

# West Allis Better Block

Reimagining the Burnham Pointe Corridor



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# Executive Summary

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Better Block Foundation proposes hosting a Better Block project to support the community in reimagining the Burnham Pointe Corridor. The Better Block Foundation will lead the community in a 90-120 day process of organizing, designing, building, and evaluating ideas that could revitalize the neighborhood.

The Better Block has worked around the world over the past decade in cities, rural communities, suburbs, shopping centers, and even conference rooms to foster community engagement, bring plans to life, and create beautiful pieces that activate spaces so people can gather.

While the demonstrations are temporary; the impact is lasting. Our projects have resulted in new businesses leasing vacant offices, the permanent addition of bike lanes, and the development of Community Development Corporations. We introduce community leaders to City leaders so that the Better Block is just the beginning.

With our process, you will get more than a plan: you will have that plan brought to life. And it will be done through community organization that will showcase the opportunity and encourage investment.



# Technical Approach

## Project Objectives



Better Block Foundation, an international, urban design nonprofit that educates, equips, and empowers communities and their leaders to reshape and reactivate built environments to promote the growth of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods, is based in Dallas. Officially started in 2015, Better Block has successfully led placemaking efforts around the country and the world and has become one of the leaders in tactical urbanism and placemaking. Better Block's full-time staff of 10 come from a range of backgrounds including architecture, urban planning, art, and journalism and use their diverse set of skills to develop and create innovative and effective interventions to address problems in all types of communities.

Our primary objectives for the West

Allis Better Block proposal are to inspire the community to reimagine the public realm in the Burnham Pointe Corridor, to empower the neighbors with the tools and knowledge to make those changes, and to use aspirational design in the new spaces. We believe that using beautiful design can lead to permanent change. The aspirational design instantly creates a sense of place and a uniqueness in a place that lacked it before. And that high design in pop-up urbanism creates a place people instantly recognize as somewhere they want to be and a place they want to become permanent.

But just as important as the design in the temporary public realm is the process of creating it. We believe that inspiring and empowering the community to make the



changes, to not just be involved, but to be leaders in the process leads to capacity building within the community, which in turn can push for permanent changes.

Our process is designed to inspire, empower, and create aspirational design for the West Allis Better Block. Better Block's proposal is for a roughly 100 day-long project including three trips. Before the Better Block event day, we have scheduled two visits: a keynote presentation and numerous community engagement events, and a community check-in trip. We believe this process will help generate interest among the community and local partners to make the West Allis Better Block a success.

Our first trip begins with a presentation from Jason Roberts, founding director of the Better Block. Roberts will discuss the project and outline the process with the community, city staff, and elected officials. The goal of the presentations is to engage and educate citizens in ways that they can influence a generation of decision-making in the communities on the future of the public realm. The following day, we will

conduct site trips along the corridor to begin the process of the site design plan. We will also hold stakeholder meetings along the corridor and being the survey process, thus beginning the process of community engagement. This trip will also include meetings with the city the following day for project procedures and parameters.

On our second trip, the Project Manager will visit the team to see how things are evolving, to knock on a few doors, and address any potential issues 60 days out from the project. The check-in trip requires travel and accommodations for two staff members for two nights. The check-in trip is instrumental in garnering local support, recruiting partners, and marketing the project.

Our process is designed to inspire, empower, and showcase aspirational design in temporary installations. We believe that by demonstrating this throughout the project that we will create the interest of local stakeholders as well as garner will and community support to make these



changes permanent. Our site design plan, event plan, and programming plan will be created based on the input from community engagement and from the capacity of the community leaders identified throughout the process. Draft versions of the plan will be presented to the City and its possible partners for review and comments before a final version is put together.

For the implementation of the site design plan, the event plan, and the programming plan, our team will manage the open streets and tactical urbanism projects utilizing unique community engagement tools, programming, and custom designs through our [Wikiblock library](#). Wikiblock is a library of street-furniture designs that anyone anywhere can download, cut out using a CNC router (basically, a giant printer for wood), and assemble with little to no glue, screws, or nails. These elements will remain in the community.

Our process is more than just management and design, our engagement process identifies and empowers community leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, advocates, and more. And by utilizing them and

empowering them with tools, the West Allis Better Block becomes more than just an open streets and tactical urbanism event. It becomes a community-organizing, capacity-building crash course on multi-modal transportation and creative placemaking.

It's through this process that we intend to inspire community members to take action, empower them with the tools to create change, and work with them to create aspiring design in the reimagined built realm.

