Implementation Plan

Montgomery County Bikeways

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→ **Montgomery County Bikeways**

Brand Implementation Recommendations

The measure of a successful brand can only happen once it is put to use. These short and long-term recommendations are based on what we've come to learn about your organization, the communities you serve, your challenges, and your opportunities — prioritized to help you reach the following overarching goals established for the Montgomery County Bikeways brand.

Please note: throughout this document we use the following names to reference the brand and the system of facilities.

- Montgomery County **bikeway system** references the facilities that make up the system. The informal reference in this document is <u>bikeway system</u>.

- **Montgomery County Bikeways** is the formal brand name. When references as the brand it is capitalized.

- **Bikeways** is the informal/shortened brand name

The Bikeways Brand:

- elevates the narrative of bicycle infrastructure as something that invites all riders, from all backgrounds, to feel secure and welcome

- creates immediate recognition and understanding of the type of experience a user can expect from the bicycle facilities

- builds awareness of bicycling as a competitive (and irresistible) transportation choice

- encourages casual recreational users to consider a healthier, sustainable, and budget friendly transportation option for everyday use

- helps bikeway system stewards clearly communicate the benefits of use as well as ease of use

This plan includes several components to help you get your new brand off the ground and power up momentum for successful long-term outcomes. The plan addresses:

- utilizing your brand to build a positive Montgomery County bikeways system image

- using your brand to market and promote the Montgomery County bikeways system

→ Audiences Overview

Key audiences are defined in the brand strategy. These will be your priority players, the people you believe will benefit the most and will be the earliest adopters of the bikeway system. This doesn't mean your brand message won't reach broader audiences. It simply means your efforts (and energy) will be focused and targeted for quicker results.

While general brand messaging will play a role, there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Each audience is motivated differently. Therefore, we need to understand what they want and what concerns them so that we can align the message and the approach.

For brand development, the strategy focused on end users of the bikeways system (see sidebar); for brand implementation, you may consider an additional audience (outlined below) that will serve as champions and ambassadors for the Bikeways brand.

The support of the county and elected officials as well as bicycling advocacy groups may be important for gaining support for implementing and expanding the bikeways system. You may prioritize these audiences in the early stages of brand awareness.

What we may expect from County appointed and elected officials:

- cooperation throughout the process

- collaboration when its go-time

- communicating to their constituencies/audiences/employees

- potential funding or resource support

Bicycling advocacy groups / civic, health and institutional organizations that may tangentially promote biking

- help with targeting specific user groups

- impacting lifestyle for users

- localized

- implements activities and experiences that would encourage people to utilize the Bikeways

Audiences

EVERYDAY USERS "We bicycle because we have to."

- All ages (children, adults, families, seniors, etc.)
- Black and Brown communities
- Culturally diverse
- Socioeconomically diverse

This audience already bikes due to need. It may be one of the only modes of transportation they have access to. They have figured out how to navigate their community, but they may not always be using the safest routes. The majority of this audience may not view themselves as "cyclists." There may be some in this category who view biking as a choice method of transportation (ie., socially motivated), but the majority may wonder if this system is really for them, or a way to push them out of the neighborhood.

RECREATIONAL USERS "We bike for exercise and relaxation — but only on the weekends."

- 21-35 years old•
- Empty-nesters
- Professionals
- Weekenders & Weeknighters

This audience is familiar with biking—but the majority may only feel comfortable biking on an off-road trail. They may bike frequently enough to seek out opportunities—but still view the activity as something they do for exercise, stress relief, and minor exploration.

→ **Recommendation #1**

Create a Montgomery County Bikeways Coalition

The effort, commitment, and contributions required to launch and maintain this brand is beyond the ownership and responsibility of a single entity. We recommend that a new organization (county-wide coalition) be developed to manage the marketing, communications, and activation of the Bikeways. This would give M-NCPPC and Montgomery County the ability to focus on the actual planning, development, and installation of the bikeway system infrastructure.

MISSION (PURPOSE)

To create, promote, and maintain an equitable, alternative transportation experience—enhancing the personal and economic health of the residents and communities of Montgomery County.

Characteristics of an effective coalition

- Ownership and support of coalition by coalition members

- High level of trust and reciprocity among members

- Active involvement of members to develop action plan of goals and objectives

- Productive meetings and decision making

- Effective Structure: committed leadership team guides coalition to design/implement strategies

- Continuous evaluation of coalition and its activities

Benefits of a Coalition

- Collaborate and exchange knowledge, ideas, and strategies for the development of the Bikeways brand.

- Share risks and responsibilities for the marketing and development of the Bikeways brand.

- Improve trust and communication among community stakeholders.

- Mobilize diverse talents, resources, and strategies.

- Develop interventions that meet the needs of the Bikeways brand, are community owned and are likely to be sustained.

