pong. It is accessible for beginners and has a relatively low injury risk.

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility and accessibility needs?

Ping pong may be inaccessible for people with some physical disabilities.

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

Yes. Outdoor ping pong will need to be coordinated in tandem with initiatives to allow pedestrians, bikes, and potentially cars to navigate the streets.

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

This intervention may require permitting from the City.

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire, get advice from or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Find out whether the City or local groups have already initiated ping pong or other outdoor games and activities. Could they be paid to build the tables or facilitate programming?

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

Yes! Ping pong tables provide a long-term investment that can be enjoyed for years.

How would you measure success?

Number of people engaged, age range of people engaged, subjective wellbeing intercepts

# Umbrellas

## WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



EASE



SOCIABILITY



HEALTH

## COST

\$\$\$\$\$

## TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Days Weeks Months

## MAINTENANCE

Umbrellas may need to be repaired or replaced over time.

## ESTIMATED LENGTH OF TIME IN PLACE

Weeks Months Years

## WINTER FRIENDLY?

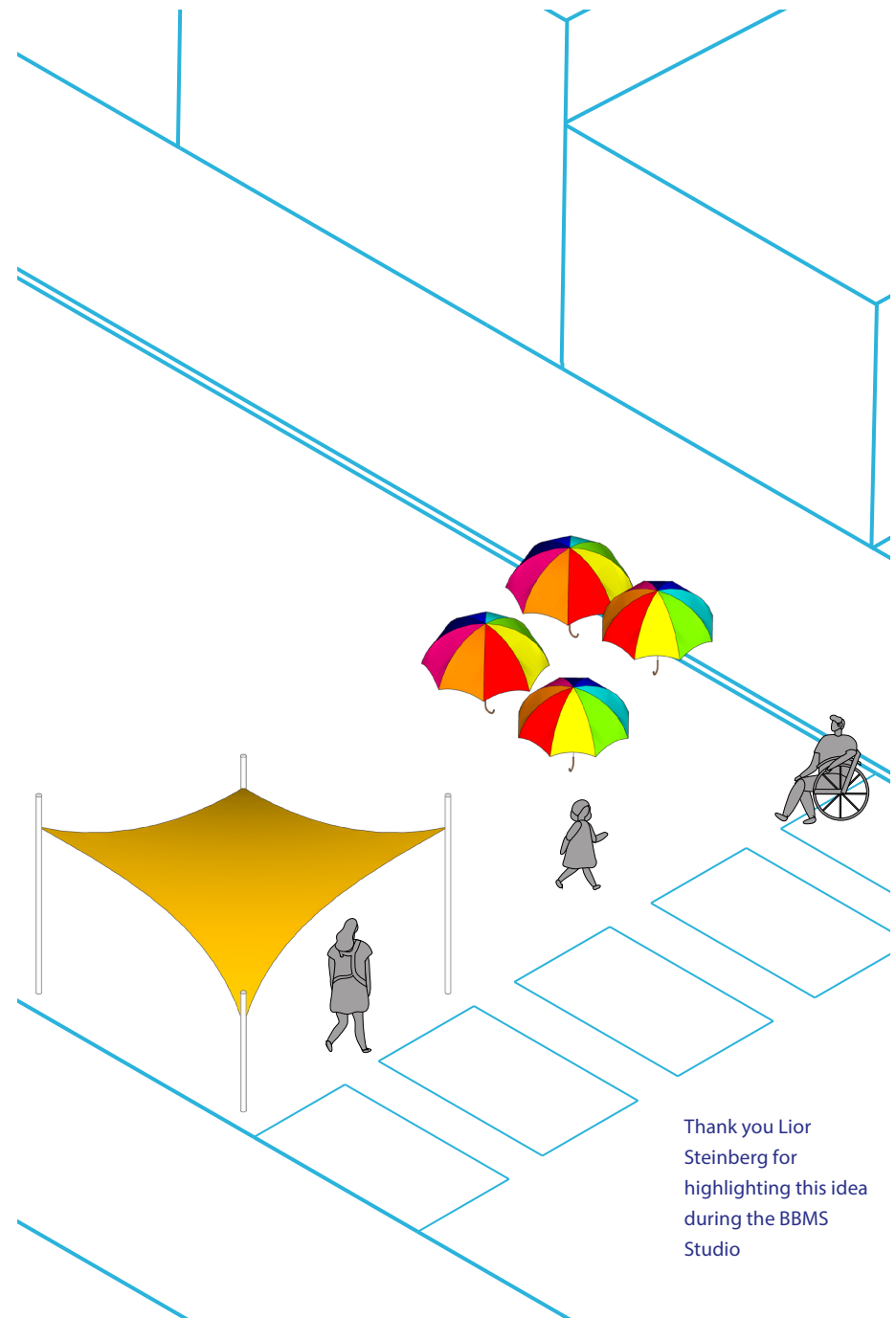
In some climates with low snowfall, umbrellas can provide cover from precipitation year-round.

