



ANNUAL REPORT

A H Public Spaces Consulting

2023





Investments that Impact Our Region

Alexandra Hall, Founder of A H Public Spaces Consulting

According to *Americans for the Arts*, public art engages a community, engenders a sense of pride and community identity, and enhances a community's quality of life. Investing in arts and culture initiatives creates the environment for this prosperity and growth. When patrons attend an arts event, they may pay for parking, eat dinner at a restaurant, shop in local retail stores, and have dessert on the way home. Based on surveys conducted by Americans for the Arts, in 2018, the typical attendee spends \$31.47 per person, per event, beyond the cost of admission. 34% of attendees came from outside

the county in which the arts event took place, and they spent twice as much as their local counterparts (\$47.57 vs. \$23.44).

'Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 is *Americans for the Arts'* fifth study of the nonprofit arts and culture industry's impact on the economy. It documents the economic contributions of the arts in 341 diverse communities and regions across the country, representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Nationally, the nonprofit arts and culture industry generated \$166.3 billion of economic activity during 2015—\$63.8 billion in spending by arts and cultural organizations and an additional \$102.5 billion in event-related expenditures by their audiences. This activity supported 4.6 million jobs and generated \$27.5 billion in revenue to local, state, and federal governments (a yield well beyond their collective \$5 billion in arts allocations).

By every measure, the results are impressive. This study puts to rest a misconception that communities support arts and culture at the expense of local economic development. In fact, communities are investing in an industry that supports jobs, generates government revenue, and is the cornerstone of tourism. Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 shows conclusively that, locally as well as nationally, the arts mean business!

The 2020 **Make It Your Own Mural Fest** inspired other communities around the country to approach mural festivals as a mechanism for economic development and as a tourism asset. In 2022 I had the privilege of working with Livingston County Economic Development (Grow Liv Co) and Visit Liv Co on a county-wide initiative, **LivCo Walls**. In the fall of 2024 I will be working with Chautauqua County, NY on another regional mural festival initiative! The results from the *Arts and Economic Prosperity 5* study reinforce and endorse the regional mural festival concept—especially when tied to the tourism industry in a region.

Further endorsement for what we do in Fort Wayne, IN came in the form of a national PBS Newshour story on both my artwork and my work with **Art This Way**. The story, 'How Fort Wayne's investment in art mirrors its turnaround,' aired in February 2023, and the special correspondent, Cat Wise, spent time with me as part of their arts and culture series, CANVAS. It is difficult to quantify the impact of the public art investment in Fort Wayne, but I can share that—to date—we have spent less than \$300,000 on our programming. To receive national acknowledgement and be highlighted as a pro-art community is a powerful endorsement for what we do, and we are not spending very much for that national recognition.

In 2023, I helped program another 24 drain murals, one large mural, and a sculpture in Fort Wayne, IN.

2023 PROJECTS

- ART THIS WAY, A PROGRAM OF THE FORT WAYNE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
- FRIENDS OF THE RIVERS CLEAN DRAIN MURAL INTIATIVE (Fort Wayne, IN)
- Downtown Bellefonte INC Mural Project (Bellefonte, PA)
- ELECTRIC WORKS Union Tunnel Mural Project (Fort Wayne, IN)

2023 Annual Report

A H PUBLIC SPACES CONSULTING, LLC

2023 ART THIS WAY | A PROGRAM OF THE FORT WAYNE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

ART THIS WAY brought one new mural to Downtown Fort Wayne, IN in 2023. Alexandra Hall installed her 2,000+ square foot mural 'Protect Our Rivers' at 302 W Superior Street, adjacent to Promenade Park. Hall worked with five paid apprentices during the installation: Bonnie Andrews, Karen Bulhman, Laura Monnier, Debbie Kuntz, Lily Martin. This piece was funded by Friends of the Rivers and the Fort Wayne Downtown Improvement District.



Hall pictured with her apprentices | Fort Wayne, IN



(above) Only Rain in the Drain mural by Hannah Rutigliano, located at the corner of Broadway and West Berry Street in downtown Fort Wayne, IN



Be River SmART was a three-year collaborative initiative between Friends of the Rivers, FOR, and Fort Wayne City Utilities. The education and community outreach/engagement arm of that partnership leveraged sidewalk mural art to convey the message, "Only Rain in the Drain!" Over the three years, FOR hired dozens of local artists, both amateur and veteran-artists. The drain muralists were assigned to paint at specific locations, and they were asked to participate in an orientation in order to ensure proper installation. City Utilities prepared each drain mural site by power washing the sidewalk and leaving one or two large safety cones on site to protect the muralists. All of the artists were recognized at World River day and given a monetary gift to thank them for their support of the project.

In 2021, the program installed 33 drain murals. In 2022, the program installed 37 murals. In 2023, the program installed 25 more drain murals and a legacy mural. These projects appeared

in neighborhoods, along trail systems, and throughout **downtown Fort Wayne**. The drain murals are expected to last between 1-4 years. The temporary murals will serve as a visual reminder that the storm drains in the city go directly to the waterways and rivers. The legacy mural will remain along Fort Wayne's Saint Mary's River as a reminder, 'Only Rain in the Drain,' was christened on World River Day.