What is a Coalition?

A community coalition is a group of individuals representing many organizations who agree to work together to achieve a common goal. A coalition brings professional and grassroots organizations from multiple sectors together, expands resources, focuses on issues of community concern, and achieves better results than any single group could achieve alone.

Stages for building effective coalition structure

- establish steering committee and hire coordinator
- recruit diverse community stakeholders and convene coalition
- create initial funding structure and additional plans for fundraising
- develop an action plan with feasible and appropriate goals, objectives, and strategies

Coalition initial responsibilities

- elect leadership
- develop fiscal management structure
- develop decision-making and conflict resolution procedures (bylaws and operating procedures)
- educate members about the Bikeway (partnership strategy/brand champion training)

→ **Recommendation #2**

Develop a Communications Plan

Brand identity and logos are effective because they stand for something. Messaging is what clarifies that "something." A communications plan is built on this foundation because you need to know what you're going to say — from high level to more targeted messaging.

What to expect from intentional messaging and consistent communications:

·   builds associations with brand identity and logo

·   communicates brand values and character

·   attracts target audiences (for whom the brand is built)

·   drives and inspires action

·   establishes consistency (Rule of 7: expose people to information at least seven times before proper retention)

Unfolding the Bikeways brand story over the course of several years can help build relevancy and activate your audiences every step of the way.

·   Communicating everything at once creates too much noise.

·   When people take the brand journey, they often arrive at the same conclusions that we've already drawn.

·   Consistent messaging and staying in brand character builds brand equity over time. (Brand equity is the value that derives from user perception of the Montgomery County Bikeways brand name rather than from the bikeway facilities.)

What is a Communication Plan?

Communication plans define what information should be communicated; who should receive that information; when that information should be delivered; where communications will be shared (e.g., email, social media, mail); and how those communications will be tracked and analyzed.

What should a Communication Plan include?

There are five core actions needed to develop a communications plan:
1.   establishing goals
2.   defining key audiences
3.   identifying key messages
4.   creating a tactical outreach plan
5.   specifying a timeline for moving forward

→ **Recommendation #3**

Establish a Brand Champion Program

Building awareness around a new brand can be a daunting task. It requires people and financial resources. To be effective, building brand awareness requires clarity, consistency, and to some extent, demonstration of benefits and promises. Creating a Brand Champion/Brand Ambassador Program is a great way to authenticate your brand and get buy-in from the community. It stirs pride and spreads the word (and your messaging) faster and more effectively than advertising or promotion.

Steps to establishing a Brand Champion/Ambassador Program:

- **Identify your brand champions.**
  The best brand champions are those who share in your mission and purpose, and/or stand to benefit from the work you are doing.

  - Create a list of area business owners, organizations and institutions that fit this description.

  - Invite these folks to a presentation and discussion on what the bikeway system is expected to do for the county, cities, and neighborhoods.

  - Explain their personal opportunities to benefit from participating in the program and from the overall success of the Montgomery County bikeway system.

- **Develop an arsenal.**
  Create and distribute the resources your brand champions will need to speak to the Bikeways in a way that aligns with the overall messaging strategy. This may include logos, copy, maps and printed materials, window decals, or t-shirts–whatever they can use to promote the Bikeways brand.

- **Establish a program.**
  Develop the structure and expectations around their volunteer responsibilities, establish a regular meeting schedule, and create a system for sharing information and updates with the team.

- **Train your team.**
  Train the team on the value and benefits of the bikeways, instructing them on how to use the resources from your brand arsenal to ensure that your message stays on point, even when people are speaking about it.

What are Brand Champions?

Brand champions are your boots on the ground–they are organizations, residents, business owners, and other community influencers who understand and believe in the Bikeway System, and they are empowered to speak to and represent the brand out in the community.

OBJECTIVES MET

This program allows you to reach a broader audience through your brand champions and spread the word faster and better,

Montgomery County Bikeways Implementation Recommendations

→ Recommendation #3 (continued)

- **Set expectations.**
  Be clear about how your brand champions can steward the brand and what their regular activities may look like. Examples may include:

  - Programming or special events

  - Newsletter or website content

  - Maps and other printed sales materials in their storefronts

  - Event promotion and sponsorship

  - Creative outreach

- **Reciprocate.**
  Your brand champions will want to participate because they believe in what you're doing and/or because they expect to benefit from it as well. That said, it's a big ask and you should find ways to thank them for their participation. For example, you might use your own channels to distribute their news or promote their events, etc.

→ Recommendation #4

Build a Brand Management Plan and Process

Paired with the brand style guide, having a system and process for how you organize, house, and manage your brand assets (visual elements of the brand as well as all communication materials/templates) will help you control what parts of the brand can be used, how communications materials are created or ordered, who is responsible for managing the brand, and how to review any new materials for brand compliance. Then intentionally train staff on the proper use and management of the plan. A training presentation/video can be created for future on boarding.

