# Title: Building Better Communities from the Bottom-Up

Subject: Disruptive Models

* Mobility

Abstract:

How can we drive change in our communities and move past unproductive committees, low community engagement, and outdated regulation? In this funny, smart, energetic, and breathless talk, arts activist Jason Roberts of the Better Block Project encourages us to stop waiting around. Even if that means painting in our own crosswalks, bringing in our own trees, building our own cafes, and blackmailing ourselves into action.

Speakers:

#### [Jason Roberts](http://www.smartcityexpo.com/en/the-event/media-center/sessions-2017/agenda/-/agenda-actividades/speakers/Jason-Roberts-/12170)

Conference:

okay we're going to move on to our first

inspirational talk this comes from Jason

Roberts and it's called building better

communities from the bottom up Jason is

the founder of the better block project

his work and helping create

neighborhoods has become an

international movement which received a

Champions of Change award from the US

White House in this talk he's going to

look at how we can drive change in our

communities from a grassroot level

taking a very DIY approach to

stimulating action we'll also be taking

questions on the app so please make sure

you submit them throughout his talk

please give a very warm round of

applause to Jason Roberts all right so

this cue this up here so my name's Jason

Roberts I'm from Dallas Texas just thank

you again from Dallas Fox out here oh

good I head up an organization called

the better block we are working in

communities around the world to help

rapidly transform spaces for bringing

places back to life again and things

like that but the thing is my early

inspiration was kind of looking at

places that weren't working anymore

this is like my mom's town where she

grew up this is in Fletcher Oklahoma

which is the middle of the u.s. like 800

people and if you go to the US many of

our small towns in the rural areas look

just like this their main streets that

are closed up they're wide streets but

they built highways and when they built

those highways they built these big

department stores and life kind of died

in these old Main Street areas but my

mom would tell me stories about how they

used to have parades in these spaces how

they used to have they would celebrate

life together this is where everyone

came together like the local store

owners knew everybody they knew the shop

they knew the kids in the area kids

couldn't do anything wrong because they

were always being watched and so a lot

of my early work was trying to figure

out how do you bring the life back to

these places how do you make these

places come back on again but the

problem was since I wasn't an urban

planner or architect I was your

Peter guy so this is where I spent most

of my days kind of changing out wires

and cables and servers in fact that

would have been setting up all this

projection unit and all and at nighttime

I played in rock bands so I was really

not the guy you would ever call in order

to help kind of fix your city but some

other inspiration for me was also

getting a chance to travel in seeing

great places that were very old that had

been working for a long time so I

remember going to Paris first and seeing

this space and thinking like man this is

gorgeous it's a hundreds hundreds of

years old I wish this was my

neighborhood if it was there I would go

there every single day for a cup of

coffee I'd want to like like retire in

this area I'd ask friends about the

space and say what do you think about

places like this and they said man

we wish we had this in our neighborhood

as well we put this on postcards we want

our kids to work here one day and I

thought well if we all collectively wish

we had more places that look like this

then why do we keep building places that

look like this and that was the early

idea behind our work was this we know

that places that we create create

responses from us they make us feel good

they make us feel bad they make us feel

like we want to celebrate as a community

or they can make us feel like

commodities we're just coming here to

just do a transaction only and leave so

I decided to start going to the city and

thinking like well how can I make change

how can I help I went to the City of

Hall in Dallas and said I want to get

involved and they said well first of all

in Dallas it's hot so you know three

months out of the year it's a it's a 40

degrees Celsius and then we also have a

car culture so you're never gonna get

people out of their cars but if you want

to get involved we have these planning

initiatives we have all these plans you

can be a get involved with the forward

Dallas Plan we have the downtown Dallas

360 plans we've got bike plans from the

1980s and the recent ones that have

never gotten built maybe you can pull

those off and work on those or you can

work on the 2035 mobility plan so I

thought I saw this and thought well

Dallas is gonna be great in 2035 I hope

I can make it

so I started started thinking a lot

can't get involved with the city because

it's gonna take too long why don't work

I work on projects that were in my own

neighborhood I can take on the problem

though with my neighborhood was it was

considered historically as the bad part

of town it has had a stigma for nearly a

century and a lot of that stigma came

from the fact that we had some bad folks

that came from our neighborhood so first

of all

today was called Oak Cliff the we had

Bonnie and Clyde are from my

neighborhood but also Lee Harvey Oswald

in fact this theater was kind of ground