For the drain artists involved, this project became a mechanism for building portfolios, networking with fellow creatives, and beautifying their neighborhoods. This project provided a consequential opportunity for the creatives in our community to expand into public art. Clean Drains artists ranged in age from as young as 16 to artists older than 65. The project saw representation from BIPOC artists and LGBTQ+ artists. The styles of artwork ranged from abstract to realism. This group of creatives got to meet at orientation, work together during their drain mural installations, and network at World River Day.

2023 Annual Report

A H PUBLIC SPACES CONSULTING, LLC

Art This Way partnered with the **Fort Wayne Public Art Commission** to commission: 'On Wings of Hope' is a 15' wide sculpture by artists Lena Balger and Torey E Dunn II. Balger, a Ukrainian immigrant based in Fort Wayne, was inspired by a poem by Ukrainian writer, Lesya Ukrainka, titled "Contra Spem Spero". This poem represents the strength and hope that she wanted to portray through this experiential sculpture. The work was installed the south elevation of 814 Calhoun Street, Fort Wayne, IN 46802, on the side of the Dash-In restaurant within the 'Bill Blass Runway, in January 2023. The mini-wings, the smaller wings to the right of the piece, were installed later in the spring of 2023.



2023 Annual Report

A H PUBLIC SPACES CONSULTING, LLC

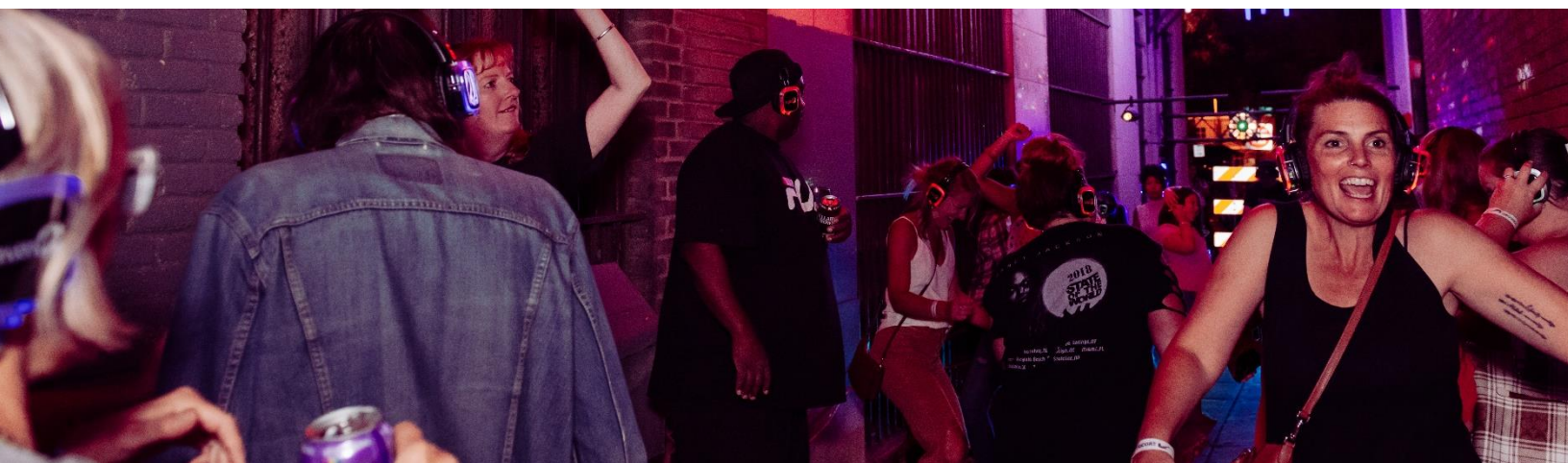


2023 ART THIS WAY ART CRAWL: ALLEY BASH

The **Art This Way Art Crawl: Alley Bash** fundraiser returned to Downtown Fort Wayne in 2023! The Art Crawl began in 2017, and since that year, this educational and experiential event has introduced attendees to Fort Wayne's professional creatives, including sculptors, bands, painters, print makers, and culinary wizards. In the past, we partnered with different local businesses to create non-traditional gallery spaces. In 2023 we switched it up! We focused on programming in only outdoor areas, like the Porch Off Calhoun, the Bill Blass Runway, the alley behind JK O'Donnell's, and South Harrison Street. Each zone along the 2023 the Crawl featured a live band, cash bar and numerous artists performing live. Attendees enjoyed a silent disco, a 3D photo booth, food trucks, art demos, live music, and even a New Orleans-style marching band in the alleys of downtown.

The 2023 Art Crawl raised over \$9,000 for the Art This Way program, and over 5,000 people attended the event.

