# Slow Streets Mayors' Playbook

Your guide to organizing a Slow Street and creating great public spaces in your neighborhood

Published: February 1st, 2022



Slow Street Mayors,

Thank you. I wanted to take the opportunity to champion your hard work and dedication to serving your community. You've taken the initiative to be a part of something larger than yourself.

Our Slow Streets program has transformed the way San Franciscans gather safely during COVID, and it has encouraged civic leaders to rethink the way we use our streets. It's because of people like you – people who are willing to volunteer their time, brainpower, and creativity – that San Francisco remains a city of opportunity and innovation. Your dedication to organize and pave the way for meaningful change in our community is admirable, and I applaud you.

So, I wanted to provide you with some tips as you carry out your mayoral duties for Slow Streets.

- 1. Have fun. Organizing can be challenging but take it all in stride. Slow Streets represent an exciting new step for San Francisco, and the work can be exciting, too. Whether you're planning an event, figuring out your social media strategy, or landscaping your street, have fun with it. You're meeting your neighbors and working toward a common goal. Don't let setbacks or long days distract you from all the good that's happening along the way.
- 2. **Set the tone.** As leaders in San Francisco's Slow Streets initiative, people will look to you to understand how the program works and how things are going. There will always be unforeseen challenges and hurdles to overcome perhaps, you're having issues with your signage or receiving regular complaints about something you've already addressed. Remember to stay calm and promote the things that are working well and going right. Your positive attitude and leadership style set the tone for other Slow Street supporters.
- 3. Be open. San Francisco is lucky to have so many engaged neighbors who actively participate in making their community more vibrant and beautiful. That said, remember that the Slow Streets program is new and may be unfamiliar to some. Take the time to listen to one another especially those who disagree with you. Try your best to understand concerns; think creatively about how to address them. Collaborate with your neighbors; brainstorm solutions together.

The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized just how critical open space is to our health and happiness – both here in San Francisco and around the world. San Francisco Slow Streets are a new chance to create, adapt, and beautify shared, open spaces in your neighborhoods. The future of this program is exciting, and it will need your continued leadership.

Above all, please know that you are making a difference. I thank you for your dedication to the Slow Streets initiative, and your commitment to making San Francisco a better place for all who live here.

Sincerely,

Drew Becher

CEO, SF Parks Alliance

#### Welcome!

The SF Parks Alliance *Slow Streets Mayors' Playbook* is your guide to organizing and creating great public spaces in San Francisco neighborhoods like yours. This playbook is your invitation - your call to action - your toolbox - your roadmap!

You may be new to Slow Streets and you're interested in learning where to start. This playbook has tips for building local support and structuring your Slow Streets team. The playbook also has ideas for how to distinguish your Slow street by building a brand and engaging on social media.

For some, your Slow Street is on its way and you need help beautifying your Slow Street and planning engaging events with your neighbors.

For others, your Slow Street is more established and you're interested in making it stick. We have suggestions on how to engage major community stakeholders like schools and businesses, engaging City departments, and applying for SF Parks Alliance sponsorship.

Above all, this playbook is your excuse to get out in the street, get to know your neighbors, and find enjoyable, engaging, and creative new ways to experience your public spaces.

One final word before we get started: This playbook is a living document. It will change and grow and improve, just as our efforts on Slow Streets grow and improve. Check back often to see new tips from your fellow Slow Streets Mayors on their success stories and lessons learned.

If you take one thing from this playbook, take initiative!

## Now, let's get started...

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#### What are Slow Streets?

The Slow Streets program, which was introduced by SFMTA in April 2020, was designed to limit through traffic on certain residential streets, allowing them to be used as fun, accessible, shared and gathering spaces.



Photo Credit: Joshua Singh

The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized a greater need for more open and shared spaces across the city, and the Slow Streets program was an excellent response to that need. Across the city, nearly thirty corridors have been implemented as SFMTA-approved Slow Streets, featuring signage and barricades that minimize vehicle traffic, prioritize other forms of travel, and enable residents and visitors to engage in neighborhood activities. Neighborhood activities range from Halloween parades to block parties to art walks. San Franciscans have really made Slow Streets their own.