# Scope of Work

## 1. Project Management

### 1.1 Kickoff and Keynote (TRIP 1)

Jason Roberts and one other Better Block team member will visit the site for a public presentation to officially launch the project. Following the presentation, local leaders, activists, stakeholders, and residents will be invited to walk the Better Block site and identify opportunities and constraints. Data will also be gathered via surveys at the event (and after), and during open discussion. The project website and social media pages will also be live at this point, serving as a centralized location for project information and the online survey. Collateral will be distributed at the event to point people toward the website and instructions for getting involved. The Kickoff and Keynote require travel and accommodations for two staff members for two nights.

Deliverables from the Better Block: Better Block manual; Collateral promoting project and community involvement; Community survey (online and print); Community walk through of the potential Better Block site; Public keynote by Jason Roberts; Website; Stakeholder meetings

Deliverables from West Allis: Prepare site visit; Prepare group meetings; Help promote events; Begin running social media sites

### 1.2 Ongoing Consultation (90 Days, Overlaps with next steps)

Weekly calls will be set up with the local team to facilitate communication and establish team roles. Better Block will oversee and provide an outline for the creation of committees to handle various aspects of the project.

Deliverables from the Better Block: Weekly call schedule; Committee formation plan

Deliverables from West Allis: Help identify local leads; Attend weekly calls

### 1.3 Check-In Trip (Trip 2)

The Project Manager and one other Better Blocker will visit the team to see how things are evolving, to knock on a few doors, and address any potential issues 60 days out from the project. The check-in trip requires travel and accommodations for two staff members for one night.

Deliverables from the Better Block: Evaluation of progress; Finalized Concept Map

Deliverables from West Allis: Prepare site for meetings



#### 1.4 Community Organization and Build Plan

Better Block will analyze all data from community surveys and conceptual plans the city has created, and in a team discussion, we will decide which elements suggested by the community are most needed and can be realistically accomplished within the project timeframe. After finalizing the list of interventions, Better Block will create a concept map, build plan, and materials list. Better Block will then organize volunteers to execute the interventions. Better Block will create a volunteer plan, Better Block guide, and assist with follow-up to generate volunteer commitments and success. Better Block will also design custom Wikiblock elements based on the community's unique cultural history and the needs of the community.

Deliverables from the Better Block: Discussion with project team; Final concept map; Build plan and workshop instructions; Materials, rentals, and vendors list; Email and phone coordination with locals, city officials, and volunteers; Assist with volunteer plan

Deliverables from West Allis: Join brainstorming of interventions list; Help source items for the materials list; Help coordinate volunteers

#### 1.5 Better Block Event (Trip 3)

Better Block will organize and lead workshops for volunteers to gather and build the elements of the Better Block. These typically take place in the four to five days leading up to the event date. The Better Block Captain, along with Better Block, will ensure that all necessary materials are onsite and organized prior to the start of each workshop, and provide safety materials, instructions, and guidance to volunteers. The workshops will culminate in a two-day showcase of the Better Block elements, programmed by the community. Better Block volunteer workshops will include setup and teardown of the event, and data collection before, during, and after the event. Immediately following the event, the core team will meet to discuss next steps and initial reactions. The Better Block Event requires travel and accommodation for three staff members for four nights.

Deliverables from the Better Block: Instruction to volunteers before and during each workshop; Volunteer waiver of liability; Onsite monitoring and assisting; Staging plan; Mobilization and installation; Onsite management and operation; Team wrap-up meeting

Deliverables from West Allis: Help facilitate any permitting needs; Help gather volunteers for the workshops; Help with implementation and teardown; Determine where leave behind items will go after the Better Block.



## 1.6 Better Block Metrics, Report, and Programming Plan

Better Block will create a survey to be collected before, during, and after the project that gauges success in terms of business, infrastructure, and social aspects of the project. We will also have counters, sensors, and volunteers onsite collecting data before and during the event to measure its impact in the community. The results of these surveys will be detailed in the final report.

Working with the City staff and stakeholders, we will develop recommendations for changes to zoning overlays and development guidelines. Working with locals, we will offer suggestions for further activating the area with programming and business development programs. A next steps report will document the project and outline these recommendations.

