



# THE TOMORROW PLAN SPEAKER SERIES

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
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## Speaker Jason Roberts: Better Blocks start with residents

Changing your city doesn't have to be a daunting task that's left to experts. There are small, simple changes that amateurs can make at the block level that have dramatic ripple effects which cascade through the city.

That's the central message of Jason Roberts, founder of the Better Block Foundation and the next speaker in The Tomorrow Plan Speaker Series. His talk is at noon Tuesday, April 10, at the State Historical Building in Des Moines.

"Cities around the world recognize that to stay competitive – to retain talent, industry and business – they need to become more walkable and more livable," Roberts said. "So what are rapid, low-cost ways to retrofit our environments? Give tools and resources to the communities and empower them to make change."

Roberts is the founder of the Oak Cliff Transit Authority, founder of the original Better Block Project, and co-founder of Art Conspiracy and Bike Friendly Oak Cliff. In 2010, Jason organized a series of "Better Block" projects, taking blighted blocks with vacant properties in Southern Dallas and converting them into temporary walkable districts with pop-up businesses, bike lanes, cafe seating, and landscaping. The project has now become an international movement and has been featured in The New York Times, Dwell magazine, TED Talks and on National Public Radio.

Roberts and Better Block team members are touring Iowa in April, providing technical assistance to enhance creative placemaking efforts in Cedar Rapids, Dubuque, Fort Dodge, Greenfield and Keokuk. His visit is possible because of the support of the Iowa Economic Development Authority and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Tomorrow Plan Speaker Series is an implementation strategy of The Tomorrow Plan, a plan for the sustainable development of Greater Des Moines. New this year is a partnership with Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, which is hosting the series and enlisting experts from the State Historical Society of Iowa to present brief historical preview talks before each keynote presentation. For more information, please visit [dmampo.org/the-tomorrow-plan/speaker-series/](http://dmampo.org/the-tomorrow-plan/speaker-series/).

### **DETAILS**

*Tuesday, April 10*

*11:30 a.m. – Lunch and historical preview with State Curator Leo Landis from the State Historical Society of Iowa*

*12 – 1 p.m. – Keynote with Roberts*

*1 – 1:30 p.m. – Q & A with Roberts*

*State Historical Building  
600 E. Locust St., Des Moines*

### **RSVP & LUNCH**

*Please RSVP.*

*Bag lunches from Cafe Baratta's available for purchase online at:  
[app.tikly.co/events/2554](http://app.tikly.co/events/2554)*

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