

HOW TO CREATE A [FREESPACE]



First Edition

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[freespace]
freespace.io

Written and designed in San Francisco



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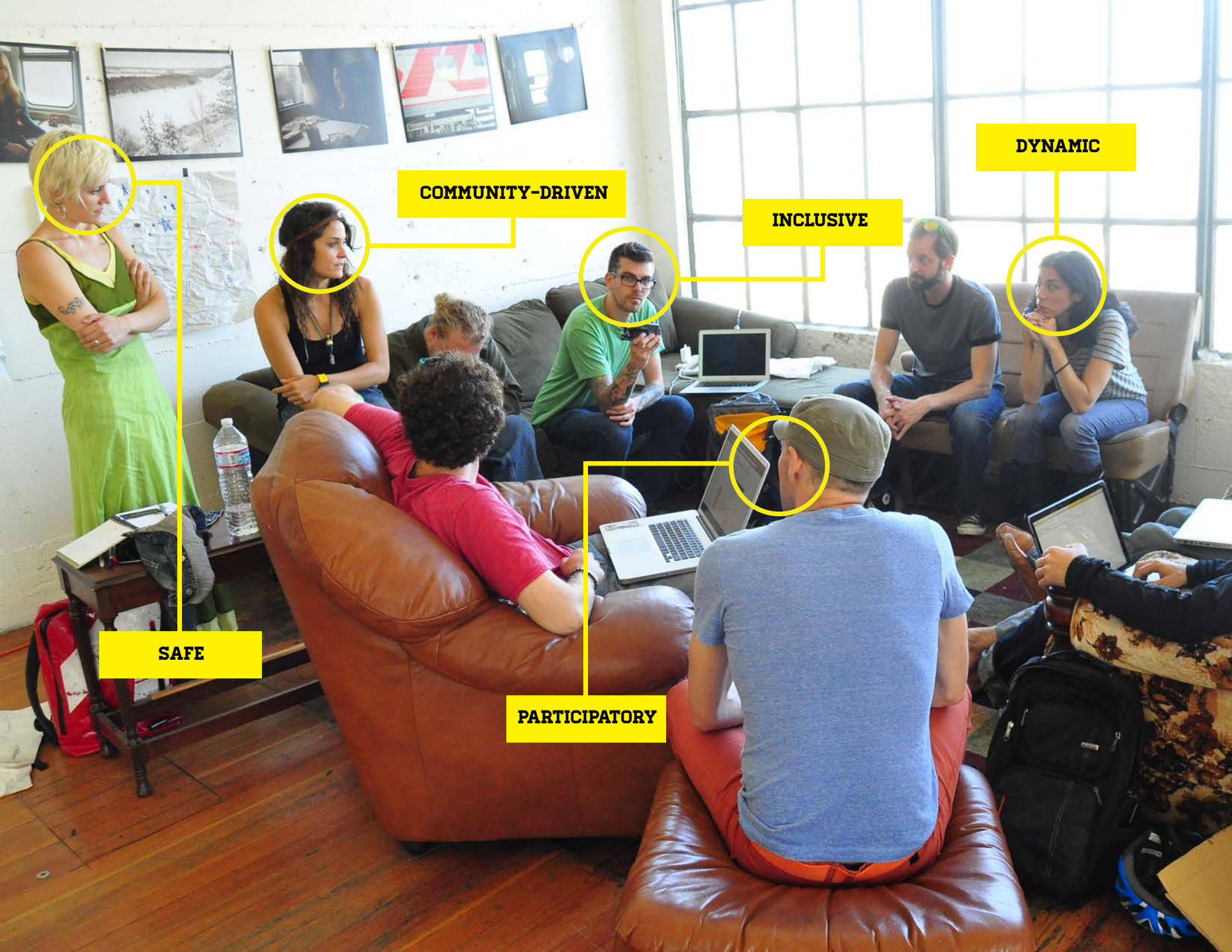
A [FREESPACE] IS...

BEFORE I DIE,

I WANT TO

Make a positive change in the world
INCREASE COLLECTING CHANCES ONLINE
EXPERIENCE
BE PRESENT
JAPAN THE SOUTH PACIFIC
Love, Create, Teach
Contribute to work that touches the lives of millions of people in a positive way
Be free to be who I want to be
Keep it real
...Live
not be scared of death
Help start another [space]





COMMUNITY-DRIVEN

INCLUSIVE

DYNAMIC

SAFE

PARTICIPATORY

THE VALUE OF [FREESPACE]

FOR COMMUNITY:

A [freespace] is free, and thus inclusive to people from all different backgrounds, cultures, and lifestyles.

