



ACTIVE ALLEYS TOOLKIT

A Guide to Activating and Enlivening Your Alleyways



Fred Carl Jr.
SMALL TOWN CENTER



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
FRED CARL, JR. SMALL TOWN CENTER

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Fred Carl Jr. Small Town Center

smalltowncenter.msstate.edu

Mississippi State University

P.O. Box AQ

Mississippi State, MS 39762

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Getting Started	3
Identify partners and forms a team	3
Establish baseline and begin planning	3
Engage the community	3
DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION	5
Ground	6
Walls	8
Ceiling	10
Utilities	12
Programming	14
CASE STUDIES	17
Thomasville, GA	18
Cincinnati, OH	19
Amory, MS	20
Austin, TX	21
FUNDING RESOURCES	23

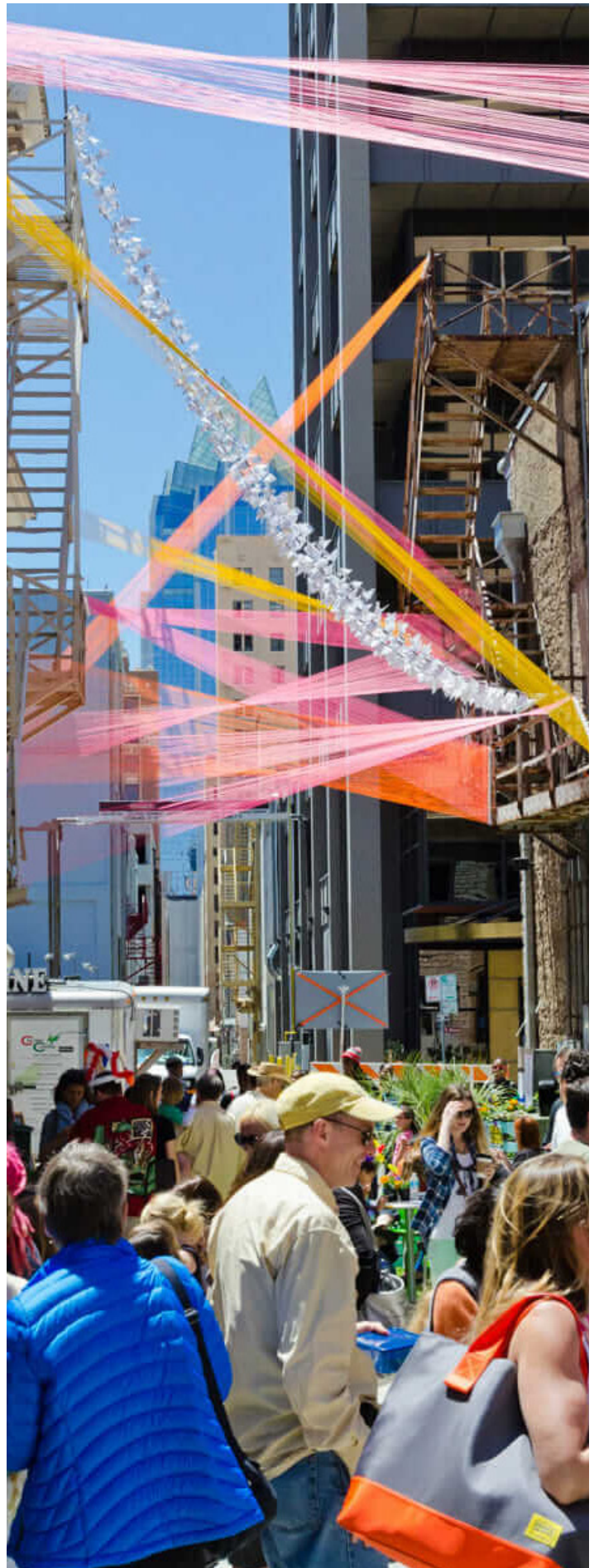


INTRODUCTION

Alleys are some of our cities' most underutilized public spaces. An alleyway is defined as a narrow passageway between or behind buildings - these spaces have traditionally been used for utilities or service purposes, but as our downtowns change so do the uses of our alleys. Now, alleys present an opportunity for activating our downtowns and creating unique public spaces.

There are many benefits to addressing our alleys as public spaces and turning them into pocket parks in our downtowns. Firstly, cleaning up and illuminating alleys makes these corridors - and, as a result, entire downtowns - safer and more accessible. Secondly, alleys provide a unique and interesting canvas for art, street furniture, and other landscape elements. When they are activated properly, visitors to downtown will be drawn to these spaces out of curiosity and stay longer to enjoy the space!