Deliverables from the Better Block: Final report; Future programming plan; Better Block blog post

Deliverables from West Allis: Meeting facilitation with stakeholders and City officials; Material for blog post and press release

## 2. Additional Project Details



### 2.1 Role of City Staff

For this project to be successful, Better Block needs the full cooperation from the City and staff. The City is an important partner helping the Better Block team to secure permits, connect with local partners, neighborhood groups, and vendors and coordinating within the City staff for all departments to work together and take advantage of all possible City resources. The City staff will also work with the Better Block team and the block captains to assist with logistics of the project and provide design review and recommendations for the Better Block's interventions. The City will help to determine what interventions fit into the existing long-term plans for the area as well as helping to identify the necessary steps to permanency. For more detailed tasks throughout the process required by the City and the designated Block Captains, please refer to the Scope of Work in Section 1.

### 2.2 Technology tools and software packages used by the Better Block team

The Better Block team uses a variety of programs to carry out the project. Sketchup and Google Earth are used to model the streetscape and create a concept plan. Sketchup, Illustrator, and VCarve are used to create and cut necessary elements on the CNC Router. Adobe Creative Suite is used to create flyers, plans, and other promotional materials for the project. Excel is used to analyze the data collected from the project and to draw conclusions and make recommendations to move forward.



### 2.3 Types of reports and forms that can be expected by the City as part of this engagement.

The Better Block team will create a community survey form to start the process. This survey will inform what kind of changes will be made to the neighborhood and how to best leverage the community's skills and resources. The team will also provide data collection sheets to help analyze the event. The survey results and data analysis will be compiled into a final report for the City of West Allis recounting the Better Block process and making recommendations on how to continue the work and make the changes permanent. The Better Block team will identify the issues blocking investment in the area and the strategies and opportunities implemented during the Better Block to encourage investment in the area.

### 3. Budget

<b>Better Block Budget</b>	
<b>Kickoff and Keynote</b>	
Travel and Accommodations - 2 staff - 2 nights	\$1,750
Keynote	\$2,500
Community Survey	\$2,000
Website Setup	\$2,000
<b>Ongoing Consultation</b>	
90 days of communications, review, and consulting (approx. 60 hours of work)	\$7,500
<b>Check-in Trip</b>	
Travel and Accommodations - 2 staff - 2 nights	\$1,750
Progress Assessment and Local Team Development Meeting	\$500
<b>Community Organization and Build Plan</b>	
Concept Plan, Materials List, and Cut List	\$5,000
<b>Better Block Event</b>	
Travel and Accommodations - 3 staff - 4 nights	\$5,500
Better Block Installation	\$5,000
Workshop Management	\$2,500
Better Block Teardown	\$2,500
<b>Better Block Metrics, Report, and Programming Plan</b>	
Final Report	\$5,000
Materials for Better Block	\$11,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$55,000</b>

# Profile of Project Team

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Better Block Foundation is a nonprofit organization based in Dallas, Texas with another office in Akron, Ohio.



## Better Block Foundation

### Primary Contact:

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Better Block Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that educates, equips, and empowers communities and their leaders to reshape and reactivate built environments to promote the growth of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods. The Better Block began with an idea from a group of neighbors who wondered, “How could we have bike lanes like found in Holland? How could we have night food markets like those found in Thailand and beer gardens like those in Munich?” They realized they couldn’t. There were decade ordinances on their city books that prohibited them from creating spaces like those they dreamed of.

So they did the only thing they could: they took over their block. For one weekend, they painted bike lanes, coordinated pop-up food markets and retailers, and created a beer garden. They called their experiment the Better Block, and through it, the community brainstormed together, learned together, and ultimately shared in the beautiful and vibrant spaces they helped create together.

The drive to make places better was placed in hands of neighbors, and they ran with it. Over the years, Better Block have been

implemented from Portland to Detroit and Melbourne to Tehran.

### What We Do at the Better Block

- Develop open source media to help cities, communities, and emerging leaders create rapid prototyping.
- Create opportunities for communities and their leaders to gain exposure to and training from urban planning experts, civic innovators, and architects through global symposiums.
- Facilitate community engagement through input and information, employing charrettes, and neighborhood meetings and workshops about the value of rapid prototyping to enhance public life.
- Create new and improve existing modeling tools through experimentation with innovative technologies and scientific solutions
- Create mentorship programs for emerging leaders and young urbanists
- Host and organize study tours to benchmark successful examples of sustainable initiatives around the world

The organization was founded in 2015 by Jason Roberts. Better Block is currently led by Krista Nightengale, Managing Director. Our team consists of 10 staff in the Oak Cliff neighborhood of Dallas, Texas, and in the North Hill neighborhood of Akron, Ohio.