#### These streets include:

- 12th Avenue from Lincoln Way to Noriega Street
- **20th Avenue** from Ortega to Judah streets
- 20th Street from Lexington Street to Potrero Avenue
- 23rd Avenue from Lake to Cabrillo streets
- 41st Avenue from Lincoln Way to Vicente Street
- Arkansas from 23rd to 17th streets
- Arlington from Roanoke to Randall streets
- Cabrillo Street from 45th to 25th avenues
- Chenery Street from Burnside Avenue to Lippard Avenue
- Clay Street from Arguello Boulevard to Steiner Street
- Golden Gate Avenue from Masonic Avenue to Broderick Street
- Hearst Avenue from Ridgewood Avenue to Baden Street
- **Kirkham Street** from 7th Ave to Great Highway
- Lake Street from 28th to Second avenues
- Lapu Lapu/Rizal/Tandang Sora/Bonafacio/Mabini streets from Folsom to Harrison streets
- Lombard between Mason Street to Powell Street
- Lyon Street from Turk to Haight streets
- Mariposa Street from Kansas to Mississippi streets
- Minnesota from Mariposa to 22nd streets
- Noe Street from Duboce to Beaver streets
- Ortega Street from 47th to 15th avenues
- Pacific Avenue from Steiner to Gough streets
- Page Street from Stanyan to Gough streets
- Sanchez Street from 23rd to 30th streets
- Shotwell Street from Cesar Chavez to 14th Street
- Somerset Street from Silver Avenue to Woolsey Street
- **Tompkins Avenue** from Andover to Putnam streets

Slow Streets have been a success because of their support from committed neighborhood associations, groups, and individuals who are passionate about creating lasting and meaningful change in their communities. In order for each Slow Street to become permanent, there must be a Local Community Partner (https://www.sfmta.com/projects/post-pandemic-slow-streets) (an identified community group or organization) that supports the Slow Street. These supporters have been coined and often self-identified as "Mayors." Slow Streets mayors organize community support, plan events, landscape, beautify, and shepherd their

streets toward permanency.

#### The future and success of the Slow Streets program is in your hands.

This booklet is a guide for mayors looking to organize Slow Streets, and will include the San Francisco Parks Alliance's *tips and tricks* for successful organizing efforts. Parks Alliance has vast experience and expertise organizing communities, and we want to give you the tools you need to be successful. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to the Parks Alliance team at – <a href="mailto:slowstreets@sfparksalliance.org">slowstreets@sfparksalliance.org</a>

## Making Friends: Seek out other Slow Streets supporters in your neighborhood

You love the Slow Streets program and the impact your Slow Street has had on your life. On your partner's morning walk. On your children's ability to play outdoors. You want it to stick around. You need to find other people in your neighborhood who appreciate it, too.



Tips for finding neighbors and community members to help support your Slow Street:

 Join the Slow Streets Slack channel. Introduce yourself and your street. (https://kidsafesf.slack.com/join/shared\_invite/zt-obftnc0z-HgRRRI8TnGXVV4 nYQjaHDQ#/shared-invite/email)

- Share why you love your Slow Street on Nextdoor. Look for neighbors who have expressed an interest in safer streets or shared spaces.
- 3. **Print flyers.** Pin one at your local coffee shop, bar, or grocery store.
- Talk with business owners. Talk with business owners on or around your Slow Street about how Slow Streets activate communities, and how they could be involved.
- 5. **Identify neighborhood associations.** Research neighborhood associations surrounding your Slow Street, and reach out. You will find other active community members who could be interested in supporting your Slow Street, too.
- 6. Support Slow Streets on Twitter. Search relevant hashtags for tweets about Slow Streets, safer streets, and/or shared spaces in San Francisco. Send a direct message to anyone you think might be interested in supporting a Slow Street. They might not live near your street, but they could know someone who does!
- 7. Go door-to-door. Grab a friend and try the tried and true door-to-door method. Bring a petition or contact form with you; get their email address for future updates. Explain the Slow Streets initiative. Even if someone doesn't want to actively support a Slow Street, they might be willing to passively support with a window sign.

## Getting Organized: Dotting your i's and crossing your t's

Great news! You've connected with other people on or around your Slow Street who love the idea and want to support it long-term. The hardest part is done. Now, you need to determine who will help with what.