This guide is intended to provide a starting point for activating downtown alleys. Within this toolkit, you'll find a myriad of inspirational examples of alleyway pocket parks, as well as an easy-to-follow checklist of essential tasks to do when starting your alley park project. Finally, a list of financial resources to get the budget started is also included here. Use this guide as a jumping off point to create the perfect active alley for your community!



GETTING STARTED

1. Identify partners and form a team

Potential partners include:

- City departments or officials
- Adjacent building owners, tenants, residents, etc.
- Local arts organizations
- Local artisans and artists
- Your Main Street organization
- Design professional(s)

2. Establish baseline and begin planning

Identify existing assets: What assets does your town already have?

Pick a location: What alleyway would be suitable for activation? Where is a new pocket park needed? What alley would be best used if activated?

Determine needed amenities: What amenities are needed in your town? What events or amenities could a new alleyway pocket park host? What are your goals for the alley?

3. Engage the community

Stakeholder meetings: Receive all permissions from building owners and city officials. Ensure those who live and/or work near the alley are on board.

Community survey: Ask the community for their input on potential locations, amenities, design, and programming.

Design charettes: Partner with designers, artists, and the community to compile a selection of ideas before settling on a final design.



DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

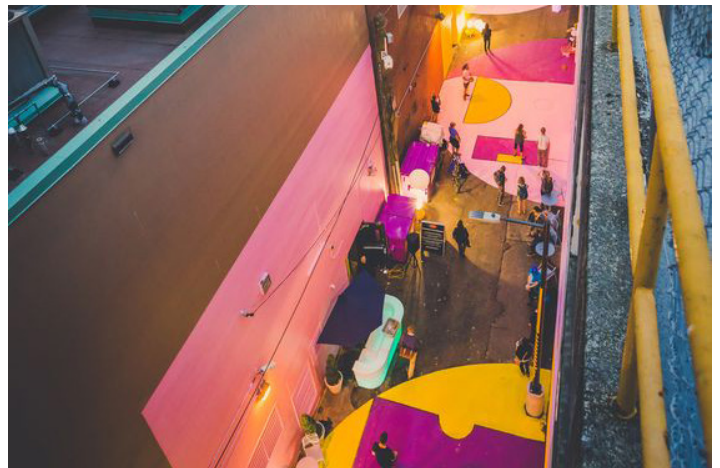
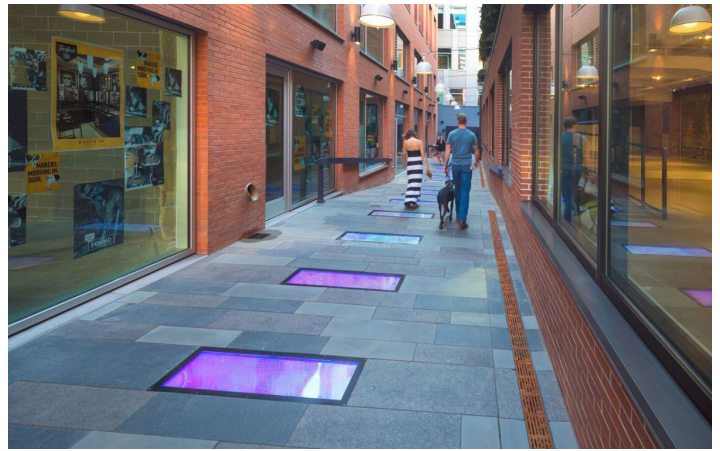
When formulating a design, keep in mind the four main “canvases” of an alley: the ground, the walls, the ceiling, and the utilities. The following section breaks down each of these and gives examples for how to enliven each plane.

GROUND

The ground or “floor” of the alley provides an opportunity for unique paving, lighting, and art. When designing the ground plane, consider integrating a collection of the following elements:

- Turf
- Stamped concrete
- Paint
- Lighting
- Vegetation
- Planters/planting beds
- Seating
- Water features