What is Brand Management?

Brand management is a series of actions and processes that increase the perceived value of your organization. Your brand is made up of multiple components that have been carefully put together to present the Bikeways in a clear, distinct, and professional way.

Guide

→ **Recommendation #5**

Create content to tell the Bikeways story

Information about the Montgomery County bikeway system needs to be readily available and align with the needs and expectations of your audiences. Content goes beyond simple messaging; it provides information on how to use the bikeways and removes unknowns and barriers for people who are less likely to use the system. This type of content will have a place in a well-crafted communication plan.

Content considerations include:

- **General information**
  What is the Montgomery County bikeway system? What is a Breezeway? Where can I access the bikeways? What type of facilities make up the bikeways? Where can these facilities take you?

- **How to use it**
  Those who bike or run regularly may be comfortable jumping right in, but others will need a little nudge. The bikeway system can be used for recreation, leisure, commuting and more. Illustrating the opportunities, advantages and benefits may be just what people need to try it out and turn into supporters.

- **Bikeway usage**
  What are the rules specific to the bikeway system? Are there general best practices for riding on the bikeway system? What are my responsibilities as a bikeway system user?

- **Safety awareness**
  Am I safe on the bikeway system? What measures have the cities and neighborhood and/or the bikeways system stewards taken to protect the people? Are there seasonal considerations that impact safety? Providing information on safety to help alleviate this concern.

→ **Recommendation #6**

Establish a Montgomery County Bikeways Website

Information about the bikeway system needs to be well organized and easy to find and information buried in the M-NCPPC's or Montgomery County Planning's websites can be tedious to find and use. Creating a digital hub for all the readily needed content for brand champions to share and users to digest is a major step in not just building brand awareness but establishing it.

A well-branded, visually appealing, and easily navigated website sets the right tone and reflects your intentions for the bikeway system. Your website can have long legs to carry you through the construction and development of the bikeways.

In addition to the obvious benefits of building awareness, educating people on how to use the bikeways system and making information readily available, a website is also helpful in terms of gauging interest in and success of system-related activities, such as programming and events. Clear analytics will help you get a deeper understanding of what bikeway system-users are interested in and what types of information they are seeking so you can continually improve your content and offerings.

Key features of a user-friendly website:

- **Employ a smart content strategy.**
  It doesn't need to be complicated. A smart content strategy can simply make information easy to find by considering the experience we want people to have on the website, the path they take when entering the website, and how to organize a content hierarchy and internal links to support that journey.

- **Keep information up-to-date.**
  The Montgomery County Bikeways website should be a reliable source of information that is current and relevant.

- **Connect all assets.**
  Like the bikeway system itself, you need to connect all your digital properties and platforms to your digital hub, including social media, sister or parent organizations, and partner stakeholders. This will help make your website or landing page easy to find.

→ **Recommendation #7**

Social Media Policy and Guidelines

Develop guidelines that ensure the Montgomery County Bikeways brand has a strong but practical social media presence. Social media is a platform for two-way communication, so coalition staff should understand when and how to respond to negative comments or threads, when to leave them be, and when to take them down.

Content consistency can be addressed in a policy and guidelines document:

- The social media platforms you use

- The types of posts you can create

- Content do's and don'ts

- Photography/image styles and specs, etc.

- Social media housekeeping tips: frequency and timing, proper use of hashtags, when to tag people and share posts, and overall best practices. This should also include development of a posting calendar to help all managers understand what posting is allowed, how frequently to post so they can plan and execute social media posts with consistency.

The value of social media as a communications tool

Online communication has brought information to people and audiences that previously could not be reached.

Social media allows organizations to tell their story to engage their followers, build brand awareness, and promote initiatives.

Social networking helps organizations and their audiences communicate more quickly, easily, and efficiently.

→ Recommendation #8

Sign System Pilot installation

Having brand and the sign system developed for the Montgomery County Bikeways is a big accomplishment. But these tools won't really do their jobs until they are in use.

The Montgomery County Bikeways is a large and complex system. During development it is challenging to identify all the potential location, context and installation issues. We recommend identifying a section(s) of the Bikeway and install a pilot sign program to demonstrate proof of concept.

A pilot program will allow your team to:

· Learn how to program the sign system. Programming is the term used to describe the action of selecting sign types for specific locations, and determining appropriate messaging. Programming will need to be completed for every Bikeway section implemented.

· Test out naming conventions and nomenclature.

· Test out the usability of the system so that improvements can be considered. We recommend surveying users for a period of time to gather usability data.

· Identify changes/updates to sign types and/or standards.

· Identify and develop new sign types that may work better in context.