zero for why we were perceived as the

bad part of town this is called the

Texas theater and at the time when I

wanted to start getting involved this

theater had been closed down for four

decade in fact the only reason that had

a sign was because Oliver Stone made

that sign for the movie JFK so I saw

that theater I started meeting the board

that was working on the space and they

said we need millions of dollars to fix

it up but we don't have philanthropy

coming into the area and so I thought

well I don't have a million dollars

either so what can I do maybe I can get

involved with my friends I get my arts

community together so we got together

said why don't we have a hundred people

in our neighborhood come out to the

theater and we'll give them all canvases

have them paint together one night and

the next night will open up the theater

and turn it to this instant art gallery

will open the doors again so this is us

inside the space getting there getting

this place ready and in minutes before

about to open the doors were thinking

man this could be an abject failure cuz

first of all the theater had been closed

for a decade it was the middle of winter

and we're on the bad side of town but

when we open the doors we had 700 people

show up and we sold every piece of art

we had created the night before but

beyond that people came up to me

afterwards and say we've been waiting

for someone to open the doors to the

theater I thought well I was waiting for

someone opened the doors of the theater

as well like we're all just waiting for

someone to kind of stand up and kind of

let turn the lights on and allow us to

use these spaces again now if you go to

the area it's working well this is an

anchor for our community it's it's runs

a regular film festivals and it's

working in fact within three months as I

kept getting involved I said I want to

keep helping and I became the president

of the Texas theater so I tell people to

be careful whenever you say you want to

help because they will throw the keys at

you but it's done a lot for our

neighborhood it's been this complete

rallying point for our for our community

so drunk with enthusiasm and thinking if

I can help bring back a theater in my

neighborhood with or with our community

what else can we work on I started

looking at old maps in our neighborhood

this map is from 1929 and if you look at

the top right downtown Dallas is at the

top right and this is Oak Cliff here and

I started looking at these areas and

started thinking about how did we used

to be how this area is to work I really

just have a tram line

streetcar that ran throughout our

community and so I looked at that I

thought okay that stream was very

integral to how we actually developed so

one of the big things was the Texas

theater had 650 seats but it only had 35

parking spaces so the tram was how

people were coming into the area when we

took that away it actually created a lot

of problems

so I started attending a lot of

neighborhood meetings and we talked

about ideas on ways we can bring energy

and things back to our community and

people had a lot of different ideas and

I said I've got an idea why don't we

bring back that tram bring back the

trolley car system people said that's

crazy it's been gone for half a century

you can't bring back a tram and I knew

very little about trolleys but since I

was an IT guy and I make a website so I

went home that night and made a fake

website called the Oak Cliff Transit

Authority that looked really official

had boards and newses and histories and

I had your European trans on the front

as well and the next week our dour

newspaper came out to the story saying

dreaming the day the streetcars return

that's what Jason Roberts and other

members of the recently formed Oak Cliff

Transit Authority are hoping but there

were no other members it was just me but

I had people in my neighborhood call me

I said we got a Transit Authority this

is great well no but I'd like to see if

we can get this involved how do we get

this up and running again so it turns

out I had a guy in my neighborhood it

was a civil engineer who said I will

donate time a hundred hours pro bono to

doing a feasibility stuff a study I had

another guy in my neighborhood it was 80

years old but enough parts of this

garage to build a trolley car so we had

this interesting army of folks together

we could gather so while this is going

on we started thinking okay

this is gonna take us a long time to

bring back the trolley car what else can

we work on and after looking around the

world and seeing all these new

developments happen we saw a lot of

great things happening around bike

infrastructure and so we thought well

why don't we start getting some bike

infrastructure in our neighborhood but

the problem was when we talked about

bicycling in the US it wasn't like I saw

here in Europe where you have girls and

dresses and guys in suits riding their

old heavy bicycles when we bicycles in

Dallas and the way we promoted by

something was we'd all get in spandex

we'd start doping and we go 300 miles

like that's how we bicycle so I thought

well how do we create a group well get

together and we'll call it bike for Leo

cliff will kind of put rally around this

idea take out your old heavy swing from

the garage and we'll all go out together

to like the post office into like the

grocery store together I found out you

know as a lead

this organization when I started going

to City Hall and saying heck with this a

great idea I want to take all of our

roads I'm going to cut them in half and

put bike lanes everywhere you'll have a