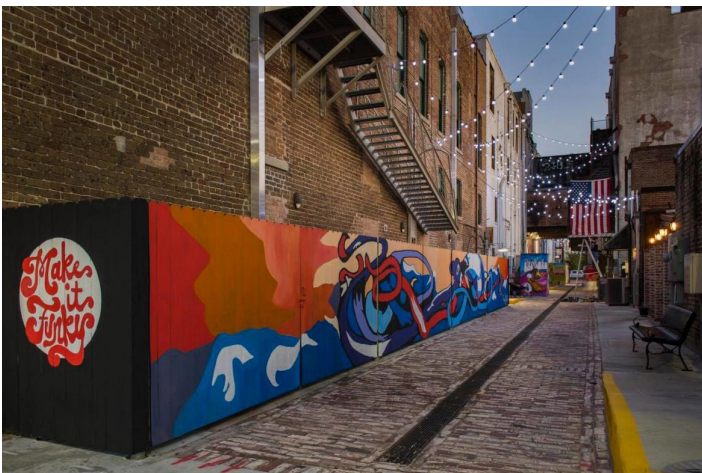
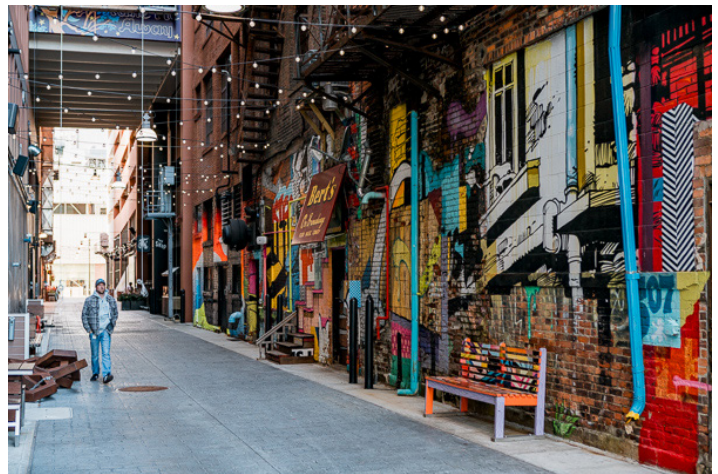
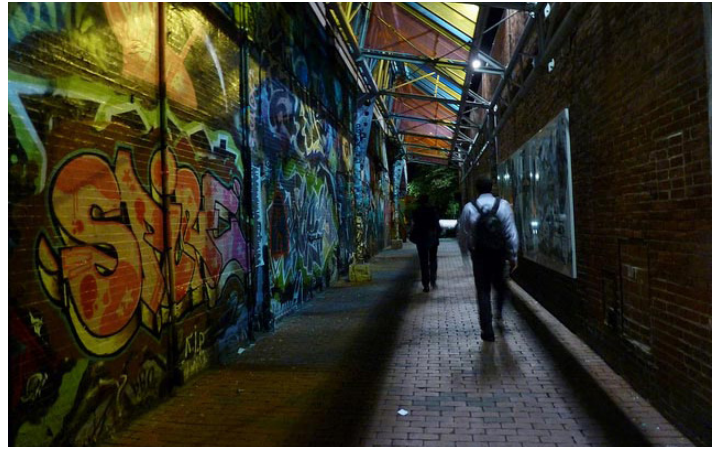


WALLS

The walls are the vertical plane of an alley. This includes both the existing alley walls as well as any additional vertical structures that exist or could be added to the sides of the alley. When designing the wall plane, consider integrating a collection of the following elements:

- Art (murals, sculpture, etc.)
- Green walls
- Lighting (LED strips, sconces, light bars, etc.)



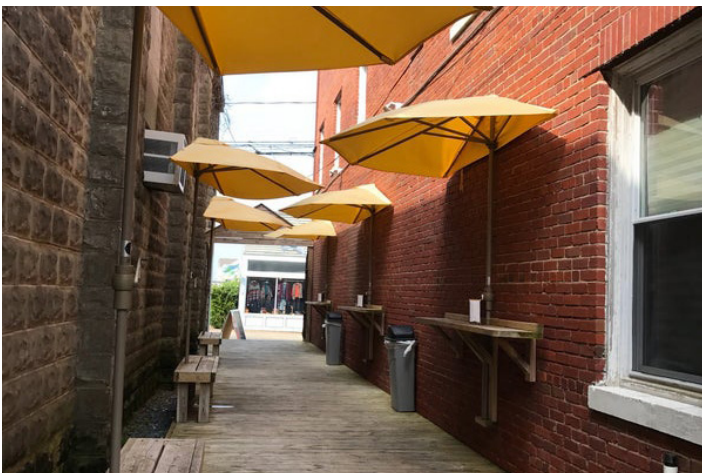


CEILING

The ceiling is the overhead plane of an alley - in typical alleys, the ceiling is open to the sky. However, adding overhead structures can make alleys feel safer and add interest. When designing the ceiling plane, consider integrating a collection of the following elements:

- Shade sails
- String lighting
- Lanterns
- Hanging objects (books, umbrellas, etc.)
- Overhead sculpture





UTILITIES

Utilities - often regarded as an eyesore - can stand alone as their own canvas within an alley. Use utilities as an opportunity for additional art and whimsy, and use art as a way of screening utilities from view.





PROGRAMMING

Programming is essential to the life of an alleyway-turned-park. Designing static programming into an alley - such as games or interactive art - is a great way to draw in passersby. Additionally, hosting events in alleyway parks can bring out the community in droves and get out the word about your town's new amenity. Consider potential programming - such as markets or concerts - as you think about the design of your alley.