## MATERIALS

- Umbrellas
- Stands (or tables that support umbrella use)

## What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?

Umbrellas in public seating areas that provide shade and cover from rain. Outdoor spaces become less usable with inclement weather. Outdoor shelter like umbrellas will allow people to access these spaces while remaining protected from precipitation (rain,



Thank you Lior Steinberg for highlighting this idea during the BBMS Studio

# Umbrellas

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

Umbrellas and other types of weather-protective shelter benefit people of all ages and abilities.

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility and accessibility needs?

Special attention must be paid to the placement, design and locations of the umbrellas to ensure they are accessible by everyone, including those facing barriers to mobility. Umbrellas must also be large enough to provide cover for people with strollers or other larger mobility devices.

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

Possibly. Special attention must be paid to the implementation of umbrellas to address these concerns.

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

Unlikely.

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire, get advice from or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Umbrellas will either be ideally sourced from a local business, or designed uniquely for the desired space, if budgets allow. Local businesses who provide such design services can be engaged.

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

Yes. With strategic design and an emphasis on durable materials, umbrellas can be used over time, across all seasons, if desired.

How would you measure success?

Shelter from rain and sun offered, number of people using them on a given day.



# Wheelchair Ramps

## WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



EASE



HEALTH



BELONGING

## COST

\$\$\$\$\$

## TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Days Weeks Months

## MAINTENANCE

Depending on materials used, ramps may need to be replaced over time, snow clearance during the winter.

## ESTIMATED LENGTH OF TIME IN PLACE

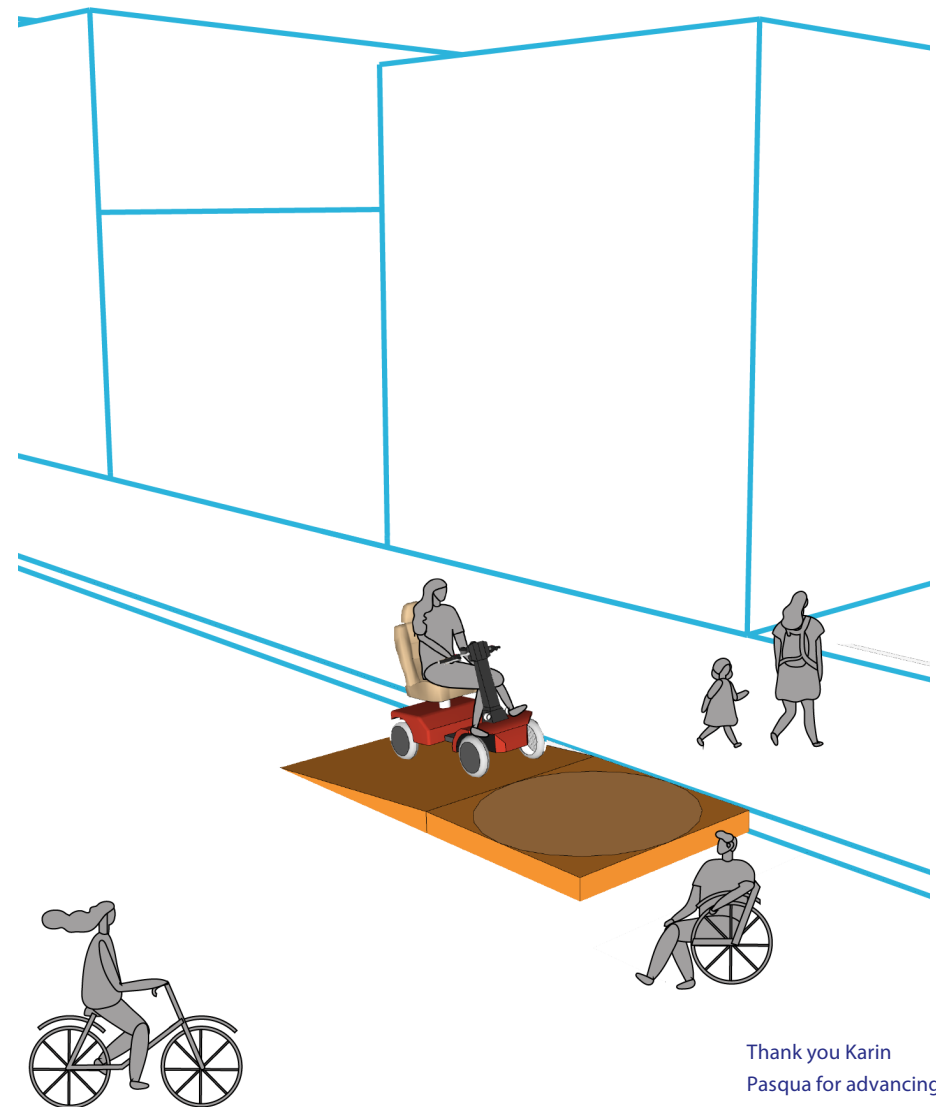
Weeks Months Years

## WINTER FRIENDLY?

Depending on the climate of the location (if heavy snowfall is not a concern), this intervention can benefit the community year-round.

