

# Tactical Plazas



# TACTICAL PLAZAS

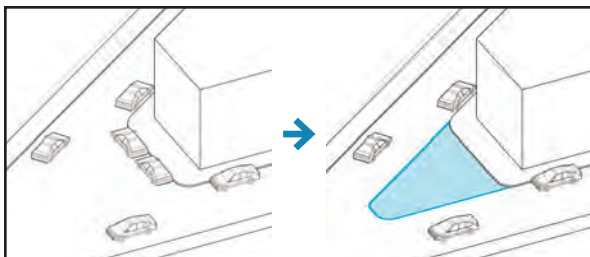
## Overview

Boston's unique charm stems in part from its dense network of sometimes irregular streets. These streets were once a chaotic mix of pedestrians, carriages, trolleys, and bicycles. Throughout the 20th century, street infrastructure was shaped to segregate different users, and most of the space was given over to automobiles. In dense neighborhoods of Boston, pedestrian space is often limited to narrow sidewalks, with relatively few opportunities for outdoor gathering spaces. At the same time, some of Boston's many irregular intersections and blocks harbor more pavement than is needed for safe traffic movements. Boston has joined a growing number of cities taking advantage of these areas of superfluous pavement, and is turning them into public plazas and parks.

Tactical Plazas are public open spaces that are created out of underutilized space on city streets. They can quickly transform barren pavement into a lively place to gather, improving safety and setting the stage for the construction of a permanent plaza.

A few simple components can transform a barren stretch of pavement into an attractive place for people to gather. The most important elements are surface paint and perimeter planters to delineate the space clearly, and seating, so that people passing by will be encouraged to linger. This section will review each element in detail.

Tactical Plazas are a partnership between the City and neighborhood groups, small business organizations, or major property owners. Although successful plazas have active community partners, they are public spaces that are open to all and not licensed to specific businesses.



## Furniture

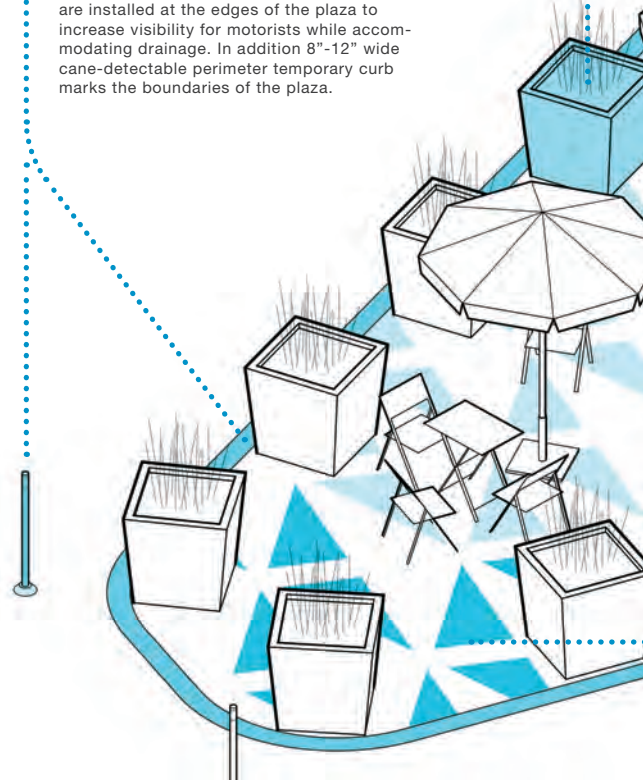
Providing ample open seating is crucial to the success of a plaza. Different types of furniture are most appropriate for different locations, depending on the level of maintenance and the adjacent uses. Five percent of seating must be accessible for persons with disabilities.