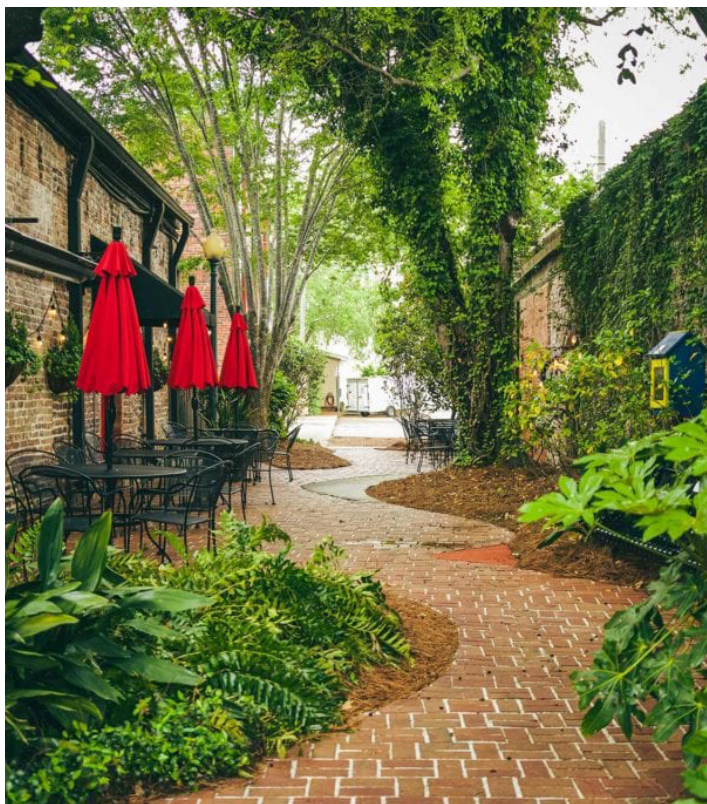




CASE STUDIES

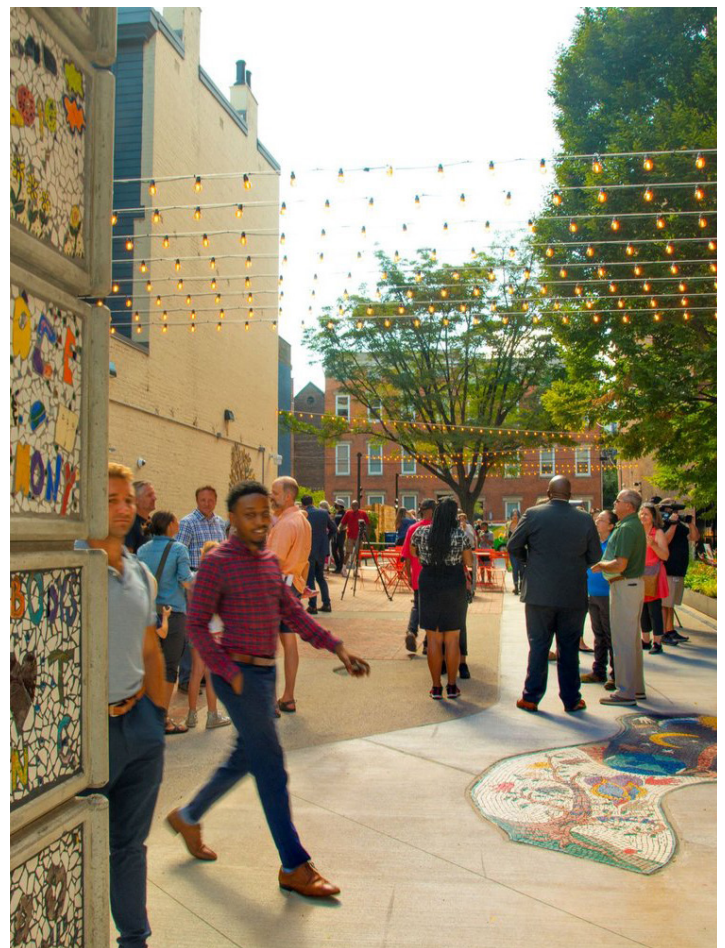
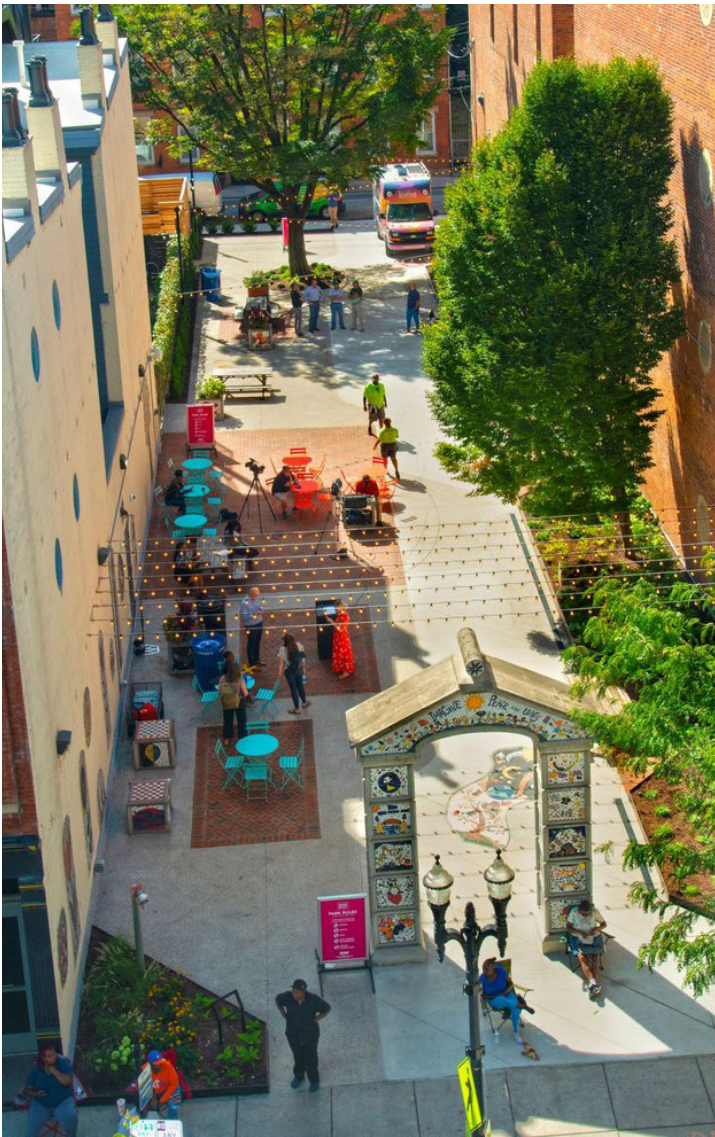
Jonah's Fish & Grits/Liam's Alley