## MATERIALS

- Plywood
- Rubber
- Anti-slip treatment



## What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?

Installing wheelchair ramps where curb cuts do not exist. This emphasizes the existing lack of accessibility features (curb cuts, specifically) on main streets.

Thank you Karin Pasqua for advancing this idea during the BBMS Studio

# Wheelchair Ramps

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

This intervention specifically benefits those who used wheeled mobility devices like wheelchairs or scooters, regardless of age or cultural background.

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility and accessibility needs?

Wheelchair ramps must be designed to existing standards to avoid creating accessibility barriers for people with visual impairments.

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

Yes, this intervention will take up public space, but if implemented properly, should not impact those spaces negatively.

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

Yes - Streets and Engineering.

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire, get advice from or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Accessibility consultants or experts should be consulted to ensure the designed solutions properly meet the needs of those who will be using them. Once in place, users can be consulted to ensure they are properly set up.

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

Yes - an increase in wheelchair ramps will improve the accessibility features of the community and should be approached with long-term solutions in mind.

How would you measure success?

Feedback from people with disabilities.

# Here's How We're Open Stickers

## WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



EASE



RESILIENCE



HEALTH

## COST

\$\$\$\$\$

## TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Weeks Months Years

## MAINTENANCE

Replace when worn out and clean window.

## MATERIALS

- Sticker templates or adhesive dry erase boards that can be placed in a windowsill
- Sharpies or dry erase markers

## What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?

Window stickers help storefronts on a main street clearly convey how the public can interact with them. Restrictions and best practices change regularly during each phase of the pandemic. In order to keep businesses afloat while maintaining public health practices, it's important for the public to know that businesses are open, as well as how to safely engage with them.



# Here's How We're Open Stickers

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

This idea supports both local business and public health.

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility and accessibility needs?

Make text clear and large, using symbols or images over words where possible, so it can be read by people of many ages and abilities. Translate your window stickers into languages spoken in your neighbourhood. These stickers will not be accessible for some visually-impaired people.

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

No.

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

No.

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire, get advice from or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Businesses can offer advice on usability. Feedback from patrons about where they are located and how useful they are in providing direction.

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

No, hopefully that won't be necessary.

How would you measure success?

Uptake by businesses, feedback from public health officials.

# Table Partitions

## WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



EASE



RESILIENCE



HEALTH

## COST

\$\$\$\$\$

## TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Days Weeks Months

## MAINTENANCE

Depending on materials used for construction, dividers will need to be cleaned or refurbished after exposure to inclement weather

