

OUTPOST

FAQ

What is the *Outpost*?

Outpost is a prototype created by the Studio for Urban Projects for the Market Street Prototyping Festival. *Outpost* serves the Central Market district, home to one of San Francisco's densest neighborhoods, and with some of the least access to open space and other public amenities. Conceived of as both architecture and event, *Outpost* will pilot 72 hours of programming that provokes new ways to interact with nature, enhance the life of the street, and connect to active transportation. Housed in a simple prefabricated structure—inspired by the space frame systems of the 1960s—*Outpost* is designed to be easily fabricated, modified, and replicated. Over three days it will be a venue for planting workshops, wildlife tours, film screenings, bicycle pit stops as well as offer a place to play, eat, talk, and relax.

Why did you name it *Outpost*?

An outpost implies a place beyond the margins, a frontier where there is freedom to experiment with approaches that are not yet a part of cultural norms. We titled our piece to evoke a space in which we may prototype new ways of relating to Market Street. Like the outposts of early settlements, it is a place that serves multiple purposes. Our project asks questions about how we integrate nature in the city, what we can do to make our streets more humane and vibrant public spaces, and how we can make our transit corridors more about people and less about the private automobile. By providing a temporary alternative and a forum for discussion, we hope to provoke new ways of thinking about how we conceive of our city streets.

Who is the Studio for Urban Projects?

We are an interdisciplinary design collaborative that works at the intersection of architecture, urbanism, art, and social activism. Our research-based projects aim to provoke change by re-framing perceptions of the city and physically transforming the built environment. Currently our projects are focused on using tactical urbanism to rethink our city streets and make our cities more ecologically resilient. We are based in SOMA.

What is your involvement with the Urban Prototyping Festival?

The Studio for Urban Projects first became involved with Market Street directly in 2011 when SPUR invited us to create an exhibition on Market Street in advance of its redesign, then scheduled for 2015. The project was entitled *Reclaim Market Street!* and was an exhibition, series of urban interventions, and a publication. The project created a series of street interventions staged over three months that engaged the public in changing the street. We chalked up bike lanes, redesigned sharrows, crated a playground, and invited the public for talks, tours and film screenings. Rather than talking about what they hoped Market Street would become, (through traditional community engagement) they were invited to participate! These interventions were framed by an exhibition and publication highlighting the many ways in which cities, nationally and internationally, are engaged in re-imagining their public spaces through experimental urban planning.

Based on our past work, we were selected by the San Francisco Planning Department and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts to act as one of five Design Captains for the Market Street Prototyping Festival. We have mentored the creation of 10 projects in the Central Market district, as well as created a “keystone” installation entitled *Outpost*.

How did you choose your collaborators?

We chose long-standing neighborhood arts organizations and businesses in the Central Market District including the Luggage Store, the Prelinger Library and Warm Planet Bikes. We collaborated with advocacy groups—the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition and Nature in the City who promote active transportation, livable streets, and biodiversity in our city. Finally, we worked with groups who could bring new experiences to the street including the Exploratorium Cinema Arts Program and the Children in Nature Collaborative.

What is the purpose/function of the festival?

The Festival aims to pilot ideas that could be integrated into the longer term plans for Market Street. It reworks the existing community design process to engage the public actively in what Market Street can become.

What are the desired outcomes of your project?

We aim to provoke participation and civic dialog around what our city streets are for. We hope that by inviting the public to engage in new ways of enacting the street, that we will begin to invent a new future for Market Street.

What is the national relevance of this work?

San Francisco is a city where the tactics of temporary urbanism have been forged from the ground up. Here, as it is in so many cities where there is not always a strong vision from the top, and the planning process is cumbersome, tactical urbanism becomes a crucial path to inserting new models for rethinking our urban landscape. However small, they become stepping stones that lead to more substantial change, especially as they are embraced by mid-level “guerrilla bureaucrats” who turn these tactics into city-wide strategies—helping them to scale up.