Thomasville, GA



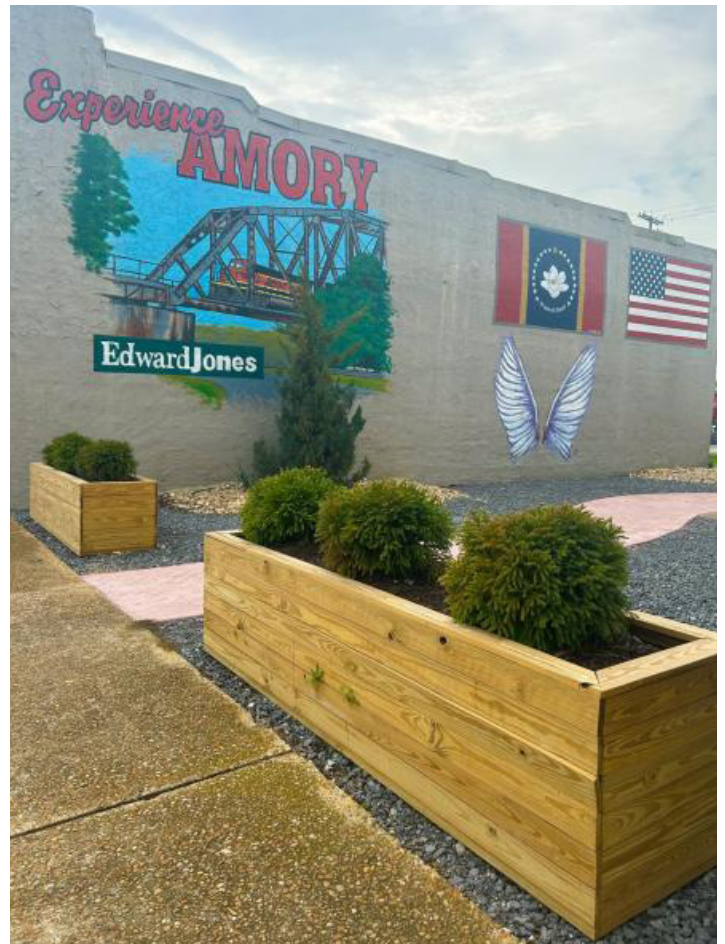
Imagination Alley

Cincinnati, OH



Vinegar Bend Pocket Park