## ESTIMATED LENGTH OF TIME IN PLACE

Weeks Months Years

## WINTER FRIENDLY?

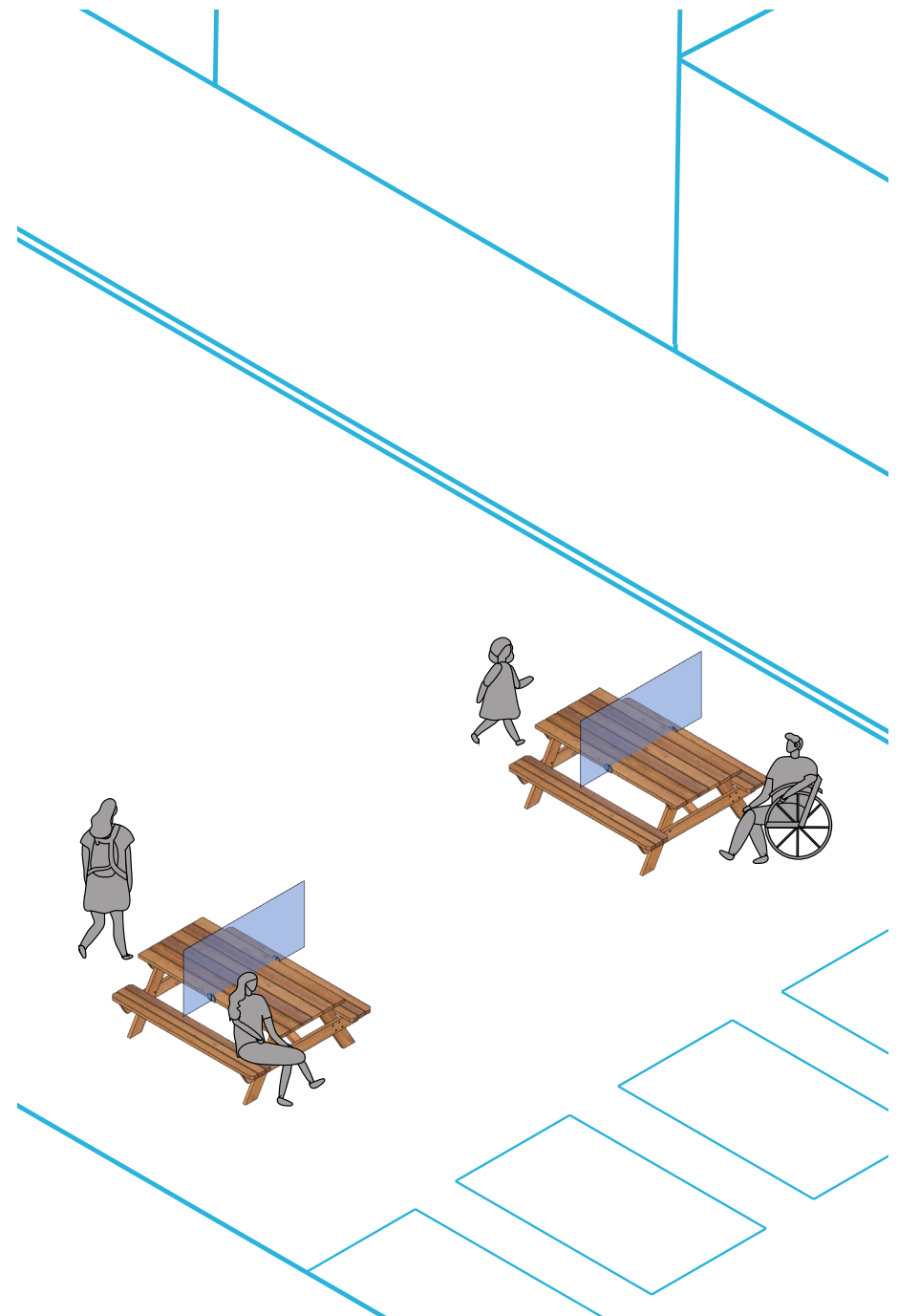
Yes

## MATERIALS

- Plywood
- Plexiglass
- Others

## What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?

Movable plexiglass (or other materials, such as art pieces) dividers, used as a partition between seats at a table to create barriers between social groups. This is a simple way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission between groups when sitting in spaces where it is not possible to keep a 2 metre distance.



# Table Partitions

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

Both customers and businesses benefit from this intervention. Businesses can serve more people at once and reduce queuing times, and customers can safely interact with their social groups without coming in close contact with others.

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility and accessibility needs?

Restricted space on tables may create challenges for people who need more flexibility when seated. Some tables should remain open to address diverse seating needs.

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

These partitions do create barriers between seats and tables, but if implemented properly, should not negatively impact existing spaces.

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

No, as long as safety procedures and requirements are followed.

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire, get advice from or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Local design firms or day labourers could be engaged and hired to build the partitions.

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

Yes, if durable materials are used. Future dining tables can also be designed to come with matching partitions for longer-term use.

How would you measure success?

Uptake by businesses, feedback from public health officials.