A Silent Disco entertained Art Crawl Attendees under 77 Steps Sculpture | 2023 Art Crawl (below)



2023 Annual Report

A H PUBLIC SPACES CONSULTING, LLC



2023-2024 Bellefonte, PA Mural Project

Downtown Bellefonte Inc released an artist RFP, and in 2024 they will commission a muralist to create a mural in their historic downtown.

Downtown Bellefonte Inc has worked with community members to develop a creative brief, which highlights community assets, tells Bellefonte's story, educates visitors about Bellefonte, and celebrates Bellefonte. This document will act as a tool to inform and inspire the design for this mural project.

ADVOCATING for PUBLIC ART

I was honored to receive the 2024 H. Stanley Liddell Award for my murals and work as manager of Art This Way, a program of Downtown Fort Wayne. I was nominated by Whatzup founder Doug Driscoll. The H. Stanley Liddell Award is awarded to individuals who have made a uniquely significant contribution to the arts and culture of Fort Wayne and surrounding communities.

PBS NEWSHOUR's 2023 story, 'How Fort Wayne's investment in art mirrors its turnaround,' featured my work as an artist and my work advocating for public art in Fort Wayne, IN.



PBS NEWSHOUR

How Fort Wayne's investment in art mirrors its turnaround

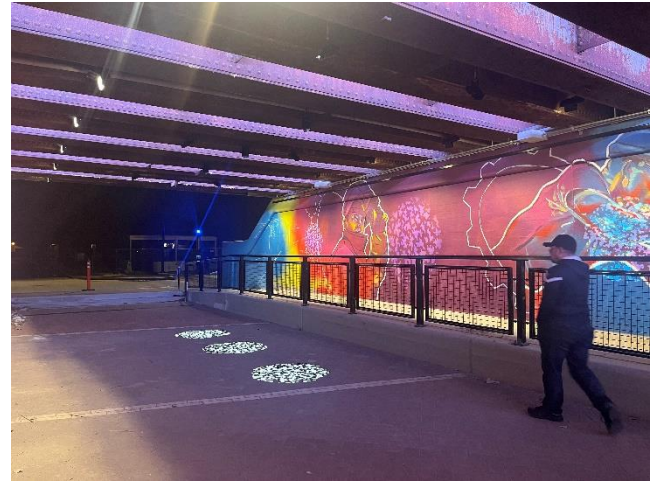
Clip: 02/21/2023 | 8m 7s | CC

+ My List

As with many cities in the Rust Belt, Fort Wayne, Indiana, went through tough times for several decades as manufacturing plants closed, jobs dried up and people left. But recently, the city has made a turnaround and a big investment in public art. Special correspondent Cat Wise spent time with an artist who is a driving force behind that effort. It's part of our arts and culture series, CANVAS.

Aired: 02/21/23 | Rating: NR

ELECTRIC WORKS MURAL PROJECT



Theoplis Smith aka Phresh Laundry was hired to install the Union Street Tunnel. This mural acts as the gateway piece that invites and welcomes visitors to the newly renovated Electric Works campus. The project is a 700,000 square foot adaptive re-use of the former GE campus will act as the heart of innovation, collaboration, programming and cultural change for Northeast Indiana. It was an honor to work with the Ancora team to implement this tunnel mural. Theoplis added his finishing touches to the tunnel mural in the late spring of 2023.





"Art can celebrate the qualities that make one place different from another. The best of public art can challenge, delight, educate and illuminate. Most of all, public art creates a sense of civic vitality in the cities, towns, and communities we inhabit and visit."

-AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS
PUBLIC ART NETWORK COUNCIL: GREEN PAPER



2023 Annual Report

A H PUBLIC SPACES CONSULTING, LLC

CREDITS:

Photos: Alexandra Hall | Stephen Bailey | Brett Frauhiger | Keith Walters | Rachel Von Stroup

Artist's Work Pictured: Alexandra Hall, Lena Balger, Bonjo Andrews, Justin Suarez, THEOPLIS SMITH III aka PHRESH LAUNDRY, and Hannah Rutigliano

REFERENCES:

Americans For The Arts, artsu.americansforthearts.org | AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS PUBLIC ART NETWORK COUNCIL: GREEN PAPER | 2016 Indiana Arts Commission Creative Economy Report | 2019 Gehl PUBLIC SPACE + PUBLIC LIFE STUDY | Gehl Downtown Fort Wayne Public Realm Action Plan | Make It Your Own Mural Fest | NEIRP | Fort Wayne Downtown Improvement District | City of Fort Wayne Public Art Commission | FORBES, 'Fort Wayne, Indiana: Small City, Big Future,' November 13, 2020 by Brandon Schultz | FORBES, 'Northeast Indiana Becomes The Canvas For 'Make It Your Own Mural Fest',' September 10, 2020 by Michele Herrmann | INPUT FORT WAYNE, 'From casual painter to muralist: A Fort Wayne artist shares how she broke into the public art scene' by SIERAH BARNHART, OCTOBER 4, 2021

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