A [freespace] provides people with the space and permission to pursue their passions and feed off of similar energy.

FOR PROPERTY OWNERS:

A [freespace] adds activity to any space, increasing foot traffic and highlighting potential uses for long-term tenants.

FOR CITY GOVERNMENT:

A [freespace] provides a new way for citizens to shape their cities.

KEY INGREDIENTS

The first [freespace] came to life in San Francisco, USA in June 2013 in a previously vacant 14,000 square foot warehouse in the Central Market neighborhood. The first month's lease was originally obtained for a dollar and a core team activated the space to create a community-driven place where people could come to share and pursue their passions.

The key ingredients and best practices for staging a [freespace] are described here, though how your [freespace] comes to life and the impact it makes will be entirely unique to your space, team and community.



SPACE



Tip: If you are unable to secure an entire building, think about other options such as having a smaller pop-up [freespace] in a gallery or storefront, empty lots, or parks.

A physical space is key to hosting a [freespace]. Having a physical location for the community to gather and a safe space to create is extremely important to fostering collaboration.

How to find a space

1. Reach out to your networks to see if anyone knows of a vacant or underutilized space that could be a [freespace]. A physical space that is allowed to be blank canvas for art and programming is ideal.
2. If tapping into your networks yields no buildings, take a visit to your local Planning or Zoning office to find vacant or underutilized spaces. Find champions in your local government that will support your [freespace].
3. Find the information for the building broker or owner. This is usually listed on the exterior of the building.
4. Contact them and tell them what you want to do, point to [freespace] San Francisco as proving the concept that activating a space brings unbridled attention, publicity, and new people to the space and community.

How to pay for the space

Obtaining a space that would otherwise receive no attention can help you pay low (or no) rent. If there would be no other tenant in the space and it would continue to sit vacant or idle, then you can present the case that you are adding extreme value and thus should not pay much for the space.

If this doesn't work, you can attempt to crowdfund the money for the space or secure grants and other funding. Keep in mind that on top of rent, there are the necessary costs such as utilities and cleaning supplies.

STRUCTURE



“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” -African proverb

Once you have a space find some other folks who are passionate about the idea of [freespace]. Learn who else is doing good work in the neighborhood. Talk to local nonprofits, merchant associations, and businesses. Bring some awesome friends on board. Within reason, the more people you have on board, the more networks, ideas, and awesomeness will be brought to the space.

Hold regular meetings and invite all of these people. These people will begin to form the team that is your [freespace] core team. This team will help maintain the general operations of the building and ensure that the space maintains a safe and vibrant atmosphere.

A non-traditional organizational structure such as a do-ocracy will best motivate and retain a volunteer team. In a do-ocracy, individuals choose roles and tasks for themselves and execute them. Responsibilities attach to people who do the work, rather than one or two “elected” people. Members are not stifled because they have the authority within their areas of specialization, and in coordination with other members, to make decisions and to take actions affecting the future of the organization. This structure allows members to respond and make decisions in the moment to the changes that will inevitably take place as your [freespace] comes to life.

It is also useful to have smaller committees of folks that focus on certain aspects of the space. For example, you might want to create one team that focuses on web and social media presence. Find a collaborator who is excited to help with this aspect of the space, and let that person recruit others. Smaller committees within the larger team will allow everyone to best utilize their passion and skills.

Create a website where you can post information about your [freespace] including things like the hours your [freespace] will be open, a form to submit events, and a form to recruit volunteers to help out.



PROGRAMMING



Tip: It's ok (and fun!) to have multiple events a day, just be mindful of what else is going on in your space. Silent film screening and tap dancing don't go so well together. However, a book club and then potluck are a nice match.

Events are one of the biggest draws for exposing people to [freespace]. Event organizers bring in their networks, who get inspired to organize their own events and bring in more people. It's also a great low-barrier way to fuel human collision and provide a way for people with common interests to meet each other.