Assigning specific responsibilities allows people to hone in on one specific area of the Slow Street's initiative, thus creating a feeling of ownership and a more focused approach to organizing:

 We recommend appointing one "mayor" that regularly connects with a member of the Parks Alliance team to provide updates and issue resource requests. We can interface with the mayor to ensure you have the tools you

- need to be successful.
- Each street could also appoint a "vice mayor" or a "steering committee"
  made up of the other individuals who want to actively support your Slow
  Street. These supporters will help identify volunteers, organize events, facilitate
  street improvements, and act as leaders in each neighborhood's Slow Streets
  initiative.
- 3. Together, the mayor, vice mayor, and steering committee could assign specific roles or tasks based on each of their skill sets. Every street is different, but optional roles could be:
  - a. *Events Chair* (plans community events and gatherings on your Slow Street, such as kick-off parties, barbecues, happy hours, or parades)
  - Safety and Signage Chair (identifies barrier and signage needs, works with schools or business to ensure your Slow Street is safe for pick-ups, drop-offs, customers)
  - c. Landscaping Chair (creates your Slow Street's landscaping vision, gathers volunteers for beautification efforts, such as planting sidewalk gardens)
  - d. *Marketing Chair* (works on creating your Slow Street's brand, developing a logo or website, creating window signs, flyers, and banners)

## **Brand-building tips and tricks**

Building your Slow Street's brand is critical for its long-term success. What makes your Slow Street unique? What makes it stand out from the others? Building a brand around your Slow Street will help get other neighbors excited and increase your street's overall visibility!



#### Tips for building your Slow Streets brand:

Create a catchy name for your Slow Street. Slow Sanchez and MinneSLOWta
have created strong brand recognition for their streets by coming up with fun
names that people will remember.

- 2. Design a logo for your Slow Street. Create a logo that will stand out along your Slow Street. Bold colors and clear text are encouraged, as you'll want your logo to be recognizable, whether it be on a small sticker or a big window sign. A directory of designers is listed below, and the Parks Alliance can help you connect with (and compensate) designers in support of your Slow Street.
- Using your logo, print posters and stickers for your Slow Street. Print window signs and/or stickers and have supportive neighbors feature them in front-facing windows or cars. Passersby will see that there is active community support for the Slow Street, and it could lead you to find more volunteers.
- 4. **Create Slow Street swag.** Just like the posters and stickers, having your supporters wear Slow Street t-shirts, hoodies, or hats is a great way to market your brand. Wear your Slow Street shirt to the nearest grocery store or park.
- 5. **Create a webpage for your Slow Street.** Work with the Parks Alliance team to create a webpage for your Slow Street. Your webpage should be listed on all of your marketing and branding materials so that people know where to go for more information.
- 6. Create social media accounts and a hashtag for your Slow Street. Use Twitter, Instagram, and/or Facebook. Take photos of your Slow Street in action - kids playing soccer, your son skateboarding, your street's Halloween parade. Share them on your social media platforms - your biggest audience is online!

#### **Designer Directory:**

Name: Adrian Bonifacio

**Design:** Slow Page, Sanchez posters

Contact: adbonifacio@gmail.com

Work: abonifacio.com

Name: Christine Innes

**Design:** MinneSlowta

Contact: christineinnes22@gmail.com

Work: christineinnes.com

Name: Alec Hawley

**Design:** Slow Lake (first draft)

**Contact:** ahawleyla@gmail.com

Work: fauvescraperstudio.com

Name: Alex Campbell

**Design:** various SF Parks Alliance materials

Contact: lx.campbell@gmail.com

**Work:** alexcampbellart.com

Please contact the SF Parks Alliance to inquire about compensation for logo designs:

slowstreets@sfparksalliance.org









## Snap & share: Social steps for Slow Streets

We just covered building your Slow Street's brand. Your Slow Street has a name and a logo. Now it's time to take your marketing efforts online. While a successful Slow Streets effort does rely heavily on in-person outreach, your biggest audience is online. Create an account for your Slow Street, a hashtag, and get going!