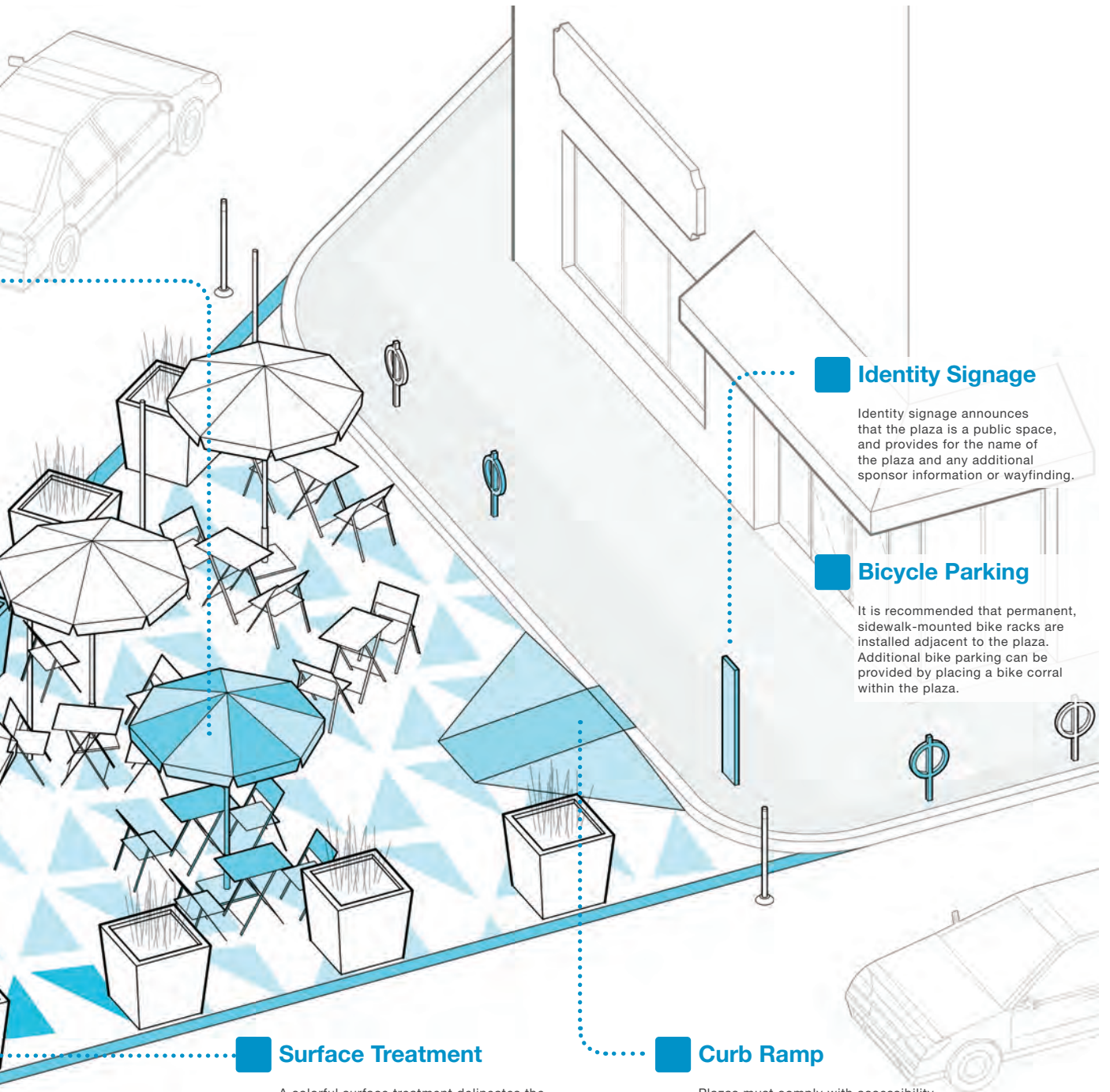
## Perimeter Barriers

Planters or equivalent barriers provide a vertical barrier between the plaza and the roadway, while helping to define the space. Rectangular planters or bollards are preferred and must weigh a minimum of 200lbs.

## Traffic Control Devices

Flexible, surface-mounted, reflective bollards are installed at the edges of the plaza to increase visibility for motorists while accommodating drainage. In addition 8"-12" wide cane-detectable perimeter temporary curb marks the boundaries of the plaza.





### Identity Signage

Identity signage announces that the plaza is a public space, and provides for the name of the plaza and any additional sponsor information or wayfinding.

### Bicycle Parking

It is recommended that permanent, sidewalk-mounted bike racks are installed adjacent to the plaza. Additional bike parking can be provided by placing a bike corral within the plaza.

### Surface Treatment

A colorful surface treatment delineates the pedestrian zone and brands the plaza.

### Curb Ramp

Plazas must comply with accessibility standards and allowable slopes. If there are no existing curb ramps that provide access to the plaza, a semi-permanent ramp must be installed.

## Context and Location Criteria

Tactical plazas can be transformational in many different contexts. The best locations are places where there is not only excess pavement, but also, a demand for new public open space. Downtown neighborhoods often lack open space, and have a high density of businesses—both conditions that can help increase utilization of a new plaza.

Mixed-use areas in neighborhoods, such as one of Boston's Main Street Districts, can be good locations for plazas, as well. Proximity of restaurants and retail businesses can help increase use of a plaza, and in turn, the plaza can help draw more foot traffic for businesses.