Amory, MS

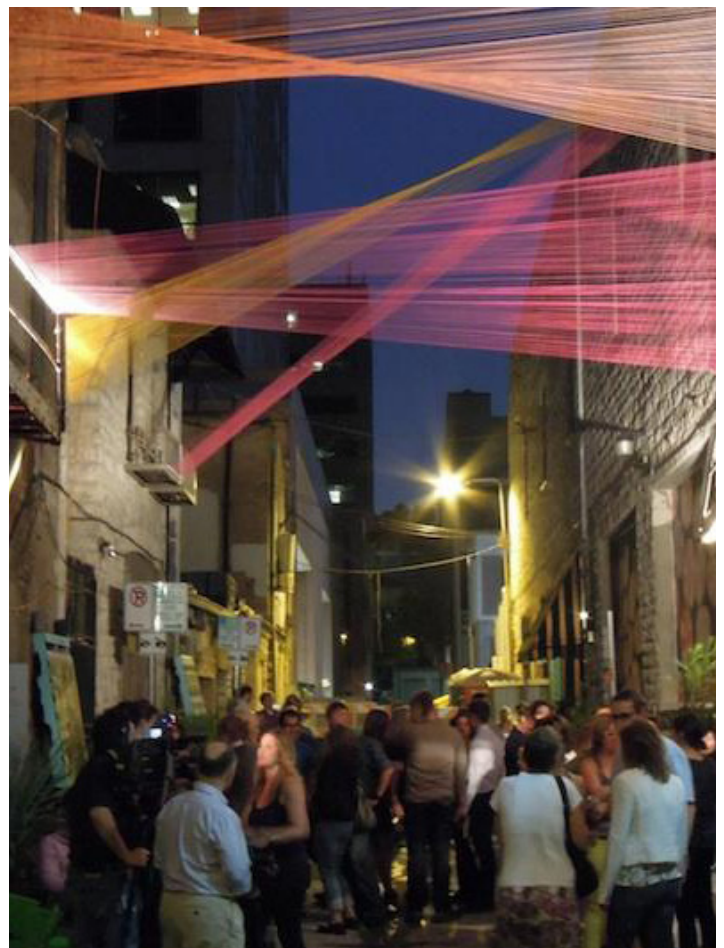


West Point Downtown Alley
West Point, MS



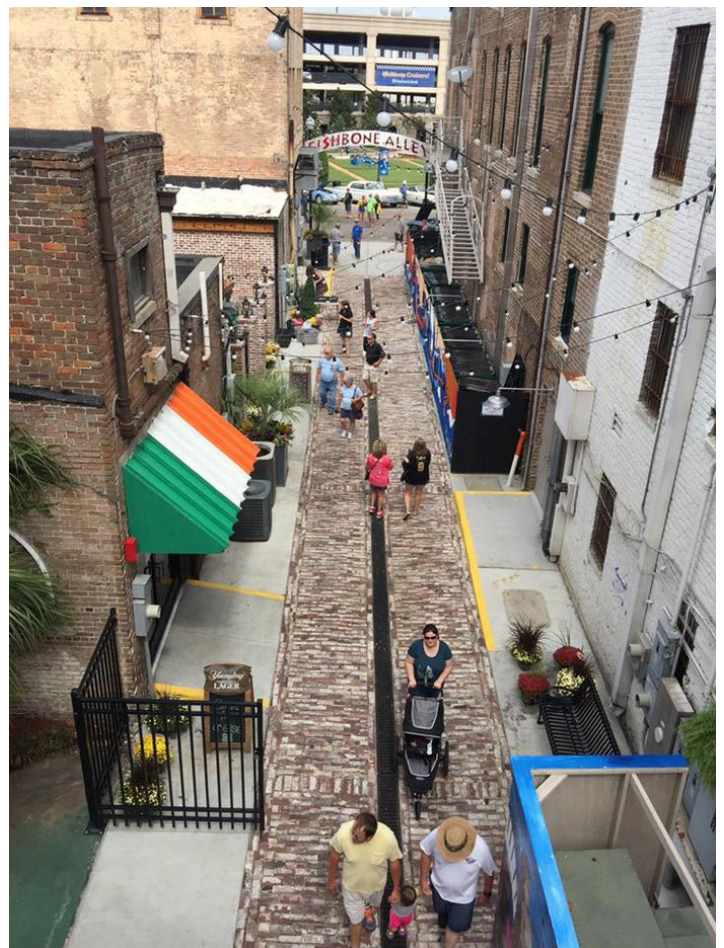