#### Tips for utilizing social media:

- 1. Create Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook accounts for your Slow Street. Use your logo as your profile, and include relevant information about your Slow Street in the bio section. You can sync your accounts, so that when you post on Facebook, you can automatically share to Instagram (and vice-versa).
- Create a hashtag for your Slow Street so that people can follow your Slow Street's posts. The more you post, the more useful your hashtag will become.
- 3. **Follow relevant San Francisco accounts.** Follow your district supervisor, the Parks Alliance (@sfparksalliance), your nearest neighborhood association, the Bicycle Coalition (@sfbike), KidSafeSF, all of the supporters you've found to date. Start interacting with their posts and checking out their followers.
- 4. **Map out a regular cadence for posting about your Slow Street.** Maybe you make an effort to post three times a week. Setting a routine posting cadence will help you build out your page and gain followers.
- 5. Take photos of your Slow Street in action. Planning an upcoming event? Make sure someone takes pictures! Sharing photos of your Slow Street on your social media accounts will give your followers the opportunity to see just how great your Slow Street really is, and how it is affecting your neighborhood in a positive way.

## Time to Celebrate! Setting up a Slow Street soirée

In-person events are the best way to get people excited about Slow Streets and their potential. The more in-person events you're able to hold on your Slow Street, the more volunteers and supporters you'll find. Events can be anything from small gatherings to full-on parades, and they will incite renewed interest among your neighbors.



#### Tips for planning a successful Slow Streets event:

- Pick a date, time and intersection. Find a weekend or evening when you can gather, optimizing for the busiest hours and best intersection. Plan a block party or parade; coordinate recess for neighboring schools... The options are endless!
- 2. **Identify activities.** Ask around in your community to identify who can contribute, as neighbors are often happy to share their talents and resources.

- Activities can range anywhere from rollerblading to a soccer match to a trivia gathering use your imagination!
- 3. **Promote your event.** Use chalk, flyers, online platforms such as Nextdoor and Facebook, and local businesses to spread the word about your event and invite your neighbors.
- 4. **Plan what supplies you need.** Bring supplies like camping chairs, a bluetooth speaker, chalk, and trash bags to your chosen gathering space. Ask a friend to arrive early with you, and make yourself comfortable.

## Sparkle & shine: Beautifying your Slow Street

Many Slow Streets supporters have already come up with fun and exciting ways to beautify their Slow Streets. From neighborhood gardens to decorated planters to sidewalk chalk art, there are several ways to make your Slow Street reflect the character and joy of your neighborhood.



#### Here are some ideas from successful Slow Streets:

- Street murals: Consider working with a local artist to do a street mural (such as the one by Amos Goldbaum on <u>Slow Sanchez!</u>).
- Sidewalk chalk art: Provide children (or adults!) on the Slow Street with chalk to design sidewalk chalk art.
- Planters: Create planters and paint them to add an artistic feel that reflects
  the vibrance of your neighborhood. You can then utilize them as barriers for
  the Slow Street! The <u>City of Oakland worked with Jonathan Brumfield</u> to pilot
  a solution for more aesthetically pleasing barricades that reflected East

Oakland culture. The barriers featured scraper bicycles (a unique aspect of Oakland culture), children walking, people pushing strollers, and words of hope.

- Community gardens: Hold an event dedicated to planting a community garden! This is a great way to both bring people together and beautify the street.
- Seating: Check out Facebook Marketplace and see if you can find a bench or other seating option for temporary use on your Slow Street during events and gatherings. You could invite people over to paint the bench, and consider using the same colors as your Slow Street logo!

## **Syncing with Neighborhood Stakeholders**

If there are schools or businesses located on or around your Slow Street, you should try to meet with them and explain what a Slow Street is and how it could benefit them, as well.

#### **Connecting with schools:**

- Are there schools on your Slow Street? Reach out to the school's leadership to set up a meeting. In your meeting, talk about the ways in which kids are using Slow Streets to exercise and get outside. Mention the Halloween parades, outdoor recess, talk about how the school could feature a booth at one of your events, etc.
- Make an effort to work with the school to coordinate pickup and drop offs.
- Ask if you can provide presentations or collateral on the Slow Street for students. Invite the students and their families to activities and events on the Slow Street.

#### **Connecting with businesses:**

- Head to nearby businesses with flyers in hand. Explain to the owners what Slow Streets are, and how they could increase their business by encouraging more foot traffic. If the owners seem supportive, ask if you can leave flyers for their customers to connect with you!
- Check out what Slow Noe is doing: Noe Art Mart on the Slow Noe showcases artists, craftspeople, clothing and more. The free event is held weekly.

