



International Downtown Association 2014 Award Nomination Public Space Category

Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) celebrated its 50th anniversary through a unique public art initiative, Sculpture with Purpose™, which enriched Fort Wayne with 50 sculptural bike racks. Through innovative designs specifically crafted by local and national artists to accommodate bicycle parking, Sculpture with Purpose encouraged the benefits of cycling while permanently enhancing the visual landscape of Fort Wayne's downtown with permanent art for everyone to enjoy.

Innovation: Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry established a task force to establish legacy initiatives. One recommendation highlighted the community need to improve Fort Wayne's downtown through arts and culture by stating "A strong arts and culture presence improves a community's identity by connecting residents and visitors with what is unique about their community." Additionally, it specified the need for "an initiative project to incorporate large-scale catalytic public art in the downtown to promote tourism and place making for the downtown area." Sculpture with Purpose supported the desire to create public art, but added an innovative element—purpose. By taking the practical idea of a bike rack and putting its design in the hands of artists, these sculptures have transformed the streetscapes of Fort Wayne and created public places for interaction between residents and their city.

Tourists and residents alike have a new reason to cycle to downtown destinations instead of driving – availability of safe bike parking options. Fort Wayne is proud that collaborative efforts to encourage residents to ride a bike to destinations rather than drive a car have earned the city recognition as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists in 2012. An important part of encouraging people to ride a bike to a destination is making sure that there are safe and secure places to store a bike while visiting a museum, dining at a restaurant or attending a class. While both the City and IPFW have been investing in standard bike racks downtown and on campus, the sculptural bike racks innovatively deliver the practicality of a bike rack in the package of public art. They provoke thought and emotion; they pique curiosity; and they are sure to become iconic landmarks that define public space and the values and interests of the people who live here. Sculpture with Purpose has innovatively transformed the way our region is perceived by residents and visitors.

Representation: Throughout the two-and-a-half year project, Sculpture with Purpose benefited from multiple collaborations. The City of Fort Wayne was the first partner and agreed to help identify potential sculpture locations that would provide high visibility and frequent use. Art and cycling experts were included on the selection committee that reviewed 160 sculpture designs from 36 regionally and nationally recognized artists. Lastly, area schools and groups serving those with disabilities were invited to participate in Sculpture with Purpose Bike Art. Participating organizations were given recycled bicycles of various sizes and styles to creatively turn into art. Each of the newly designed bicycles was displayed for the public's enjoyment at the FAME (Foundation for Art and Music Education) Festival in March 2014. Then, May 2014 when the sculptures were presented to the City, the art bikes were attached to the sculptures to visually define the purpose of the sculptures as bike racks and to celebrate the inclusion of artists of all ages and abilities in this community-wide project.

Sustainability: Sculpture with Purpose was developed with the intent to produce a lasting legacy of functional public art. All of the sculptures are intended to be permanent and most are located in public spaces that are easily visible from the road and accessible to pedestrians. Together, the collection of sculptures reinforces the image of Fort Wayne as a place where three rivers meet; a place where families and commerce thrive; and where vibrancy, creativity, and vision are celebrated. Many of the sculptures have already assumed an iconic

status as landmarks for nearby businesses and several sponsors are incorporating their pieces into their branding and marketing plans. This broad engagement in the project is an example of its capacity to remain relevant beyond the initial intent - to celebrate the anniversary of an important local institution.

Beyond the concept's durability, several steps were taken to ensure that the sculptures remain available to the public. Sculpture with Purpose organizers had the foresight to establish both an endowment for maintenance and an agreement with Arts United, a local arts organization, to own and manage the sculptures installed in public places. In fact, this project delivered a template for future public art projects that will require long-term maintenance. Prior to this project, Arts United and other groups had been exploring the logistics involved in delivering public art projects, but Sculpture with Purpose provided a productive opportunity to test and shape ideas that will preserve the sculptures for years to come.

Physical durability is another important component of the project. The call for proposals that solicited sculpture designs from artists included a requirement to use durable materials and to design pieces that could withstand abuse. During the design review process, a structural engineer provided advice about material and design modifications to help meet required safety and durability goals. Sustainability was a project priority from start to finish.

Execution: The multitude of steps that led from initial research to project plan development and, finally, to implementation were deliberately crafted thanks to the collaborations described above and the project leaders' desire to create the best possible result for the university and the City of Fort Wayne. Other cities with similar projects were contacted for advice. Experts in sculpture fabrication were engaged. With permanence as the goal, leaders attended to every detail in order to ensure success.

Outcome: Sculpture with Purpose has significantly impacted downtown Fort Wayne and IPFW's campus. Success has been achieved relative to the initial project goals: 50 sculptural bike racks were placed throughout the City and on IPFW's campus; the quality of life for Fort Wayne residents has been enhanced based on an increase in bike rack usage and sculpture engagement; 50 public places have been transformed for interaction between residents and their city; tourism has increased due to additional state-wide and regional recognition in magazines and travel materials as measured by Visitor Center guests requesting a map of the sculpture locations; 50 recycled bikes were transformed into art by area students and people with disabilities; and a template for future public art projects was developed and implemented. And, an unexpected outcome was the creation of Kickstart, a new annual downtown festival that celebrates bikes, art, and music. Kickstart celebrates active lifestyles and represents a wonderful example of what can happen when passionate, like-minded organizations collaborate to make Fort Wayne a more vibrant community.

Replication: IPFW and the City of Fort Wayne are proud of the results of this transformative collaboration. The partners recognize that Sculpture with Purpose represents a project that other groups can replicate. Project leaders are in the process of documenting the steps to success in order to provide valuable information that others can use to enhance their city the way Fort Wayne has revitalized its downtown with engaging and accessible public art.