20ft WIDE Alley

Austin, TX

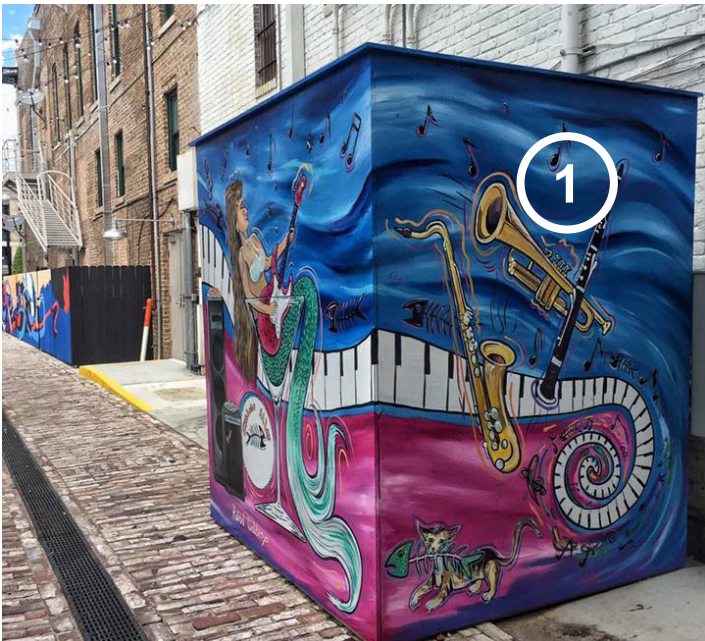
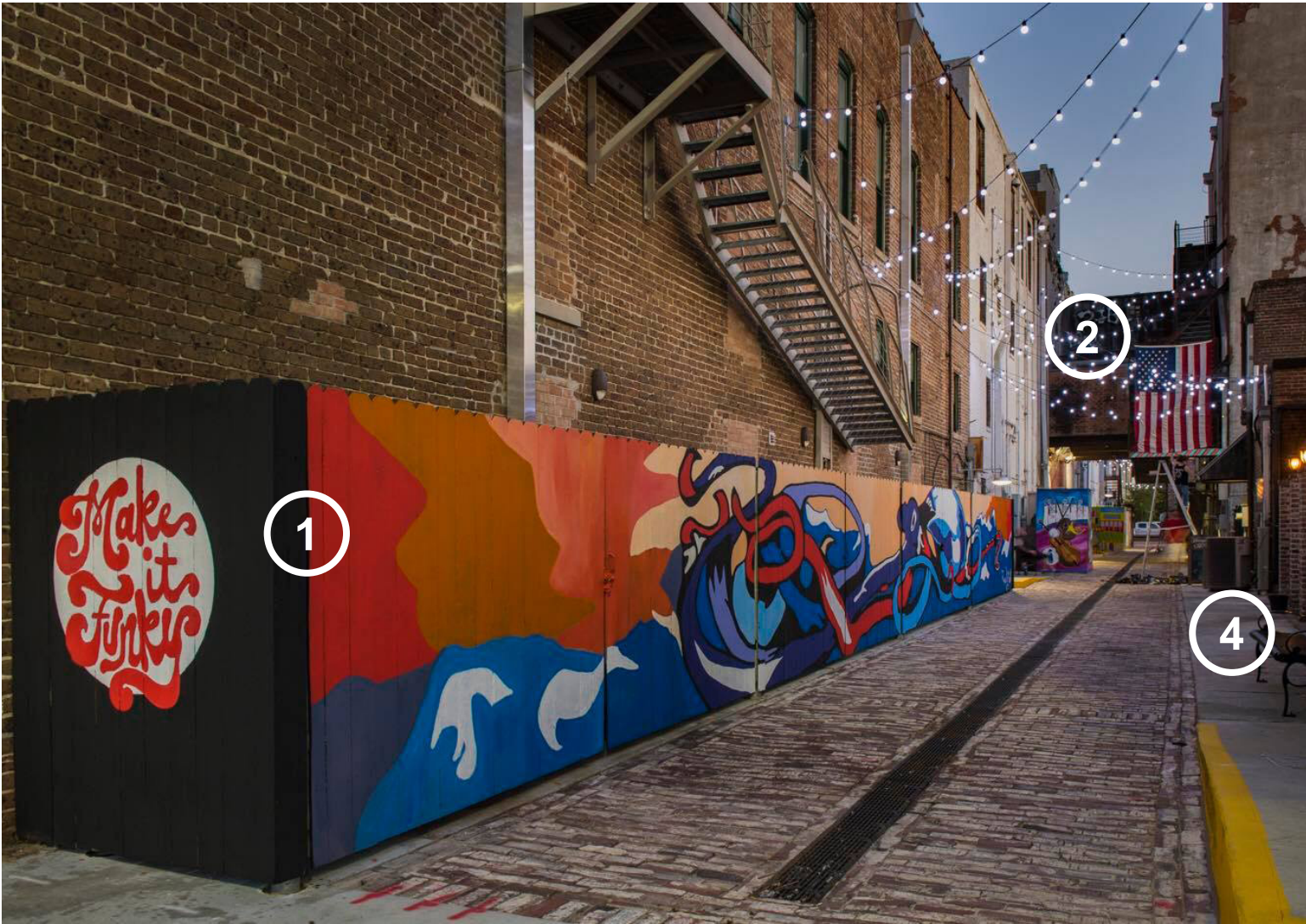