# Jason E. Roberts

Founding Director, Public Speaker (Lavin Agency)

Jason Roberts is an artist, civic activist, and urban designer whose life's work has been dedicated to the creation of healthy, vibrant, and sustainable neighborhoods. In 2006, Jason formed the nonprofit organization, Oak Cliff Transit Authority, to revive the Dallas streetcar system, and later spearheaded the city's effort in garnering a \$23 million grant from the federal government to help reintroduce a modern streetcar system to Dallas. In 2010, Jason organized a series of Better Block projects, taking blighted blocks with vacant properties in Dallas and converting them into temporary, walkable districts with pop-up businesses, bike lanes, cafe seating, and landscaping. The project has become an open-sourced international movement occurring everywhere from Melbourne, Australia to Tehran, Iran, and has been featured in the New York Times, Washington Post, and Dwell Magazine. Jason has received a Champions of Change award from the U.S. White House, showcased in the 2012 Venice Biennale, and was listed in Planetizen's Top 100 Most Influential Urbanists.

- Showcased in U.S. pavilion at Venice Biennale 2012
- U.S. White House Champions of Change Award Recipient 2012
- Dallas Morning News Nominee "Texan of the Year" 2012
- National American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Award for Communications 2011
- North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) CLIDE Award 2011
- Dallas Observer's "Neighborhood Advocate of the Year" 2009
- Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce's "Volunteer of the Year" 2008
- Tecmetrics "Consultant of the Year" 2008

## Awards

- The 100 Most Influential Urbanists by Planetizen
- 2018 Honorary Member of AIA Dallas
- Environmental Design and Research Association's Place Planning Award 2016
- AIA Community Honors Award 2016
- Corenet Global Southwest Chapter Community Impact Award 2015/2016
- Greater Dallas Planning Council Urban Design Award for Dallas Complete Streets Design Manual 2015
- Greater Dallas Planning Council Kessler Award 2013

## Krista Nightengale

Managing Director

Krista Nightengale is the Managing Director of the Better Block. She began her career at D Magazine, the city magazine in Dallas, where she served as Managing Editor, Executive Director of a leadership group aimed at empowering citizens to take action, and Executive Director of a literacy nonprofit that united the city in reading together.

She then served as Chief of Staff of the Coalition for a New Dallas, an advocacy group that worked to reunite communities by removing an elevated highway between two neighborhoods in Dallas. Krista then launched Dallas Innovates, a news site that promotes Dallas-Fort Worth as a hub of innovation. While covering the city, Krista became intrigued by the built environment. In 2016, she joined the Better Block, an international, urban design nonprofit that educates, equips, and empowers communities and their leaders to reshape and reactivate built environments to promote the growth of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods.

At the Better Block, Krista works to help with its growth, spread its story, and make the world a little better by working with communities to demonstrate how wonderful walkable/bikeable districts are, and what it means to build for love not fear.

Krista is on the Dallas Architecture and Design Exchange board, TEDxSMU steering committee, Emerging Leaders in Philanthropy cohort for Communities Foundation of Texas, former executive board of the New Leaders Council, former member of the Dallas Police Department Community Advisory Board, former AIA Dallas board, former member of the Dallas Commission on Homelessness, and a graduate of Leadership Texas.

## Colin Amos

Project Manager

Colin Amos is a project manager with the Better Block Foundation. After graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a degree in Environmental Science and Urban Planning and Design, he joined the Better Block in December 2016. Colin has managed several Better Block projects, including the Kenmore Better Block, the Barberton Better Block, and White Flint Placemaking. As an avid cyclist, Colin is passionate about working to create multimodal streets and places for people rather than cars.

Colin will be the lead project manager for the West Allis Better Block.

### References:

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## Dylan Adams

Architectural Designer

Dylan Adams is one of Better Block's architectural designers. Graduating from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 2013, Dylan strives to work with communities, artists, and designers alike to promote creativity and build inspirational works. Dylan works to expand and implement Better Block's Wikiblock library.



# Reference Projects

## Kenmore Better Block



### Reference Description

The Kenmore neighborhood is a tightknit community in southwest Akron, Ohio. The center of the neighborhood is Kenmore Boulevard, a nearly 100-foot-wide road with continuous building frontage. Over the past few decades, economic decline and disinvestment have greatly affected Kenmore. The closing of local businesses has led to little activity and public life on the block. Despite Kenmore's difficulties in recent years, it has great potential due to its engaged residents and architectural form.