# Handwashing Station

## WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



HEALTH



EASE

## COST

\$\$\$\$\$

## TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Days Weeks Months

## MAINTENANCE

Water pipe maintenance,  
regular cleaning

## ESTIMATED LENGTH OF TIME IN PLACE

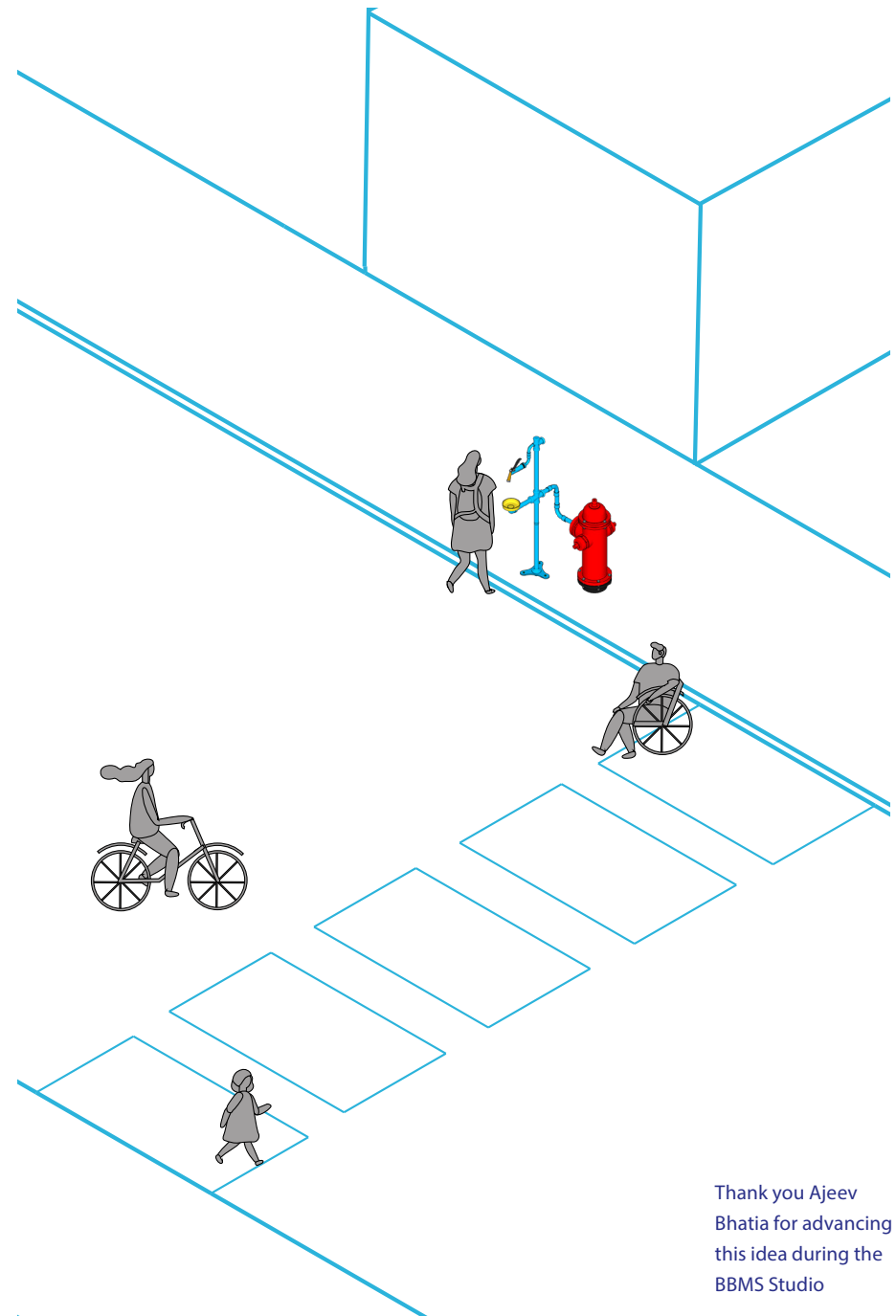
Weeks Months Years

## WINTER FRIENDLY?

No

## MATERIALS

- Pipe to connect handwashing station to fire hydrant, faucet
- Alternative: Hand sanitizer dispenser



## What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?

Handwashing Station. A publicly accessible, cost-effective intervention that enables all people to regularly wash or sanitize their hands.

Thank you Ajeev Bhatia for advancing this idea during the BBMS Studio

# Handwashing Station

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

Everyone who has touched anything in public benefits.

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility and accessibility needs?

It needs to be placed at a height where people using wheelchairs can reach it.

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

If it were improperly located on sidewalk, but unlikely.

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

Yes.

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire, get advice from or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Plumbers or craftspeople. Appealing signage or backsplashes could be created by an artist or graphic designer.

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

It is a summer intervention, but could be repeated annually if needed.

How would you measure success?

Number of people using it in a day, feedback from public health experts, input from community and businesses.