lot of people that look like this that

come out and say no no you won't so I

realized okay it's gonna be really

tricky for me to get this guy to ride a

bicycle so we'll have to figure out some

other approach that we get people into

this idea so we said well why don't we

just start getting people to ride

together for fun why don't we do just

this history tours we'll go out and

we'll we'll celebrate you know following

the trail Lee Harvey Oswald cuz we

didn't have a lot to celebrate in her

neighborhood and so we got it this this

idea up we said we're gonna promote this

this ride we said meet us at the grassy

knoll because that's where you're gonna

meet for a JFK ride and we thought maybe

if we're lucky they'll be twenty people

show up because I mean who's into this

idea of writing old heavy bikes in hot

Dallas but whenever I showed up to the

grass you know and saw what was there I

saw 150 people actually they were all

excited about this idea and so this

picture is taken actually that's

crossing the bridge and going into my

neighborhood so what you don't see as me

at the front of this line looking

terrified because first of all I didn't

own a bicycle when we started bike

family Oak Cliff I just loved the idea

of having a bike culture but I also

thought I am NOT the leader of a

movement I don't need to be leading

anything I'm your IT guy but I thought

if you're passionate about something you

have everything it takes to become a

leader and everyone in our community was

way for someone to stand up and say

there's a problem there are other ways

to do things there's other things

happening around the world why don't we

try something different

and so I started trying to figure out

what are other ways we can help build

bike culture in our neighborhood or it's

easy simple way so one of the first

things I found was my kids school know

kids are riding bicycles at all none

whatsoever in fact there were no bike

racks and when I was a kid everybody

rode bikes to school so I thought well

why don't we go out and I'll get punch

cards to the kids and I said every day

if you write every day for five days for

a week I will punch the card and at the

end of a week we'll all go out get root

beer floats together the beginning of

the week we had maybe zero we had four

or five kids riding by the fifth day we

had 100 kids come out and start riding

so we realized that we could easily kind

of transform these spaces and build

these bike cultures and build cultures

based on these simple ways getting

people together and having them have fun

together all right so I was looking at

trolley cars I was working on the street

the theater and also working on bike

projects I started looking at the blocks

of buildings in my neighborhoods and

trying to

why aren't these working I realize we

did a lot to hurt these spaces over time

so first of all and in the 1970s we

changed the roads to one-way high-speed

streets we thin the sidewalks we got rid

of the landscaping and we change the

zoning from from retail to light

industrial and then we created all these

laws and rules and don't don't read all

this but just know that we had rules

that said if you want flowers on the

sidewalk there's gonna be a thousand

dollars in permitting if you wanted to

have awnings over the windows $1,000 per

awning Street cafe's is gonna be a

thousand dollars times market rate area

value times eighty-five percent times

twelve percent I have no idea what that

is and then we also had laws that if you

really want to queue in your street life

that say say people are now allowed to

gather on the sidewalk and all of those

rules were from 1941 so when I asked the

city and city staff why do we have these

rules are like we don't know they just

been on the books for a long time you

have to follow these rules we looked at

our blocks in our neighborhood we said

well obviously it's illegal for us to do

anything to make these places come back

to life so what would happen if we took

a weekend and we broke every law we

possibly could so that's what we did we

just went in and we painted our own bike

lanes we thinned the streets ourself we

added our own cafe seating we brought

our own historic lights out

we took the empty buildings we put the

businesses we always wanted to have in

our neighborhood we put bookstores and

coffee shops and flower shops and then

we printed off every one of those laws

and rules were breaking we put in the

windows and we said everybody come out

to our better block we invited our city

staff and our mayor and they came out

and they're like I don't know if we're

supposed to be here we're thinking mean

we're all gonna go to jail but the

amazing thing was people saw this and

said this is works much better we'd much

rather have places like this this makes

far more sense in our community and we

started seeing a lot of rules change

after this we started using the zoning

rules change so now we get we were no

longer a light industrial back to retail

and our in are these little pockets and

we also saw all those fees get reduced

so instead of being a thousand dollars

for cafes eating now it's 100 dollars so

it's a lot easier

I feel so that's great but you didn't

want to spring it's nice outside but

remember in Dallas it gets really hot so

I said okay let's try to get in the

middle of summer we'll take another

street in our area and we'll say it has

a similar problems I mean there's no

sidewalks on one side broken up

sidewalks on the other side there's a

pole if nothing on it

just grayness and kind of empty

buildings and thought how do we make

this cool