If you, as a [freespace] organizer, have specific event ideas or themes, put those up on your calendar as early as possible, create Facebook event invites for them, and cross post to local blogs.

And then open it up to your community! What do they want to do, teach, make, celebrate? It's important to have a few guidelines up on your website letting folks know what type of event will/won't be considered. It is helpful to create an online submission form to provide people a simple way to submit their events, and to templatize the event format for the core team. Support the event hosts by posting the events on your [freespace] website and social media platforms.

Build in flexibility and don't be wedded to your own event ideas. Giving your community ownership is a huge factor in building up your support. Part of that comes from letting them propose and run events.

Make sure you have enough staff or volunteers on hand for bigger events, especially if you have a sign-in process, and know that you'll probably have lots of clean-up to do.

And thank your volunteers and event hosts! They are making freespace what it is - let them know you appreciate them and what they've brought to the space.

IMPACT

Now you have created an amazing creative, collaborative space with murals, workshops, concerts. But what happens once you leave your [freespace]? Creating scalable, sustainable projects that can live outside of the temporary space will help you prove the impact that this model can achieve.

Identify leaders in your community that want to start or develop projects that will improve your neighborhood. Help them build their team by promoting their project within the physical [freespace] and online. Host events to match the project leaders with people who have the skills to help them grow their project.

PROJECTS

GARDEN

System: urban agriculture
Success: parking lot → garden
Strategy: plant + beautify!

Team:
Nima
Kerry

TOOLS Needed:

BIKE
SHARE

System: transportation, sharing economy
Success: ID other spaces for bikes
Strategy:

Team:
Woody
Mary Kay

TOOLS Needed:
trained volunteers
bike cleaning, P

#

System: trash, beautification
Success: clean neighborhood

Team:
Callie

tools needed:



CASE STUDY: [FREESPACE] SF

June + July 2013

14,000 square foot vacant warehouse

San Francisco's Central Market neighborhood

\$1 rent in June, crowdfunded \$25,000 for rent + expenses in July

Do-ocracy volunteer-run organizational structure

6,000 people passed through the doors

209 events

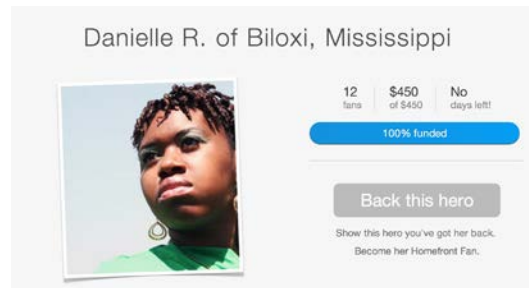
PROJECTS LAUNCHED

LEARNING SHELTER



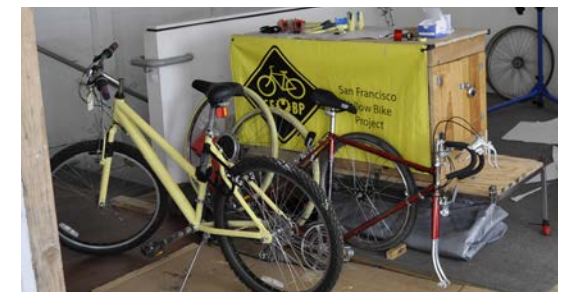
Artist/maker classroom that offers training courses for homeless individuals

HOMEFRONT FAN



Grassroots group addressing women veterans unemployment

YELLOW BIKE PROJECT LIBRARY




Free bike share program

WORKSHEET

- We are committed to creating a space that is dynamic, inclusive, community-driven, safe, and participatory where people can come together to create change in their lives, their communities, and their world
- We have a physical space that be can be transformed into a [freespace]
- We have the means to provide access to the space for free or to anyone who wants to participate
- We have an online presence to interact with our community, receive event submissions, and promote our [freespace]
- We have a community of people who want to make [freespace] come to life with their events, workshops, and time
- We have a core group of people that want to maintain the space and ensure [freespace] is amazing
- We have the desire to make an impact in our immediate community with [freespace] and the projects that come from it





**“NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL
GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL,
COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN
CHANGE THE WORLD; INDEED,
IT’S THE ONLY THING THAT
EVER HAS.”**

-MARGARET MEAD



**START YOUR [FREESPACE] TODAY!
FIND MORE INFO AT FREESPACE.IO**