Neighborhood Commons Releases New Toolkit of Recommendations to Support Public Spaces in Commercial Corridors

From the Design Trust for Public Space supported by a grant from NYC Department of Small Business Services,

The publication explores best policy practices for public space governance in under-resourced neighborhoods.

New York, NY, Thursday, April 28, 2022 – TODAY, The Design Trust for Public Space, released a new toolkit as part of their joint initiative, Neighborhood Commons: Plazas, Sidewalks, and Beyond, aimed to provide small business and place-based organizations with recovery tools and strategies to utilize public space. The project was made possible through a Strategic Impact Grant provided by the NYC Department of Small Business Services.

Small businesses play a unique and central role in the livelihood of neighborhoods and public spaces. With the ongoing crisis hitting commercial corridors and main streets hard, NYC needs innovative strategies to reactivate the public realm. The publication, Neighborhood Commons: Reimagining Public Space Governance and Programming in Commercial Districts, lists recommendations on ways the City of New York can reshape its approach to the management of public spaces located in the right-of-way, and how different models of local governance, stewardship, and service delivery can impact the economic resilience of small businesses.

As public spaces in commercial districts increasingly become important places to build place identity and share culture, the City will need to adapt its regulatory structures, programs, and policies to lower barriers to public participation in and management of the public realm, particularly in under-resourced neighborhoods. Recommendations include an interagency working group to coordinate citywide policy, more accessible resources, and unified processes. Two pilot projects are being developed to test out these recommendations. The first is being developed with CaribBEING and the Brownsville Community Justice Center to test concessions on an open street, and the second will consist of a photo exhibition in Jamaica to test coalition building with local cultural organizations.

“Neighborhood Commons’ policy recommendations are coming at a crucial moment for decision-makers guiding the city’s recovery and long-term economic resilience,” said Matthew Clarke, Executive Director of the Design Trust. “Public spaces and the small businesses that define them are critical for the livelihood of our neighborhoods. The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated just how important it is to protect and uplift these spaces as community anchors. We can do so by lowering the barrier to access of public space programs and resources”
"SBS is proud to support organizations dedicated to pushing our city's recovery and enlivening our public spaces," said **Kevin D. Kim, Commissioner of NYC Department of Small Business Services.** "Our public spaces have allowed thousands of small businesses to stay afloat across the five boroughs and investing in them is key to ensuring our City's vitality for generations to come."

**Read the Full Publication at neighborhoodcommons.nyc**

*Neighborhood Commons spokespeople are available for further comment. Please contact Alexa Mauzy-Lewis (amauzy@designtrust.org) to coordinate an interview.*

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**About the Design Trust for Public Space**

The [Design Trust for Public Space](https://www.designtrust.org) is a nationally recognized incubator that catalyzes change and transforms New York City’s shared civic spaces—streets, plazas, parks, public buildings, transportation, and housing developments—to create a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable city. Established in 1995 by Andrea Woodner, the nonprofit brings design expertise and systems thinking to the public realm to make a lasting impact. Founded on the tenet that New York City’s cultural and democratic life depends on viable public space, the Design Trust focuses on social justice and equity, environmental sustainability, design excellence, and public engagement. Its innovative model brings together government agencies, community groups, and private-sector experts, utilizing cross-sector partnerships to deliver creative solutions that shape the city’s landscape.