



Better Block Foundation to help people build more vibrant, connected communities with \$775,000 from Knight Foundation

New nonprofit will give communities the know-how and tools to rapidly transform underutilized public spaces and blocks

Dallas—Jan. 13, 2016— [Better Block Foundation](#), a new nonprofit focused on creating tools and resources to help individuals and organizations shape their neighborhoods into vibrant, walkable and livable communities will launch with \$775,000 from the [John S. and James L. Knight Foundation](#).

Jason Roberts, co-founder of The Better Block Project and White House “Champion of Change” award recipient, is leading the effort. Roberts will build on his work with Team Better Block, a company he founded in 2010, which works with cities to create quick, inexpensive, short-term changes to revitalize streets and public spaces. The goal is to encourage people to rethink these spaces and inspire them to contribute; the changes can also advance new policies and investments to introduce more permanent revitalization efforts.

Until now Team Better Block has had to work directly with cities, developers, local volunteers and others to implement Better Block projects. The Better Block Foundation will help to expand this work by providing people and communities with the resources and guidance they need to create their own, independent projects. The nonprofit will also train emerging leaders to create wide impact in their communities – beyond one project or neighborhood.

“As a result of over a hundred Better Block projects that have taken place around the world, we’ve rapidly seen new businesses formed, cultural districts created, zoning laws and ordinances changed, and community investment increased,” said Roberts. “We’ve already begun publishing online recipes on building bike lanes, plazas, and pop-up businesses for anyone to access. This support gives us an opportunity to create more of these tools, enhance what we’ve already learned and strengthen the permanency of this work.”

Tools created by Better Block Foundation will help people quickly implement new ideas to transform underused spaces, that may be dominated by traffic or vacant buildings, into community meeting hubs where people can connect and add to neighborhood life. The nonprofit will also cultivate emerging leaders through study tours and mentorship programs, and provide opportunities to network with urban planning experts, architects and civic innovators from around the world. It will organize planning sessions and neighborhood meetings to share information with residents, stakeholders, and governments to get feedback and encourage people to participate in shaping their communities.

“We’re excited to help Jason and his team take their work to the next level. Jason’s work has inspired so many emerging civic innovators in our cities. Better Block Foundation will help turn inspiration into action,” said Benjamin de la Pena, Knight Foundation director of community and national strategy.

Knight support builds on previous investments involving Team Better Block including the [Akron Better Block project](#), Saint Paul’s [WikiBlocks](#), and Akron [Airbnb cultural hub](#). These efforts have



centered on engaging communities and fostering civic leadership through short-term changes developed by and for neighborhood residents using local resources.

“We all see amazing things happening around the world, but feel, as we’re not trained urban planners or architects, that those changes are out of reach,” said Roberts. “How does the school teacher, the accountant, the computer technician, or the fireman become a changemaker in their neighborhood? Better Block has been the starting point for many of these community members to develop vibrant, walkable blocks that become neighborhood destinations, without being formally trained to do so. Better Block Foundation will now help grow this community of civic innovators.”

Support for Better Block Foundation forms one part of Knight Foundation’s efforts to invest in civic innovators who help cities attract and keep talented people, expand economic opportunity and create a culture of engagement. The foundation believes that designing places to achieve these goals is crucial to city success.

For more information on Better Block Foundation visit: betterblock.org.

About Better Block Foundation

Better Block Foundation is a nonprofit that teaches and applies placemaking principles to citizens on the neighborhood level. By creating the tools necessary to educate and equip residents, stakeholders and government leaders, Better Block Foundation seeks to enable them to reshape their communities into vibrant, sustainable places. For more information, visit betterblock.org.

About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Knight Foundation supports transformational ideas that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster the arts. We believe that democracy thrives when people and communities are informed and engaged. For more, visit knightfoundation.org.