### **Interacting with Slow Streets Opposition**

Like most initiatives and campaigns, you will likely encounter opposition to your Slow Street. However, like many initiatives and campaigns, sometimes all that is really needed is an in-depth conversation with your opposition. Work to understand their concerns, and talk with them about the pros of your Slow Street. Oftentimes, opposition arises simply because people do not feel like their concerns have been heard or addressed. Be respectful, listen, learn, and inform.

#### Tips for addressing opposition to your Slow Street:

- Have you heard that someone opposes your Slow Street? Ask why. Set up a call or meeting with the person or group that has voiced concerns or opposes your Slow Street.
- Take the time to listen. Perhaps the root of the opposition is simply a misunderstanding or miseducation surrounding the Slow Streets program.
- 3. Think of ways to address their concerns.
  - a. Parking: The Slow Sanchez team heard that some residents on the street were concerned about their ability to park. To address that concern, they created mirrored hangers that identified drivers as Sanchez residents.
  - b. Accessibility: Many residents concerned with accessibility issues may misunderstand the nature of Slow Street barriers and/or the ways in which Slow Streets actually enhance accessibility. Try sharing a list of ways specific accessibility concerns could be addressed and/or why Slow Streets actually promote accessibility.
  - c. Aesthetics: Barriers can be both functional and aesthetically pleasing. If you hear complaints about the way they look, consider decorating the existing barriers or painting planters to use instead.

## Responding to the Opposition's Arguments

**Argument:** The Slow Street in my neighborhood is diverting traffic onto my street.

**Response:** Slow Streets were selected not only by the degree of support they received in surveys, but also SFMTA's findings that they would not increase traffic on parallel streets. All Slow Streets must be classified as neighborhood residential streets with low traffic volumes, ensuring they do not overwhelm other streets nearby.

Argument: I don't understand the point of Slow Streets when there are parks for gathering and sidewalks for other forms of travel.

Response: You're right! San Francisco has some phenomenal parks, and yes, our neighborhoods have sidewalks for folks to walk on. Yet, so many of our amazing parks are often crowded (an exceptional issue during COVID) or difficult to reach for some residents for reasons such as distance or their physical ability to travel. Slow Streets offer another opportunity for social and recreational activity, directly outside people's homes. For many San Franciscans who don't have backyards or even much space in their apartments, Slow Streets have been a godsend.

Although Slow Streets are well-known as recreational opportunities, many San Francisco residents depend on Slow Streets to safely commute to work. San Francisco has regularly advanced innovative, safe and sustainable mobility, and Slow Streets is one more opportunity to meet that goal.

**Argument:** Slow Streets make it more difficult for me to get around the city.

Response: That's understandable. There are several areas where residents have had to adjust their regular driving routes. That said, for people who walk and bicycle around the city, Slow Streets have drastically improved their ability to get around. So, we're trying to find a balance where everyone can navigate safely. In some cities with Slow Streets programs, they've started using additional signage to help drivers navigate around the Slow Streets more efficiently. SFMTA has also worked with

Google, Waze and Apple Maps to change the routing systems to help GPS navigation avoid Slow Streets, while still maintaining an efficient driving experience.

#### **Argument:** Slow Streets have only been successful for a handful of streets.

**Response:** I'm not sure I know what you mean. Can you share more about what a successful Slow Street experience would look like? What are some reasons you think they haven't been successful?

Slow Streets are just as diverse as the city itself, and their "success" looks different for every street. For some Slow Streets, neighbors have appreciated simply having fewer cars on the road and feeling safer when they walk to nearby destinations. For other streets, success looks like additional space to gather with your neighbors. The mistake is to believe every successful Slow Street has to look the same. And moreover, that when a Slow Street may be experiencing challenges, that their challenges are all the same.

### **Expand Your Vision**

Other ways to improve your Slow Street, find inspiration, and explore precedent

Slow Streets are just one of the countless ways to improve the public spaces right outside of your door. All across San Francisco, communities just like yours have been asking, "how can we make this better?"

We've compiled lessons from a variety of projects from across San Francisco, and make them part of our **Public Space Toolkit.** This toolkit draws on our decades of experience taking ambitious community visions through the planning process and bringing them to reality.

