

City of Everett

Building community connections through creative signage and art

In June 2020, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) launched the [Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program](#) to assist municipalities in meeting their individual needs for safe outdoor recreation, commerce, community activities, and mobility in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant provides technical and funding assistance to help Massachusetts cities and towns conceive, design, and implement tactical changes to curbs, streets and parking areas in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce. Some municipalities have also incorporated creative elements to further enhance their new spaces; the case study below highlights one such creative activation. For more case studies and examples, please visit www.mapc.org/resource-library/shared-streets/

Overview

Key features:

- Multi-lingual pavement markings near redesigned bus stops that communicate public health guidelines.
- A mural, paved path, and new trees to revitalize an underused and neglected alleyway in a commercial area.

Goals:

- Communicate public health messaging in a clear, creative, and culturally appropriate way, especially in locations susceptible to crowding.
- Revitalize an underused space to create a new and more comfortable connection through a commercial area.

Context

Since 2016, the City of Everett has been working on small- and large-scale projects to “Reimagine Broadway,” the city’s main thoroughfare that provides connections to local businesses and neighborhoods, as well as to downtown Boston. The cornerstone of this multi-part project has been its Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) work, including dedicated bus lanes, level boarding, and transit signal priority.

In September 2020, the City received \$150,000 from MassDOT’s Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program to implement peak-hour northbound bus lanes on approximately a half mile of Broadway and a quarter mile of Main Street to alleviate delays for bus passengers. The City, in collaboration with MassDOT, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP), and local community partners wanted to

improve service reliability and mitigate crowding conditions quickly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and prioritizing the bus was one way to do that.

Process

Pavement Markings

The initial idea to incorporate a Shared Streets component with the City of Everett's bus lane project came towards the end of the planning process for the bus improvements. After the City received funding for bus lane improvements, MassDOT reached out to encourage them to apply for the Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program, which would provide additional funding to help tie the project together and build community buy-in.

In October 2020, Everett was awarded an additional MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces grant of \$20,000 to implement shared/slow streets and mobility hubs along Broadway and intersecting side streets. The grant also included funding for a road diet on Ferry Street through a lane reduction and repurposing of road space to outdoor dining and gathering spaces.

In conjunction with the bus lane improvement process, the City installed colorful pavement markings at bus stops. The markings, designed by Adrian Gill of Ad Hoc Industries, featured a resonant public health message, "The Distance of Care," in three languages frequently spoken by Everett residents. Each marker was eight feet long, with measurements to show where people should stand, sit, or walk to maintain safe distances. Gill, who had been working with ITDP, Neighborways Design, and the City for several years, built on existing relationships to work with two local organizations, the Haitian Community Center and La Comunidad, to ensure that the language was correct on both the Haitian Creole and Spanish versions of the pavement markings.

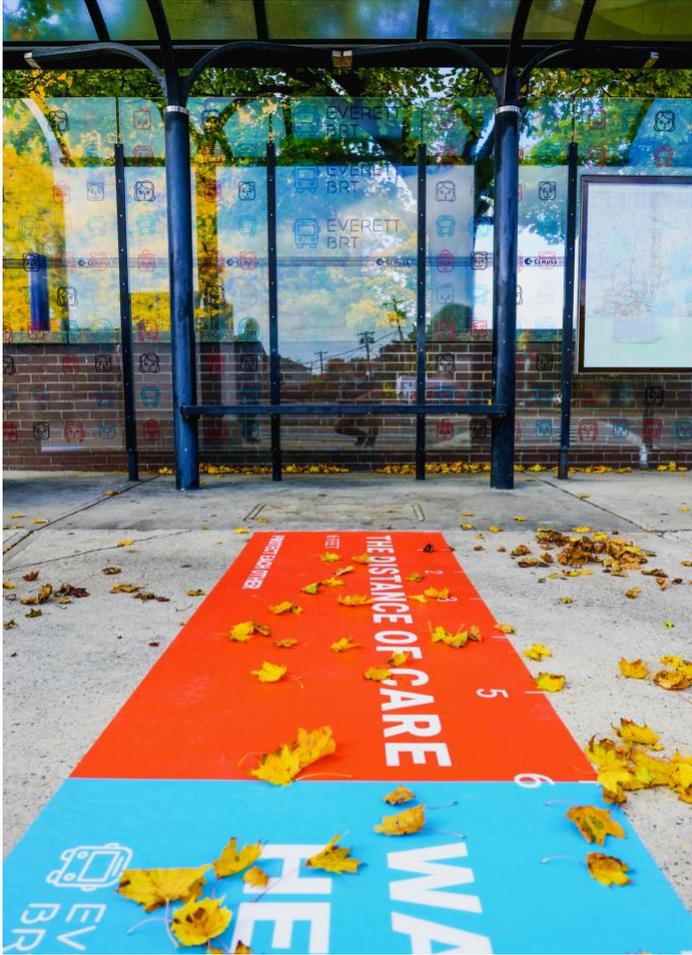


Image Credit: Ad Hoc Industries, [Everett BRT Project](#)



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Although the initial public response to these projects during the construction phase was mixed, feedback has been much more positive since residents have had a chance to use these new spaces. For example, 56% of responses to an [EverettBRT survey](#) reported that the new markings at the bus stops on Broadway reduced crowding and/or helped people to stand or walk at safe physical distances, and the same percentage of respondents would like to see more Shared Streets and Spaces projects.