cool this down and make this a humane

space for people so we came out with our

neighbors in the middle of night we

brought out 42 trees but 100 bushes to

create pedestrian islands so cars would

go slower in the area and people would

feel safe crossing the streets we

painted her own crosswalks we put

bicycles on that pole because we weren't

really the bike part of town we just

kept telling people were we weren't it's

funny how it became the self-fulfilling

prophecy

and then lastly we put tables under the

trees and people came out and they would

not leave so we found that there was

this easy way for people to experience

something and have a feeling and say

this makes sense we need more places

like this these people all became into

my neighborhood became instant Urbanists

they got it all immediately and the

thing is I show this picture off and

this is the block looked like at the end

we had seen so many architects and

consultants coming to our neighborhood

giving us renderings and models and

watercolors that never got built so we

said you know we don't believe these

anymore we had rendering fatigue so the

amazing thing is we just took the time

energy it takes to draw pictures and we

just built it ourself

those aren't photoshopped trees those

are real trees those aren't photoshopped

bicycles are real bicycles from our

neighborhood real crosswalks that we

made so one of the big initiatives that

we found that was important for our

community which was kind of us kind of

before I forget people also asked me

what happens we break all those laws and

rules this is my friend Scott who helped

me identify the laws and rules were

breaking Scott's now our city council

member so I found there's a one-to-one

correlation between breaking laws and

becoming a public servant all right we

also found that was important for us to

work fast

the community has ideas they want to do

things but they start going through the

bureaucracy and then they realize it's

going to take us years and millions of

dollars so we're just going to give up

we had a group that wanted to do a dog

park and they talked to the city and

they said it's going to take us you know

do these environmental studies and wait

three years and we need lots of acreage

acreage of land and we didn't have that

the group came to me and they said well

well well what would you guys do and

we're standing across this field in our

neighborhood that was small and that was

people were throwing trash in and I said

well why don't we use this and show

people how we can turn this into a dog

park and make it like a temporary test

and they said that's great this group

they're like we'll get together well

we'll raise some money after a few

months we'll have some meetings and well

we'll try to test out a dog park and I

said well why don't we just do it next

weekend

so that's all we did we just went in and

we just copied the official city of

Dallas park signs and we made our own

park signs we found that it wasn't

actually that hard to make a dog park if

you know how to make it fence you can

make a dog park and then we started

making them more for people than less

than for dogs we found that would get

people out more so we put swings out for

kids and kiosks so you could buy dog

treats and coffee so one of the other

big concepts for us was kind of taking

the city of Dallas as mano which is

think big and kind of turning it upside

down on its head because we found

whenever we think big as a city what

that happens is that we're gonna we're

gonna go out and we're in a higher an

Italian architect who's gonna design a

150 million dollar bridge it looks like

a fish skeleton that we hope is gonna

make a hundred little things happen but

the amazing thing is the places that we

love in the world whether it's here in

Barcelona it's in London it's in New

York it's in New Orleans it's in

Johannesburg wherever it is there all

these these little blocks that we go to

all the time to have coffee shops and

flower shops and bookstores and great

sidewalks and benches and as a community

we can make 100 little things a lot

faster than that one big thing that we

hope makes a hundred little things we

found we can found a lot so these lots

of tools at the store to make this

happen so we can use white duct tape

because it looks just like the paint

that cities used to paint stripes on the

ground we can go in and we can take

trash cans from the dollar stores and we

can turn them into planners and then we

can take the scraps of graphics on the

city buses that are left over and we

make crosswalks and then we could say

look these roads are too big and too

fast we need to fix this one

intersection they'll say it's going to

take us years and all these studies and

we'll say don't worry about it we'll

take care of it on Saturday we'll fix it

ourselves and the amazing thing is now

we've gotten hired by cities assertive

as this kind of guerilla activist

movement but our cities come in look at

these and they say well this actually

works well you engage the community you

go out you try out an idea you get to

watch it you get real data and we can

apply this work afterwards people also

ask me how do you get away with breaking

all those laws and rules in broad

daylight

I thought you can break any rule you

want as long as you wear an orange vest

all right so now our work has been

sanctioned I'm gonna give an example of

a project that we have now and this is

how we do most of our work we go into a

lot of places this is an Akron Ohio that

suffers from major depopulation they

have empty buildings these wide spaces

