Formalize 5
While enhancing a single park or street is worthwhile, the broader goal for mayors should be institutionalizing people-centered approaches in government and civic society. Cities can be more vibrant, equitable, and livable when measuring and interviewing the people who are most affected by projects is a built-in component of the planning process. Such an approach is not only possible, but has proved highly successful at the city scale.

**Tactics**

Implement a culture of people-centered approaches

Use people-centered metrics and tactics to cultivate a higher quality of life for all residents. When people are made visible in the data gathering of every city agency, the built environment becomes more livable and accommodating to the human scale.

Find a method of institutionalizing change

In an era of tactical urbanism, cities run the risk of shortchanging citizens by ending projects in the trial stage. Public-realm improvements must be more substantially invested in and made permanent. Early successes during the “Do” stage of short-term projects must be leveraged into medium- and long-term policies and developments to ultimately move from evolution to formalization.
CASE STUDY

Copenhagen

Making People Count—The “Metropolis for People” Project
What began as Danish urbanist Jan Gehl’s research on how people move through and spend time in Copenhagen has evolved into a method for informing city policy. For over 20 years, the City of Copenhagen has applied evidence-based approaches to strategic planning and investments based on his methodologies.

Beginning with the Bicycle Account in 1996, city leaders observed behavior and conducted extensive surveys to directly inform investment in cycling campaigns and infrastructure. The results, published every other year, do more than demonstrate the city’s status as a global leader in bicycle mobility; they also illustrate municipal transparency and build trust between citizens and decision-makers. This form of evidence-based documentation captured quantitative data, like the number of children or elderly cycling, in addition to qualitative data, like the perception of safety and the motivation for cycling among citizens.

The cycle account became a formal component of the city’s mobility infrastructure investment framework and began to spread to other aspects of strategic planning. In 2010, the city launched a five-year campaign to make Copenhagen the most livable city in the world. The project, entitled “Metropolis for People,” included simple yet tangible and ambitious metrics for urban quality of life. The city again committed to quantitative and qualitative targets to put people first on its agenda. In 2015, Copenhagen met its goal for people spending 20% more time in public spaces (in relation to 2010), which had been a unifying ambition across city agencies ranging from parks, transportation, planning, and economic development. Another target was for 80% of residents to feel satisfied with the quality of the public realm. Such qualitative measurements would drive investment in public life and benefit as broad a cross-section of residents as possible.

The city formalized the yearly collection of this data into a “public life account” that was inspired by the bicycle account in terms of format and approach. Every year between 2010 and 2015, the city published a wide range of people-centered data.

To collect the data necessary to transparently and effectively
monitor the city’s progress toward the 2015 targets, the city established an office to annually “count” public life. A team of city employees measured people moving through and spending time in public spaces as well as monitored the demographics in these spaces and the activities of the different groups. Collecting qualitative data began as a way to inform the Metropolis for People campaign but quickly spread to many more city projects. Today, public-life metrics are a key performance indicator—along with typical project targets like “on time and on budget”—in determining a project’s success. In this way, a whole culture of putting people first spread across departments, with the evaluation of public life now institutionalized across the city.