While each project is different, there is plenty of precedent to be found that can inspire your efforts and point the way towards project completion. The toolkit has a wide variety of resources, and can help you navigate permitting, materials, and a variety of other issues.

Give it a look: https://sanfranciscoparksalliance.org/SF-Public-Space-Toolkit/

## Raising funds for your Slow Street

In order to keep your Slow Street moving forward, a successful fundraising campaign is critical.

#### Here are some of our tips:

The San Francisco Parks Alliance provides **fiscal sponsorship** to community groups whose missions align with our organization's values. As a fiscal sponsor, SF Parks Alliance enables community groups to seek grants and solicit tax-deductible donations under our 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. Since most grant-makers fund organizations, but not individuals, fiscal sponsorship helps Slow Streets Committees like yours raise money without having to go through the complicated process of starting their own nonprofit. SF Parks Alliance staff also assist with project management, fundraising consultation, marketing, grant review, and insurance needs as appropriate.

#### **Current Fiscal Sponsorship**

SF Parks Alliance staff will work with new Slow Streets committees to determine if fiscal sponsorship is needed and if or organization and your group are a good fit. There is an application process and once approval is granted, the group enters into a legal contract with SF Parks Alliance. We charge an administrative fee to help cover our staff time and overhead. We currently sponsor nearly ninety Community Partners across San Francisco. These Partners are a diverse group whose focus ranges from community engagement, to gardens and urban agriculture, to capital renovation projects, to ongoing programs and events. While we have established best practices for the program, we seek to meet the needs of each individual group. For a comprehensive list of current Community Partners, please visit our Community Partner Network Index.

#### **Approach**

SF Parks Alliance's project management oversight, training and support increase a group's ability to achieve success. In addition to offering the standard accounting

and insurance services of fiscal agents, SF Parks Alliance staff may provide the following optional services to groups:

- Helping them organize, and attending their project meetings
- Establishing and sustaining relationships with City departments and elected officials
- Creating mentorship opportunities between more seasoned groups and new groups
- Executing contracts between contractors hired by groups, including landscape architects, muralists and general contractors
- Instructing groups in community engagement tactics
- Testifying at Commission and Board of Supervisors hearings in support of projects
- Accessing in-kind and pro bono services, such as landscape architecture services
- Providing access to SF Parks Alliance's office for group meetings

## **Activity #1**

#### **Flowerbombing**

Seed your Slow Street so that wildflowers flourish after the rain.

#### What you need:

- 1. The seed packet from the Mayor Starter Pack, or you can use your own.
- 2. Wait for a rainy day. You can go the day before or during the rain.
- 3. Invite your friends and neighbors!

This activity is easy, fun and the results are very visible!

You can make your Slow Street beautiful by scattering seeds in any empty treewells or planters you find. In a couple of weeks, your street will be lined with wildflowers that make the street more attractive and a more welcoming habitat for pollinators.

All you need for this activity is a packet of seeds. You can use your own or use the ones included in the Mayor Starter Pack. The more the merrier!

Once you've got your seeds, look at the forecast and aim for a day just before it rains, or feel free to put on a raincoat and go *during* the rain.

This is a great activity to do with friends, neighbors, and even elected officials, so send out those invitations!

### **Activity #2**

#### **Bucket Signs**

An easy way to communicate with neighbors & show that your street is cared for.

#### What you need:

- 1. Paint bucket
- 2. Cement (bricks and/or soil can be used as an alternative)
- 3. 2x4 cut into four foot lengths
- 4. Foamboard
- 5. Acrylic paint
- 6. Hammer & nails

How will you share messages to people on your Slow Street? Bucket signs are an easy and effective way to communicate.

Gather the items listed above, and start by putting a 2x4 cut to a four foot length into the bucket. Mix the cement in the bucket, ensuring that the 2x4 is standing vertically.

While the cement is drying, get the paint ready and paint your message on the foamboard. Make it bright, make it colorful, make it friendly!

Once the cement has fully dried, nail the foamboard to the top of the 2x4.

Once it's finished, bring it out into the street for all to see! The best place to display your sign is directly behind the official SFMTA Slow Street intersection signage near the center of the road. Be sure to leave at least 14 feet of clearance space for emergency vehicles.

As the days progress, keep an eye on your sign! Strong winds can potentially blow it over, so be sure to be a good steward and keep them standing.