these streets that are over built and

we're asked well how do you fix places

like this so what we have to do is we

always start with the people we he'll

find the people in the neighborhood on

the ground and we start asking who lives

here what is missing what is making this

place not working work or anymore and

what can we do to start transforming

things rapidly not in 30 years but in 30

days and so we'll make maps with the

neighborhood we'll identify all the

empty buildings the empty spaces and

this community we had Bhutanese refugees

so we said let's help let's see what

what kind of businesses they want to

start we had a lady that wanted to do a

restaurant so we started Bhutanese

restaurant we'll try to go in and and

create a cafe there's an Italian

community as well that was living there

so we'll do a cafe will create an artist

space will create an international

welcoming center because there's a

refugees moving into the neighborhood as

well and so we gather that up we start

filling up the city's official machines

with kids finger paint we go and take

white duct tape and we work with the

kids in the neighborhood and we stripe

those and then within two hours we can

have a functioning bike lane that looks

just like the ones we see on other

places around the world we can then go

in and take the empty lots these are

empty for 50 years to stick some dirt

and take some hay bales and some

volunteers and we can study kind of

classic plazas and within two hours we

can make a our own Italian Plaza in the

neighborhood we can also go in and take

the turn lanes for the cars and make

bocce ball courts we can kick the

pallets from the trash and make decks

and teach people how they can actually

build things with this with this

leftovers in the neighborhood this is an

intersection that we again we just used

finger paint and we used white duct tape

this was a bank that had been empty for

ten years and the city looked at this

and said what can we do it's it's this

is a wide street we don't know how to

make this a desirable space we just took

tires old tires the neighborhood and

paint and made a great Plaza for the

community and this is the neighborhood

actually using the space so just a few

hours before the people that were in

this bike lane were actually helping us

make this and they had no idea that they

could ever have a place like this in

their community they never believed this

was possible I thought this happens in

Portland and Austin but not in Akron

Ohio

see those things here and we can prove

this over and over again and get people

a chance to say like there is a way to

do things better and once they can show

that there's another idea there's

another way to do things they can

actually get a tow haul to make

permanent change this is a grocery store

that we worked on in Denton Texas once

it emptied there people said how do we

fix this we went in and just take old

billboard vinyl and took a scaffolding

and made it to a little Main Street so

people could show how you can actually

use this space make it small again so

people can kind of start a lot of little

businesses in the area and now you go to

our website better block org and you can

actually see a lot of the information

that we have that we do in cities all

over and you can take these ideas and

use them in your own cities so we have

recipes this is our green bike-lane

recipe you can download we have plaza

recipes we've got bocce court recipes we

also have gotten pretty heavily involved

with digital fabrication so I've gone

back into like my IT roots this is our

office in our neighborhood we started

realizing there has to be more tools we

can use to help people transform their

communities and we learned well first of

all kids know how to model things they

model things through games and through

free software online they can modeled

our cities we can teach them how to do

this and start making 3d models and with

those 3d models that can make

enhancements as well but we also realize

we can take this equipment called CNC

routers which we have it in our office

which is basically just imagine a giant

printer for wood you can cut out these

shapes and when you pick up these shapes

you actually make these interesting

things when he puzzle piece them

together this was inspired by a group

called wiki house that was designing

houses but you can actually cut out of

these with these machines with just

plywood and assemble these things with

no glue screws or nails so we created a

library called wiki block that's on our

website you can actually go to this and

download all of these designs for free

they're open source to make public space

furniture so we've got all this is just

some of the seating that you can

download simple benches that you can you

can bake simple chairs what happens is

you put the sheet of wood on the machine

you you download the file you haven't

start cutting you can go out have a cup

of coffee and come back 45 minutes later

you can actually start assembling a cafe

seating set so there's no glue screw or

nails in that this is a coffee kiosk

that we've designed that people can

assemble so they can start fixing the

public spaces and create kiosk and

create merchants in these areas that can

take I have eyes in the spaces and take

care of the benches and

in the trash this is the coffee shop

being used their tables and chairs this

is a benches with kids in st. Paul

Minnesota that we teach them how to fix

their parks this is a bus stop we design

easy to assemble for a community this is

in Tallahassee Florida we made a green

