

In the tradition of the Better Block Project, the newly formed open source Better Block PDX has come together to create inviting and interactive places that challenge the notion that streets are only for cars. Join us as we gather people to experience their city in attractive, engaging new ways long thought impossible.

Portland has parks and plazas, public spaces that have seating options and other forms of programming. But our city doesn't have small parks like those cropping up in cities everywhere. It's also unfortunate that the City caved to the Portland Business Alliance and decided to not allow any street seats in the central urban core.

Our rightful places of common interaction and mingling – where we have historically laughed, shopped, conversed, and observed one another – have been demoted to highways choked with dangerous speeding steel machines.

For centuries, the through-ways in between city buildings were dominated by human beings, by horse carts, by rickshaws, by bicycles. Then came cars, and with them the communal dimensions of our streetlife were crushed beyond repair.

This hijacking of the commons for the convenience of the auto-centrally advantaged simply cannot continue alongside honest aspirations of 'sustainable cities'. Such buzzwords uttered by trend-savvy politicians fail to ring true when they're stomped on by big-industry interests like the Portland Business Alliance. When our elected officials and highly funded nonprofit groups fail to push the ball forward where it concerns livable streets, the work of liberating our avenues and boulevards falls upon citizens weary of waiting for change from the

top.

It's clear that grander schemes need to be implemented to enact radical change to the technology of the street. Ultimately, the aim is to configure these kind of street spaces as permanent, not just as a novelty. New York City has seen tremendous success in doing just that. It's time for the people of Portland to take street seats and parklet-ing to the next level.

It is a fundamental right of a city's citizens, as in any democracy, to demonstrate that which they deem necessary for the health of the community. When that comes to public space, the need is urgent. We can no longer wait for the 'capital C' city to suddenly realize that streets as they are now do a disservice – we need to reclaim the streets for people. What we are seeing through actions like this is a rise of insurgent urbanism, not only as a force of awareness and rebellion, but as a demonstration to the 'powers-that-be' of what can be done when people creatively make the city into their own.

Stop by, enjoy Better Block Project, play some games, listen to some music, read, chat, make new friends. Most of all – come see what's possible when we start designing and utilizing urban space first and foremost for human beings.

See you in the streets!

betterblockpdx.wordpress.com