In residential neighborhoods without much public open space, especially denser areas where residents do not have private yards, a plaza can provide a welcome gathering space. Plazas can also help calm traffic, which is a priority in many neighborhoods.

### General Requirements

<b>Speed Limit</b>	Plazas are permitted on streets regulated at or below the default speed limit of 25 mph.
<b>Size</b>	Plazas must occupy a minimum of 1,000 square feet.
<b>Access</b>	Seating in a plaza may not be licensed to an individual establishment.
<b>Emergency Access</b>	Alternate access must be provided for emergency vehicles. Plazas must not block access to fire hydrants.
<b>Loading</b>	Alternate access must be provided for delivery trucks and sanitation vehicles.
<b>Utility Access</b>	Manhole covers and other utilities are allowed within plazas, but cannot be blocked by furniture.
<b>Clearance</b>	Adequate clearance must be provided for turning in and out of nearby driveways.
<b>Traffic Flow</b>	Existing traffic volumes must be maintained. Plazas must not interfere with existing public-transit routes.
<b>Paving Schedule</b>	Plazas should not be installed in locations scheduled for resurfacing or utility work within 8 months of installation.



Above: Underutilized areas of Boston streets that are well suited to becoming Tactical Plazas

### Closing Redundant Streets



### Squaring a Corner



### Diagonal Intersecting with Grid



### Filling in Redundant Lanes



# Application and Implementation Process

Each year, the City may fund one to two Tactical Plazas selected by a public nomination process. Additional Plazas may be implemented if fully funded by community partners. The process for privately-funded Plazas is the same, except that the partner must provide their own design consultant and contractor.

The Tactical Plaza Program will follow the process outlined below, with specific roles identified for Plaza Partners.

## 1 Nominate a location for a Tactical Plaza and submit application to Boston Transportation Department (BTD)

Application guidelines can be found at [www.boston.gov/publicrealm](http://www.boston.gov/publicrealm).

Applications are accepted annually from November 15 through February 15, and must include:

- ▶ street-level photos of the site to describe its existing conditions and an aerial image diagram to indicate the proposed Plaza location
- ▶ letters of support from abutters and local organizations such as resident associations and business groups

## 2 Initial review by the City

Applications will be evaluated by the City and selected based on criteria ([www.boston.gov/publicrealm](http://www.boston.gov/publicrealm)).

## 3 The City's on-call design consultant will work with the community partner to design the Tactical Plaza

- ▶ Applicant should expect to meet with BTD and the City's on-call consultant up to three times.
- ▶ Applicant is strongly encouraged to work with local artists and designers to develop concepts that incorporate art.

## 4 Proposal will be reviewed through a public process determined by the City and adjusted based on the feedback

## 5 The City's on-call design consultant presents to Public Improvement Commission (PIC) for administrative approval

## 6 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Successful applicant becomes the official Plaza Partner by signing an MOU with the Public Improvement Commission (PIC). Sample available at [www.boston.gov/publicrealm](http://www.boston.gov/publicrealm).

## 7 Design installed by City contractor

Plazas will be in place year round for up to three years. Furniture may be stored during winter.

# Community Partner and City Roles

The City has committed to assist the funding and implementation of Tactical Plazas. However, the long-term success of the Plazas will depend on community partners. Successful Tactical Plazas are embraced by those who use them, and are supported by community partners that provide “eyes on the Plaza” and have a true sense of ownership.

## Plaza Partner

### Regular Maintenance

- ▶ Cleaning, trash removal, furniture maintenance, and plant watering are the responsibility of the Plaza Partner.

### Day-to-Day Management

- ▶ Daily setup and breakdown of any items that cannot be left out overnight, such as games, are the responsibility of the Plaza Partner.
- ▶ Selection of plaza furnishings should take into consideration the level of daily management required.

### Winter Maintenance

- ▶ Leaving the plaza snowed in is acceptable as long as it does not inhibit access through the intersection for all users. Furniture may be removed, and shoveling is the responsibility of the Plaza Partner.

## City

- ▶ The City is responsible for maintaining the temporary curb.
- ▶ The City is responsible for any necessary replanting or repair/replacement of furniture, perimeter, and bollards/planters.
- ▶ Maintenance of the pavement in the case of utility work or pavement repairs will be the responsibility of the City via its contractor. Coordination with paving schedules will take place during the design process.
- ▶ Trash pick-up locations at the outside edge of the plaza will be determined as part of the design process.

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