house with community garden boxes you

can download and this is uh we just did

this actually two weeks ago this is our

stadium seating you can download so you

can actually create theaters in your

area in your neighborhood and then we'll

go to kids schools and we'll teach them

how they can download the files and

modify them themselves this is an in our

in our city and in South Dallas this is

teaching the kids how they take these

files and build their own benches and

fix their own courtyards this is a

community in Ohio teaching them how they

can make cafe seating and this is then

using those spaces and in Austin we

actually there was a child that was hit

by a car because the streets were too

wide and too fast that we designed

actually a series of ball bouts and

pedestrian islands that the neighborhood

could take and download and install on

the street to Shaw you can fix it and so

the community could see these things

working again and that better block

project that I started you know back in

2010 really just I want to have a coffee

shop and a bike lane and my neighborhood

started getting really popular started

going all around the country because we

open-source the idea to look any people

starting to ask me can i how do I do

this is it look I work on computers for

a living so I can't help but here's how

you can you can do this in your own

community and then the next year start

going around the world it went all the

way from Melbourne Australia to Tehran

Iran when some people the people in

Tehran Iran called me asked about

breaking laws I was like I don't know

about breaking laws and Tehran Iran if

the stakes might be a little higher all

right I'm gonna end with a streetcar

store you see what happened with this so

this is my little team and we had a

couple other members as well on board

visiting Portland looking at their

trolley car systems and trying to figure

out how do you do this how do you bring

them back they hit brought back their

tram it took them 15 years they said

it's gonna take a long time it's gonna

be hard but it's gonna be worth it so we

gather our team together we went back to

our home and we called the city of

Dallas and said hey we want to start

applying some for some grants to see if

we can bring back our tram and they

laughed and they said okay cliff Transit

Authority apply for all the grants you

want

we found one grant called the tiger

grant the first year they ever did it

we had a point three percent chance of

getting any money whatsoever but what

happened was we won millions of dollars

and instead of taking 15 years to bring

back that tram we brought it back in

five years and all I did was build a

website so I tell people it's amazing

what you can do you could take these is

what a dedicated group of amateurs can

do in a community because we don't know

what we're not supposed to not be able

to do so we can transform places rapidly

so if you go to this neighbor you go

along now this trolley car line along

the spine of this dotted throughout this

you'll see cranes again in our

neighborhood you'll see dense

development coming back in these areas

that were empty fields before like this

we made it we started today finding out

other ways to make things happen quickly

so we started a restaurant with our

friends and neighbors as well we started

getting a lot of tension for the work I

got to a lecture at Harvard I got to

have dinner with Michelle Obama I

decided to run for a US Congress at a

free April we got in the Venice Biennale

so we thought what can stop us we found

these great ways to make lots of things

happen in our community quick but the

one thing that completely stopped me was

in 2012 I was diagnosed with stage 3

cancer and then everything stopped at

that point I were thinking what's all

this for I'm not gonna get to see my

kids grow up I'm not going to get to you

know ride this trolley car we help bring

back I'm not going to get to you know

test out these trials businesses that

we're creating and when I was at my

sickest and needed all kinds of help the

neighbors I'd gather in our community to

help do these better blocks started

knocking on my door and started taking

my daughter to go shopping they started

taking my son to go fishing and then

when I was at my sickest they started

devout doing these campaigns to help

build a better Jason to fix me so I tell

people what I got out of all of this

work with better blocks was not street

cars not businesses not anything what I

got was a neighborhood and that's why

we're doing all of the work we're doing

all the smart city stuff that you hear

all the things that are happening

whether it's involved of policy or law

or or or or economics it's all about

creating great neighborhoods so we can

feel safe so we can thrive so our kids

can do well so we can age in place so we

can have our parents feel like they're

taking care of before I forget in 2014 I

was diagnosed as being cancer-free so

I'll be just fine

thank you thank you all right like three

quick rules on how you make things

happen now so because we did a lot in a

short amount of time in our community so

first of all I said you have to show up

if you don't show up he willing as

opposed to everything so I'd again I

join every club everything the Kiwanis

Lions Clubs Chambers of Commerce --is

second of all you've got to give your

idea name so we created this great

designs and we had bike-friendly Oak

Cliff and we had Oak Cliff transit

authority so people could take these

ideas and they could actually help us

broadcast them so they took this and

said we're part of this great group in