# Wheelable Rack

## WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



EASE



RESILIENCE



HEALTH

## COST

\$\$\$\$\$

## TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Days **Weeks** Months

## MAINTENANCE

Minimal

## ESTIMATED LENGTH OF TIME IN PLACE

Weeks **Months** Years

## WINTER FRIENDLY?

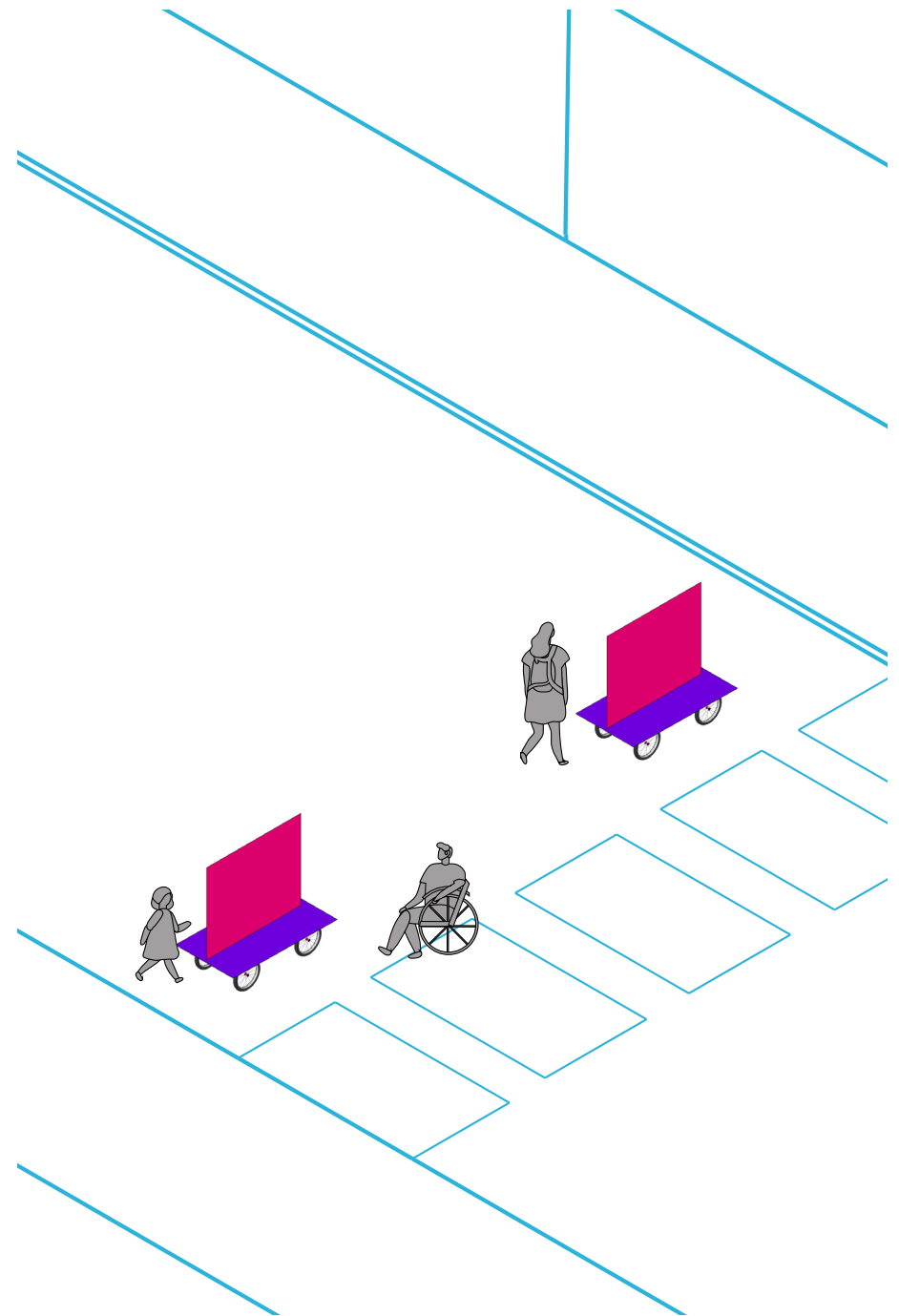
No

## MATERIALS

- Wheels (cart or bike)
- Materials for the rack (wood, metal grid or more)

## What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?

Wheelable racks. These versatile racks can serve a multitude of roles, from guiding queues to holding books and other items, to serving as rolling gardens that can act as restaurant partitions. They can be produced using many different materials and be added or removed to suit spaces of all sizes.



# Wheelable Rack

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

Businesses could use them for queueing or retail purposes, restaurants could use them as partitions. They can also be used to activate the public realm. Their versatility means they work for many different people and uses.

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility and accessibility needs?

Yes. If improperly located on sidewalks or other thoroughfares, they could be barriers to accessibility.

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

Yes, if improperly located.

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

No.

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire, get advice from or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Craftspeople or maker spaces. People, groups or libraries who could use them for purposes that suit their needs.

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

Yes, with proper maintenance and care, they could be used for extended periods of time. On some main streets, they would need to be secured at night, so that they are not misused.

How would you measure success?

