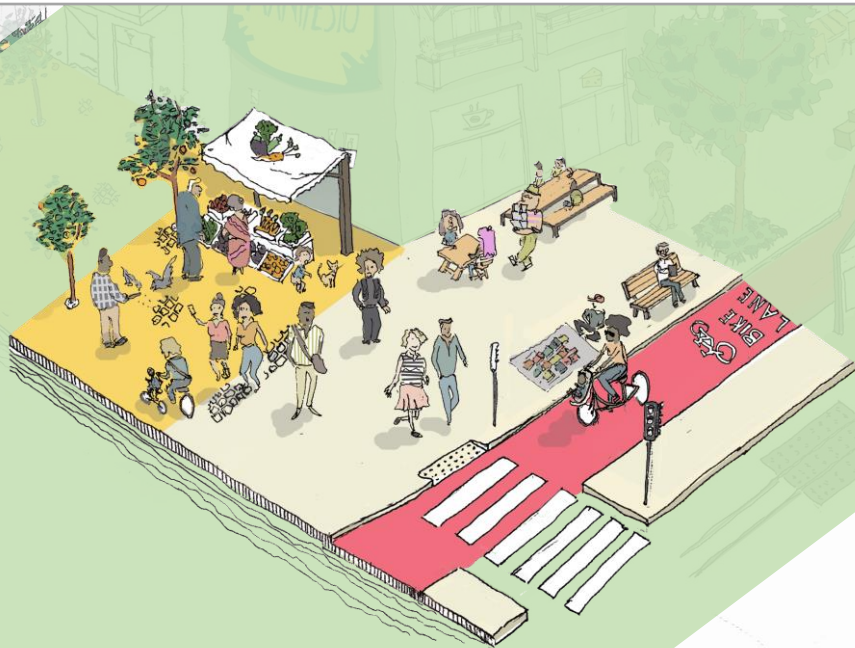




GO #1

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE BIG TIME IMPACT ??

THE WHOLE WORLD (CITY) IS YOUR STAGE!



LEARN WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE
SPECTACULAR IMPACT WHERE YOU LIVE.

THIS ARTICLE IS INTENDED TO STIR YOUR
IMAGINATION AND INTEREST, AND IT IS
ACCOMPANIED BY SEVERAL OTHER
ARTICLES AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON
CARFREEALLIANCE.ORG.

Most of us are susceptible to a particular mental roadblock: the world around us appears big and complex, and the things that would make our cities truly sustainable - well, we can't really see them happening in a million years. We don't have much confidence that the decision makers will make the right decisions, and anyways, what is a single person able to do?

If that seems at all familiar, you're not alone. One of the main reasons that people don't get more involved in their local environment is that they don't see a simple way to do something, to make a difference. And it is true, the world is a complex place.

But there is good news. For those who dare to try, there are many positive rewards that lie in wait. What you will come across in this article are persuasive arguments and encouragement for participating directly in the shaping of your city and local environment;

and secondly ideas and suggestions for where to look for further inspiration and how to get started.

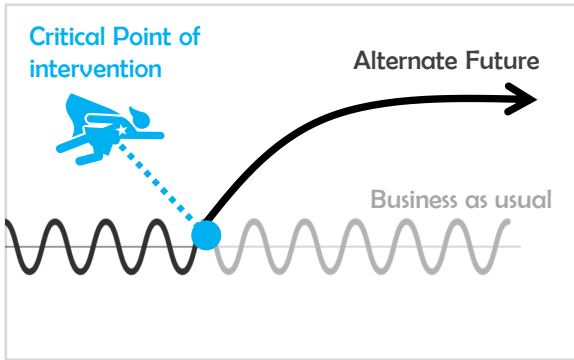
You may share the sentiment:

"It has always been like this. You can't change it"

"Yeah, the traffic here is crazy. But you couldn't just ban all the cars, where would they go?"

The underlying belief supporting this thinking is that change to your city's infrastructure in a big way is next to impossible. But this is erroneous thinking! There are a lot of cities that have changed dramatically in the recent past, and many cities are changing for the better right now.

A crucial starting point is to expand our imagination. Look at the diagram overleaf, illustrating the importance of action to bring about necessary change and therein different results.



Business as usual will be the path continued on if nothing is undertaken. An “alternative future” is a scenario that kicks in once steps are taken to change the course of development in one way or another.

Now if we could only create a vivid picture in our minds of such alternative futures and map out a possible course of action, that would be a huge step forward. The importance of the perception of available options was captured eloquently by Richard Box:

“What choices would people make if they were aware of a wide range of options including some that involve significant changes in existing political, economic, institutional, and legal arrangements, if they did not think that existing arrangements were all that is possible.” -

(Box, 2007)

We should also include here: changes in policy, infrastructure, and transport systems.

Let us bring everything to the main point: you would like your city to have less traffic. You would like to double or quadruple the number of pedestrian streets. You would like to remove that annoying super-busy highway passing downtown. You want the traffic out of your neighborhood square or favorite park. You want trees, birds, and flowers.