our neighborhood and then lastly and

probably most importantly was we said we

call it blackmailing ourselves into

action we set these short dates and then

when we start publishing what we're

gonna do so what that does is it forces

us to make and make things happen in

fact we don't say don't do a long day

don't say I'm gonna do something in 12

months because you're gonna come up with

every worst-case scenario to talk

yourself out of doing something we'll

set 90-day time frames and we'll spend

the first two weeks making the poster

and making the poster as good as we

possibly can they will publish it

everywhere all announced hey we're gonna

do this better block project and people

say that's great how are you gonna pull

that off and we're like I have no idea

but the amazing thing is people will

start contacting me in my neighborhood

and say look I know how to work with

textiles and somebody else will call and

say I know how to work with wood and

somebody else will call and say I know

how to work with food and we start

assembling and fixing neighborhoods

based on the people that live in the

communities and the skills that they

have and with those three things I found

you can pretty much fix everything thank

you

[Applause]

thank you so much Jason we have got time

for a couple of questions if you'd be up

for answering them do you want to take a

seat over here just so we're not all

quickly stood at the side and that truly

was inspirational some people have

gotten contact over the app and one of

the ones they're sort of as you sort of

mentioned during your talk they're

worried about what happens when you do

actually break the law so anna says did

you ever get fine for breaking the laws

or have failed attempts of no one coming

and how did you handle that no

fortunately knock on wood I've not been

thrown in jail what we found in a lot of

the neighborhoods that we work in

they're so distressed and they're and

they're suffering so bad that often

times like the law and the police forces

were coming in saying look we're dealing

with gunfire and major like violence in

the area like if you're out here

painting a bike lane like that's low on

our priority list and when the community

started saying like hey this is working

and making places better and people are

coming together

the politicians started getting behind

it because it became a populist movement

as well so I mean I if you tried it in

affluent neighborhood maybe you're right

I know I speak and I speak all over the

world and like I know when I speak in

Germany the Germans are the most scared

of like this idea of breaking law so I

totally get that but but yeah that's

just you know and we've been sanctioned

now so we actually get asked to go in

and we'll do these projects and we'll

have the city come out and say now

should tell us every rule in law we're

breaking now so we can identify what

needs to change good wave identify and

what does need change if we've got any

questions that you just like to ask

through the old-fashioned method of

putting your hand up yes lady here no I

think there is a mic that you need to

head down to sorry you innocently put

your hand up there and I've made you

move yeah just stand there thank you

hi Jason thank you for your inspiring

talk um has the municipality change his

behavior in the sense that when you find

some roles that have to change for sure

is the government or the urban planning

who has to change at the end half day I

will say the plans that you saw like the

Ford doll

and dodge on 360 plants have been

adopted but the public areas take longer

to change the private realm changes

faster the businesses can kind of come

in and things like that

I found the public realm too in order to

get that to change you have to have a

continued pressure from an activist on

the outside otherwise and I guess but

the politicians want to make these

changes as well oftentimes but as soon

as city staff gets like somebody comes

out says they're opposed everyone gets

really nervous and so if the activists

aren't coming up and saying we're going

to continue fighting and having your

back on this then you'll see these these

initiatives fade and drop so it's it's

it's tricky it requires this constant

kind of touchpoints in pushing the ball

forward another question from the app

says great projects about how to ensure

the maintenance and security of these

places you create if you don't have the

city's buy-in a great question well

first of all and these projects are all

done temporarily so we'll just go in

like on a weekend and transform the

space and then we'll take the everything

out afterwards so the goal for our

artwork really is to identify like what

is wrong what is the capacity in the

community to actually do things and then

what are options for us to make change

so won't get into the idea of

sustainability and maintenance after we

started identifying who are the

champions and therefore liaised like we

put the trees on the street we have

people in the neighborhood come up say I

love landscaping I would love to take

care of this and we can identify a way

to maintain those things and someone

else will say I love the bike

infrastructure or a bike group and so we

start working with them to identify you

know methods for sustainability and

maintaining those things so it's it's an

ongoing process any other questions from

the floor that we can end with notice

that everything well on that night I'd

like to say thank you very much as a

brilliant talk and really really

inspiring round of applause for Jason

everyone thank you

[Applause]