Uptake by businesses, range of uses, length of use

**Intervention Name:**

CREATE A VISUAL OF YOUR INTERVENTION

WELLBEING PRINCIPLES



COST

\$\$\$\$\$

TIME TO IMPLEMENT

Weeks Months Years

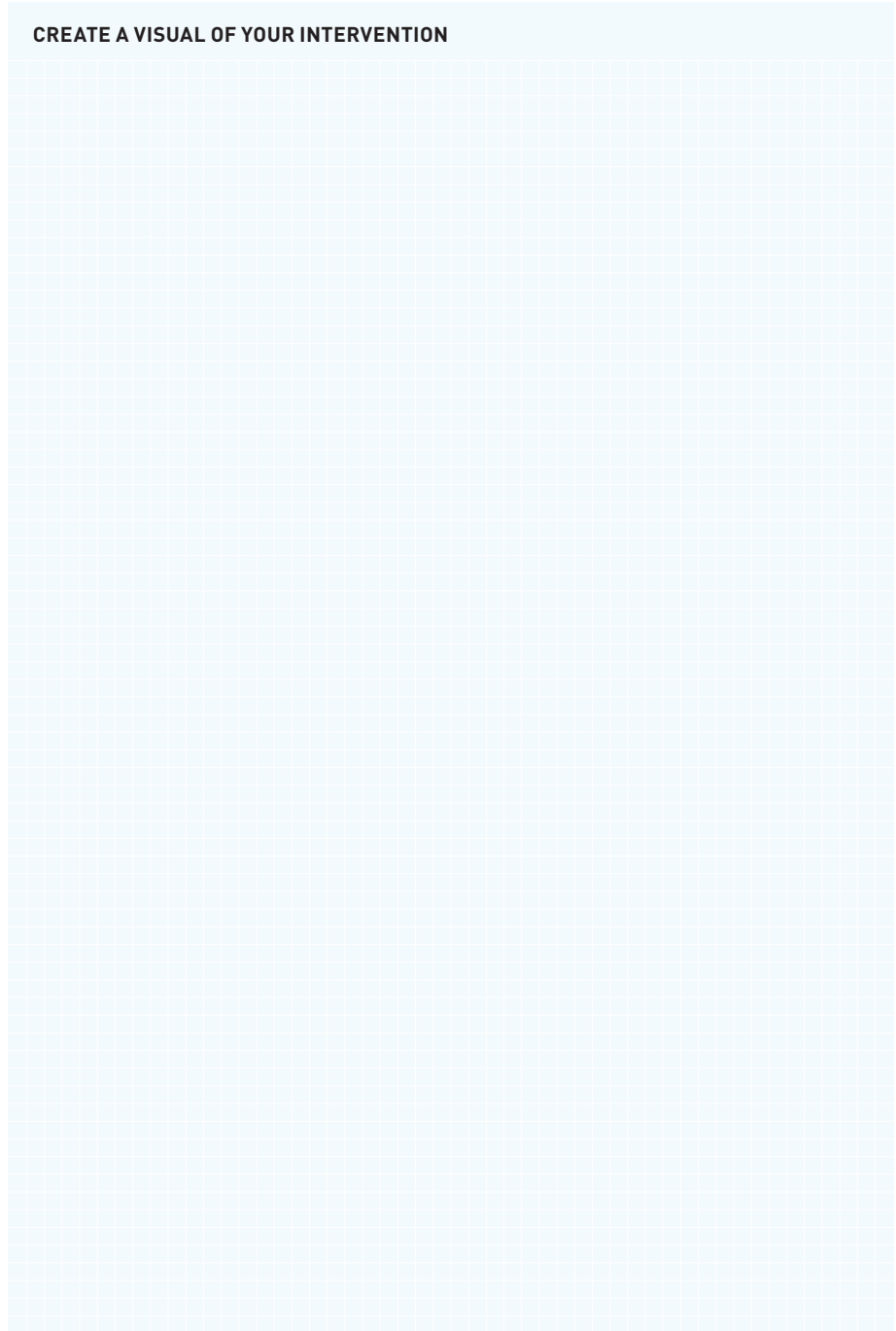
MAINTENANCE

ESTIMATED LENGTH OF TIME IN PLACE

Weeks Months Years

WINTER FRIENDLY?

MATERIALS



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**What is the idea? Why is this a good idea?**

## Intervention Name:

Who benefits from these activities? Who doesn't? Does this idea serve a specific age, gender or cultural group?

Could this intervention risk creating new barriers for people with diverse mobility and accessibility needs?

Could this intervention risk encroaching on existing sidewalks, bike lanes or public spaces?

Could this intervention require input or review by City officials?

Who, in your community, is already doing this kind of work you're hoping to do? Can you hire, get advice or otherwise engage them to bring this intervention to reality?

Could this become a long-term or permanent idea?

What maintenance does this intervention require?

How would you measure success?

## About this Toolkit

Rapid Placemaking to Bring Back Main Street is part of the Bring Back Main Street project, a nationally-coordinated research and advocacy campaign committed to finding the best solutions to ensure our main streets recover from COVID-19 and emerge from the crisis more resilient than ever. Bring Back Main Street was developed in the public interest by the [Canadian Urban Institute](#), with the support of BIAs/BIDs, city-makers and researchers from across the country.

This toolkit is intended to support the connection between main street and community by advancing an equitable design process, highlighting programming opportunities and offering design ideas that together bring back main street.



## Introduction

COVID-19 has radically altered the way humans gather, interact and even walk down the street. Globally, the heightened fear and awareness of this virus – and the vital physical distancing measures that followed – has touched nearly every aspect of people's lives. In March, main streets across Canada transformed from bustling centres to vacant spaces in mere days.

In recent months, people have found creative ways to use the main streets around them. Canadians are using streets that typically prioritize cars to: access essential jobs and services by foot and bike, to meet friends and neighbours, and share messages of hope and gratitude. And as reopenings occur, businesses and cities are expanding patios and public spaces into main streets across the country. Importantly, people are taking up main street space to grieve and protest the racist treatment of Black and Indigenous peoples within communities and by police.

Reallocating and reprogramming main street space—from parking or traffic to people and local businesses—is an essential part of a holistic pandemic recovery. Research indicates that the risk of COVID-19 transmission is significantly higher in indoor shared spaces than outdoors. This shift in how main streets are used can support the triple bottom line for health, local business and community.