These are all great, but let's first grow the thought inside our minds that this could indeed become a reality. Then, let's take the necessary steps to do something about it!

Close your eyes for a second (after you finish reading this sentence) and imagine the city or a neighborhood of your dreams!! No really, do the exercise.

For the place where everything starts is in fact the mind. There may be an idea or vision that grips your imagination, causing you to think: "*Wait, we could actually do that here!*" Obviously, this idea won't just happen by itself. A famous activist credo is:

If not us, who? If not now, when?

Thus, a good idea needs to be followed up with action. Think it over, this weekend or next, but don't let months go by without taking any concrete steps.

The fact that success can come to those who work diligently towards achieving their goals is illustrated by the story of the now world-famous - **High Line Park in New York City.**

High Line Park in New York City

Two individuals, Joshua David and Robert Hammond, came up with the idea of converting an unused elevated train track in Manhattan into an elevated public park. They founded a citizen's group called Friends of the High Line and worked for years, facing numerous challenges.

They were eventually rewarded with the full realization of their project, a now iconic and popular New York landmark. The most interesting thing about their story: they were not architects or community organizers. They were simply two individuals who had a great idea and stayed with it long enough to make it happen.



The High Line Before and After (c) Demetrius Freeman/The New York Times



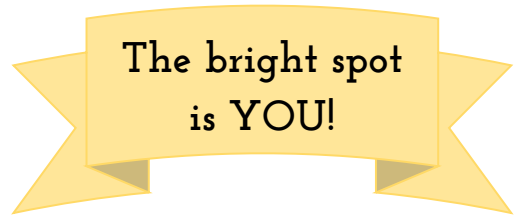
The High Line Park in Manhattan (c) David Berkowitz - www.marketersstudio.com

So if you are interested in getting started, the first thing you'll want to do is share your ideas with a few trusted people.

- ❑ Sit down with you friends/colleagues that share the same idea over a cup of coffee, or organize a visit to a local community association, Contact that individual you want to collaborate with but haven't gotten around to it, & Now see if you can get traction for your ideas.
- ❑ Don't give up too quickly if your idea doesn't have immediate takers, but instead be ready to improvise or join forces with other good ideas, individuals and or similar projects.
- ❑ Also most importantly: don't allow the doubt or self-accusation of being naïve and uneducated about the subject!

Turning your ideas into action and working out how to cooperate with others is explained in more detail in other Toolkit articles - such as *Action! Sheet #3 Tactics and Strategy*.

The point here is to demonstrate the big picture and to illuminate that bright spot in the big picture -



Here is another mental exercise: take that one shiny thought, that vision of a wonderful change that you would love to see happen, and imagine this to take place - an accomplishment that may well come to pass precisely due to your own efforts in making it happen. Hold on to that idea and make it your passion.

It is a very powerful thing when we come to realize that by our actions, we have the ability to bring something into existence. Not only will it bring great personal satisfaction, but you will also have scored an important and meaningful victory for your community - a contribution to a better society that can be built on for future triumphs.

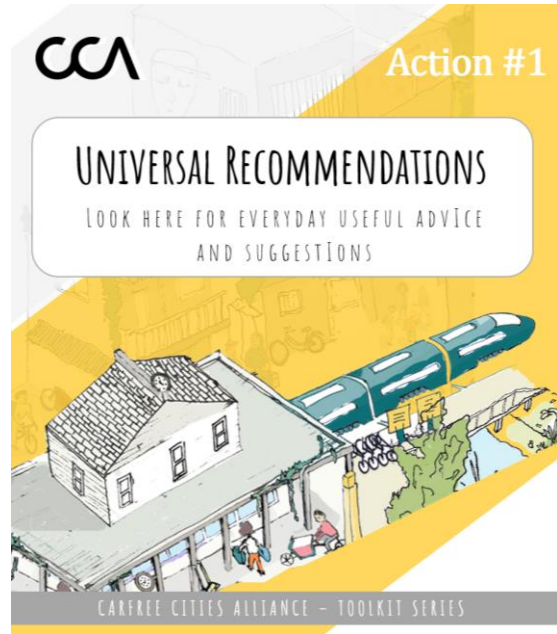
Take the time to read through other articles that provide specific ideas on what you can do in your city and neighborhood, specific examples of projects and campaigns, inspiration to take home.

You can also read our **How-To guides** in setting up your local organization or working step by step to develop your campaign.

But don't forget the basics: it all starts with an idea germinating in your mind, and with the realization that if you put the right steps into action, what might have struck you first as a fanciful dream could in fact become reality.

Several decades before Richard Box, the well-known community organizer Saul D. Alinsky wrote along similar lines:

"If people feel they don't have the power to change a bad situation, they do not think about it. ... Once people are organized so that they have the power to make changes, then, when confronted with questions of change, they begin to think and to ask questions about how to make the changes."
(Alinsky, 1979)



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OR WRITE TO US AT DOWNTOWN@CARFREEALLIANCE.ORG