Alleyway Mural

Concurrent with the pavement markings and other bus lane and street improvements, the City also partnered with Neighborways Design to beautify a neglected alleyway, [Beautification Way](#), near the intersection of Ferry Street and Broadway. An old mural had peeled and worn away along a 750 square foot concrete retaining wall, and trash littered the ground.



Beautification Way, 2019

Image Credit: Neighborways Design, [Beautification Way](#)

Prior to the installation of the mural, the City had worked with property managers of the adjacent shopping complex to plant eight magnolia trees in spring 2020. A path was paved along the alleyway to create a new connection for people to walk, bike, and roll. This path connected to a paved parking lot used by local employees of the shopping center.



Rendering of Beautification Way once completed

Image Credit: Neighborways Design, [Beautification Way](#)

Spurred by Mayor Carlo DeMaria's desire to refresh the space and make it more welcoming for pedestrians, the City worked with Neighborways Design, Everett Public Schools Art Coordinator Amanda Gil, and Everett High School art teacher Briana Pierce to develop and implement a community visioning process. Neighborways then worked with local artists Sury Chavez, Liz LaManche, and Jessica Mortell to lay out the mural design and coordinated a paint day that brought together community partners, volunteers, teachers, and Everett High School students to contribute to the mural in October 2020.



Image Credit: Neighborways Design, [Beautification Way](#)



Image Credit: Neighborways Design, [Beautification Way](#)

Timeline

- March 2020: City of Everett discusses installation of a new bus lane with MassDOT and the MBTA.
- September 2020: Everett receives \$150,000 to implement peak-hour northbound bus-lanes on approximately a half mile of Broadway and a quarter mile of Main Street to alleviate delays for bus passengers.
- September 2020: Construction begins on northbound bus lane.
- October 2020: Everett is awarded an additional Shared Streets and Spaces grant of \$20,000 and completes construction on the northbound bus lane. Over the course of the month, the City coordinates a Paint Day with partners to create a mural on Beautification Way and installs pavement markings with public health messaging near bus stops.

Partners

These projects were part of Reimagine Broadway, a holistic effort coordinated through EverettBRT, one of multiple city-based BRT campaigns as part of a larger BostonBRT initiative through ITDP and with support from the Barr Foundation.

- Everett Department of Planning and Development (grant management and reporting)
- Ad Hoc Industries (designer, pavement markings)
- Everett Haitian Community Center (community partner, pavement markings)
- La Comunidad (community partner, pavement markings)
- Neighborways Design (project facilitator, alleyway mural)
- Everett Public Schools (community partner, alleyway mural)

Funding Sources

- Grant Funds: Everett received **\$150,000** from the Shared Streets and Spaces grant program for expansion of peak hour bus lanes. An additional **\$20,000** from the Shared Streets and Spaces program supported the purchase of signs, paint, and other capital costs.
- Other Funds: The Barr Foundation (via ITDP) funded Ad Hoc Industries' work, which included pavement markings at bus stops as well as public relations materials and events.
- Municipal Funds: A small amount of City operating funds supported both the pavement markings and alleyway mural projects.

Tips for Success and Lessons Learned

Advice for other municipalities:

- **Political buy-in is key.** Throughout the planning process, money wasn't the main barrier; political buy-in was the key factor for project success. Keep in mind that municipal officials and the public likely won't remember how much things cost, but they will remember what projects looked like and how community members responded.
- **Partner with local groups.** Engage stakeholders who represent the diversity of your community. Ensure that messaging, signage, and other communication strategies reflect the cultures and languages present in your city or town.
- **Projects can be multi-faceted.** A transportation project can also include elements of public art and public health. In spaces where many people will be traveling, consider how these corridors can facilitate multiple uses and opportunities for enjoyment.

Our takeaways:

- **Advance equity and quality of life goals.** Everett's long-term goals of increasing affordable housing, improving the quality and efficiency of public transit, and enhancing the experience of the Broadway corridor were foundational to the projects they championed.
- **Build on previous successes.** Everett's dedicated bus lane pilot in 2016 was the first in the region and received a lot of positive press. As the City has continued to improve the transportation experience along Broadway, they have also taken the opportunity to incorporate supporting features like public art, public health messaging, outdoor dining structures, and bikeshare stations.
- **Be opportunistic.** The COVID-19 pandemic unleashed new sources of funding, which gave cities and towns the ability to incorporate new and creative elements to their transportation and mobility projects.

Future Vision and Projects

The City of Everett continues to partner with Neighborways Design for additional projects, including a mural completed in summer 2020 and another mural in the works for summer 2021. These projects are expected to be implemented in conjunction with Shared Streets and Spaces funding. The City and their partners also continue to work on additional improvements along key corridors to make bus service more efficient and reliable. Mobility hubs, shared streets, parklets, and more placemaking initiatives are all in the works for Everett.

For more information, visit the [Everett BRT website](#) or contact [Jay Monty](#), Transportation Planner for the City of Everett.