While it may be less obvious, engaging communities in the process of reshaping and reimagining main streets in towns and cities across Canada is also vital to a holistic pandemic recovery. Research indicates that during lockdown, the most resilient Canadian main streets were those with strong community connections. During this same period, societal inequalities were laid bare, as vulnerable and marginalized communities faced the greatest impacts of COVID-19. As such, equitable engagement can support a just recovery, local business and community. Fundamentally, the success of main streets and communities is intertwined.

This toolkit was produced by Happy City (Mitchell Reardon, Emmay Clayton Jones, Harry Olson, Cheri Hessami, and Charles Montgomery) with input from many city-builders from across Canada. For more information, please contact Happy City at [info@thehappycity.com](mailto:info@thehappycity.com).

## An evolving response to COVID-19

The content for this toolkit is based on public health direction, research, stakeholder input, expert insight and emerging best practices in June and July 2020. We remain in the midst of a global pandemic. Accordingly, main street pandemic responses remain fluid.

The ideas presented in this toolkit have been developed with a focus on [the broad array of main streets](#) that are found across Canada. Recognizing that ongoing effects of COVID-19 can vary by region, local application of these ideas should be tailored to the direction of relevant public health authorities.

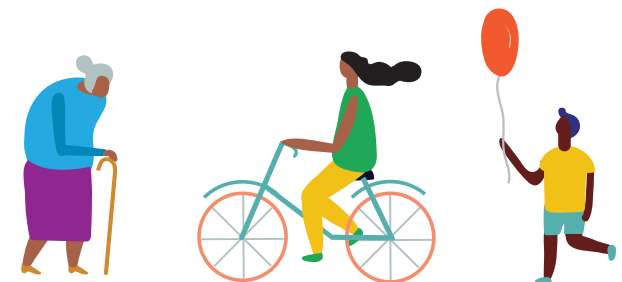
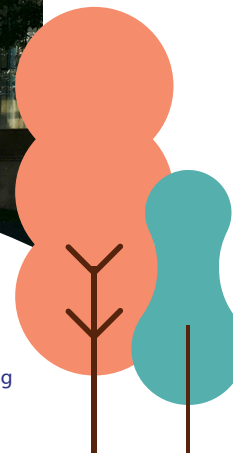
## Who should use this toolkit?

Anyone who wants to see their main streets thrive in the short and long term as safe and inclusive places to connect, access services, shop and live.

The Bring Back Main Street Rapid Placemaking Toolkit is intended for Business Improvement Areas/Districts and City staff tasked with retail and public realm recovery work, as well as interested community groups and residents.

## How should it be used?

Whether you're working on main street in a major city centre, a suburban plaza or small town, the activities and ideas here can support your local businesses and community. A just recovery is fundamental to creating a better normal. That's why activities, tips and questions to help you establish an inclusive process are spread throughout this toolkit. You know your main street best. With this in mind, the toolkit includes an array of programming ideas and design interventions for you to pick and choose what's right for you. As you scroll through, you'll all see space for you to write out your process and test your ideas. Feel free to download and markup the PDF, or print it out and write on it, in real life. There are more ideas to bring back main street than pages in this toolkit. We invite you to send in your ideas, and any enhancements you've made to ours.



# THANK YOU

Thank you to CUI for the opportunity to work on the Bring Back Main Street project, and our Bring Back Main Street Partners. Thank you to all of the BIAs, BIDs and other organizations whose generous support made this project possible.

Thank you to the BIA and BID representatives from Halifax, Moncton, Ottawa, Regina and Surrey who participated in our focus group. Your insight helped establish the direction for this toolkit. See their contributions in the appendix.

Thank you to the array of thinkers and doers whose reflections, practices and advice have contributed to the development and evolution of the wellbeing framework used in this toolkit. For this iteration of guiding principles, this notably includes Ali Grant, Dr. John Helliwell, Dr. Eva Kail, Robin Mazumder, Guillermo Penalosa, Jay Pitter, Gord Tulloch, Dasho Karma Ura, Hannah Wright, and Bring Back Main Street Studio Participants.

We are especially grateful for our Bring Back Main Street Studio participants: Ajeev Bhatia, Ariana Holt, Cheryl Case, Elora Wilkinson, Harry Olson, Houssam Elokda, Karin Pasqua, Lior Steinberg, Paty Ríos, Renée Miles Rooijmans, Rob Leblanc, Sierra Tasi-Baker, TJ Maguire and Will Dunn. This session, full of thoughtful discussion, creative ideas and critical thinking guided our approach and generated excellent process, programming and design ideas. Learn more about these young and rising urban thinkers and doers, and check out their contributions, in their bios on pages 69 and 70.

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[bringbackmainstreet.ca](http://bringbackmainstreet.ca)