For the Kenmore Better Block, we worked with the community to address several issues facing the neighborhood including; safety, traffic speeds, public life, and economic development. The team remodeled the street and created a two-lane road instead of a four-lane road to solve the issue of traffic speeds. We extended the sidewalk 8 feet out into the on-street parking, added a 5-foot bike lane, and 8-foot on-street parking spots. The road diet, coupled with the increased activity on the sidewalks, made cars slow down significantly. We found that the traffic speeds decreased from 27 MPH on Wednesday, before the interventions were installed, to 21 MPH on Friday and 20 MPH on Saturday during the Better Block. To address the issue of economic development, we wanted to create businesses that act as third places, the places you go to when not at home or work. Alto Coffee created a temporary pop-up coffeeshop in a vacant building. This provided an opportunity for the owners to test ideas, should they open a permanent location, as well as provided the building owner a chance to show his space to potential tenants. The team also created a beer garden in an empty lot to revitalize the dead space and create a hangout spot for the community members.

Many of the changes that the Better Block team made during the Kenmore Better Block became permanent within a year. The bike lane design was implemented by the city and the newly for Community Development Corporation has been working to support new local businesses and continue many of the programming elements started by the Better Block.

### Project Manager:

Colin Amos

# White Flint Placemaking



## Reference Description

In mid-October, we created Montgomery County's first pop-up park in partnership with Montgomery County Planning, Montgomery County Parks, the Randolph Civic Association, and Allen Krondstadt Realty. Approximately six months of design and planning culminated in a community built, public, green space in an underutilized grassy lot in the Randolph Hills Shopping Center.

For the design of our park, we created two sections connected with a street mural across the driveway. The grassy area was designed based on the tenets of traditional German beer gardens. We filled the space with our Wikiblock long tables, rows of trees donated by the Parks Department, and lined the site with local vendors. We hung string lights at 12-feet to create an artificial ceiling at human scale. Fire pits and swing sets were built to provide people an area to congregate. These elements helped to create a relaxed, casual, human-scaled atmosphere on the previously empty space.

The other half of our park design was more activity focused. The Parks Department brought out toys and games for kids, including Kaboom's Rigamajig set, ping pong and hula-hoops, which were hugely popular. Rockville Bike Hub and WABA provided bicycle workshops and education, promoting cycling in the DC area. KOA Sports organized games for kids on our pop-up basketball court, while Dynamite Gymnastics, MyGym and Badlands Playspace created pop-up obstacle courses for kids. Working with these partners, we were able to transform the parking lot from a space solely for cars to a safe play area for kids and families.

The White Flint Placemaking project has taught us that any space has the potential to bring people together, no matter how overlooked it may be, with a dedicated community and thoughtful design. All of the elements build during the Placemaking project will continue to live on the site and be utilized by the community organization.

## Project Manager:

Colin Amos

# Hillside Better Block



## Reference Description

In November of 2018, the Better Block team partnered with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Zeitgeist to host a Better Block in Duluth, MN. We were tasked with addressing an empty lot and overbuilt roads that were negatively affecting the Hillside neighborhood. After discussions with the community, we came up with the idea of a Transit Hub. This space would be used for ride share and bus transit users, as well as house bicycle parking. As the concept continued to develop, we added spaces for merchants as well as design elements to turn it into a landmark.

The space that people would enter after arriving at the “station” would be a community plaza. Other ideas sought by residents were creating places for families to gather. This would require designing play into the space, as well as tables, chairs, and lighting to offer opportunities to linger.

The street required narrowing the intersection and creating safe spaces like pedestrian islands to slow traffic as well as create respites for people crossing. In order to slow traffic along Sixth Avenue, we created a plan drawing from inspiration from suburban streets in Holland where cars are required to make serpentine motions at intersections. The city’s only requirement was to allow outbound traffic two lanes, while the inbound could be narrowed to one.

With the excess and unneeded space taken from the automobile lanes, bike lanes could be installed. Also, the development of a safer Dutch-style intersection could be implemented, which offers a series of enhancements that increases safety for all users, while providing clarity of movement for cars.

To bring a little hygge to Duluth, fire pits were brought onsite, as well as cozy blankets, hot chocolate and coffee vendors, and outdoor barbecue grills. A programming schedule was developed for resident artists to perform and enliven the block.

Children played, couples sat beside fire pits, residents interacted and shared food, and ultimately, ideas on the possibilities were discussed. It was the feeling of being in a neighborhood among new friends who realized they had everything they needed to create the kind of place they always dreamed of.

When everything was complete, a Welcome to Hillside sign was erected, letting residents know that they’ve entered a special place, full of neighbors who not only enjoyed spending time together in a block they helped shape, but one they could point to as a defining point for future community-driven change.

Project Manager

Colin Amos

# Professional References

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