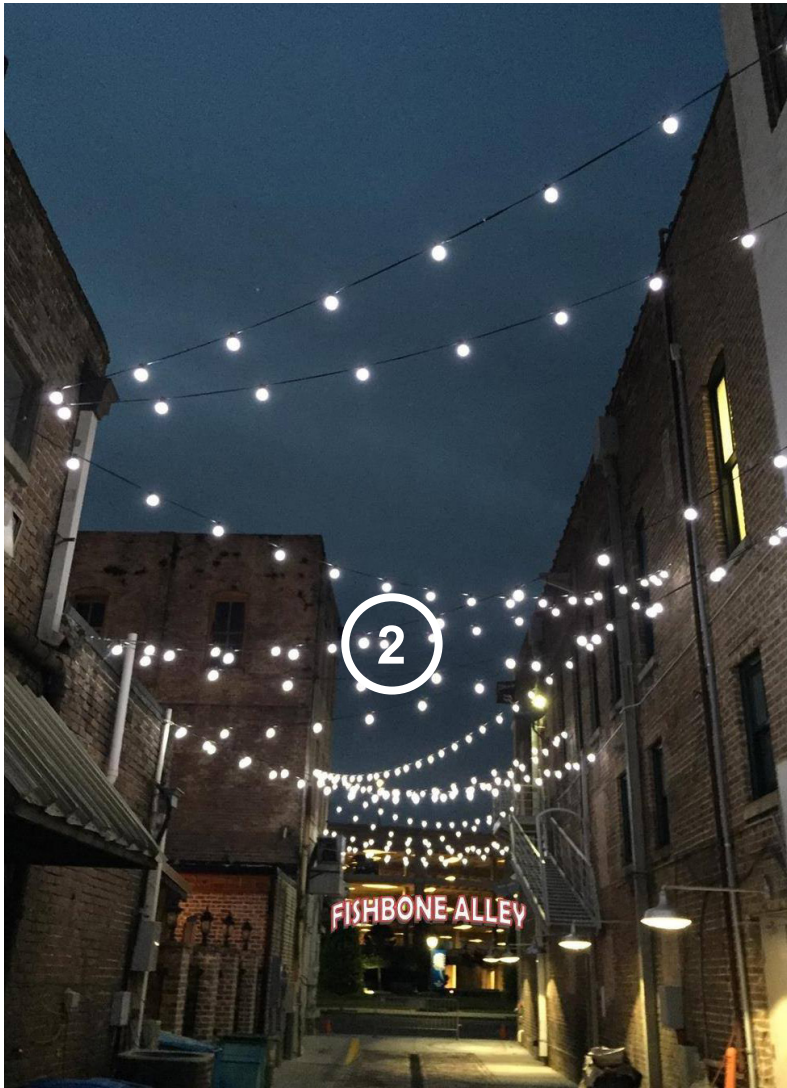
Fishbone Alley

Gulfport, MS



Fishbone Alley
Estimated Budget:





1. PAINT

~ \$27 - \$36 (per gal.)



2. LIGHTING

~ \$17 - \$50



3. SIGNAGE

~ \$80 - \$200



4. SEATING

~ \$119 - \$148





FUNDING RESOURCES

Mississippi Arts Commission Grants

[***https://arts.ms.gov/grants/***](https://arts.ms.gov/grants/)

National Endowment for the Arts Grants

[see: "Our Town" and "Grant for Art Projects"]

[***https://www.arts.gov/grants***](https://www.arts.gov/grants)

South Arts Community & Organization Grants

[***https://www.southarts.org/community-organization-grants***](https://www.southarts.org/community-organization-grants)

Mississippi Main Street Community Development Grants

[***https://www.msmainstreet.com/services***](https://www.msmainstreet.com/services)

Percent-for-Art Program

[***https://artsandplanning.mapc.org/percent-for-art/***](https://artsandplanning.mapc.org/percent-for-art/)

AARP Community Challenge

[***https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/***](https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/)

America Walks Community Change Grant

[***https://americawalks.org/programs/community-change-grants/***](https://americawalks.org/programs/community-change-grants/)

Project for Public Spaces Community Placemaking Grants

[***https://www.pps.org/community-placemaking-grants***](https://www.pps.org/community-placemaking-grants)



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