→ Recommendation #9

Public Art: Overview

Why Public Art?
Public Art plays a critical role in our communities and can enhance experience for transit users across multiple system types, including bikeways.

Public Art will act as an engagement tool, introducing people to the system and making their trips more joyful. It will also engage local communities, artists, citizens, and institutions, making them an integral part of the bikeways system. Installations supporting the routes can tell stories, frame views, and serve practical purposes, all while marketing bicycling in general and the system by encouraging and highlighting social interactions with art pieces.

We envision a range of types of Public Art that can populate the entire Montgomery County bikeways system, each providing engaging ways for users to weave art into their daily lives.

→ **Recommendation #9 (continued)**

Public Art: Large-scale commissioned pieces

Typically chosen via an RFP process, these large pieces command substantial budgets ($50K+) and may include lighting and landscape improvements.
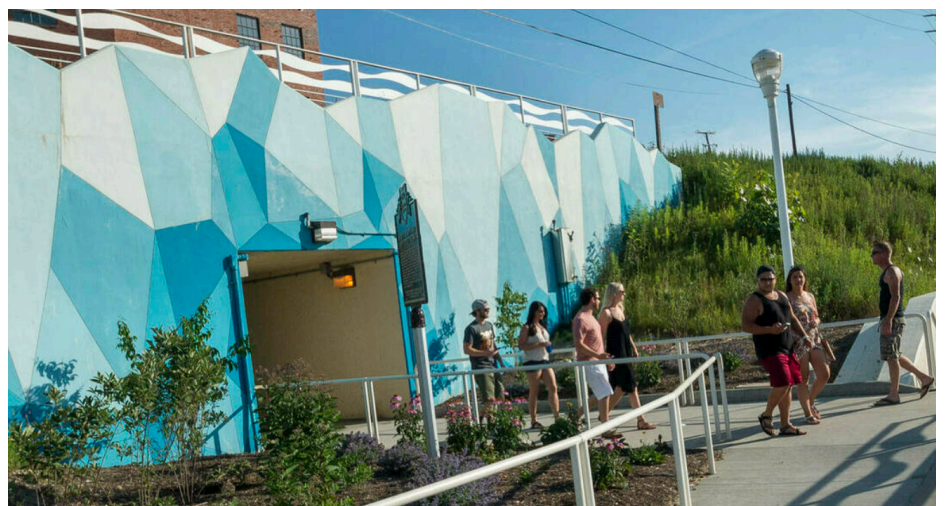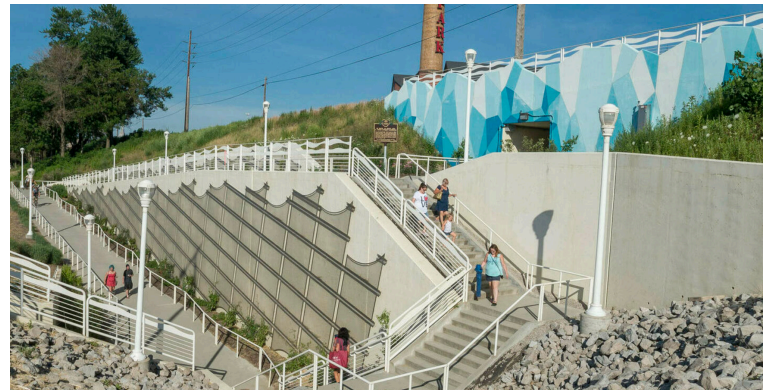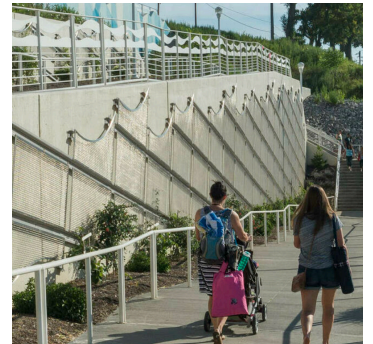
Purpose:

- Highlight key nodes throughout the system

- Act as way finding landmarks (meet me at.....)

- Provide a sense of intrigue to visitors and others who may not be acquainted with Bikeways

- Provide photo opportunities

- Act as passive system marketing

Location:

- Heavily-trafficked nodes

- Activity centers

- Visible to multiple user groups

- Places big enough to act as gathering places

Partners:

- Schools and educational institutions

- Arts organizations

- Local government

- Libraries

- Private business owners

- Transit authorities

EXAMPLE
LAND Studio, Cleveland OH
Cold Front
Mark Reigelman II, Designer

Project Partners
Cuyahoga Arts & Culture
City of Cleveland Ohio

→ **Recommendation #9 (continued)**

Public Art: Community-based installations

Simpler installations, these pieces will typically have smaller budgets and incorporate work from amateur artist/students.
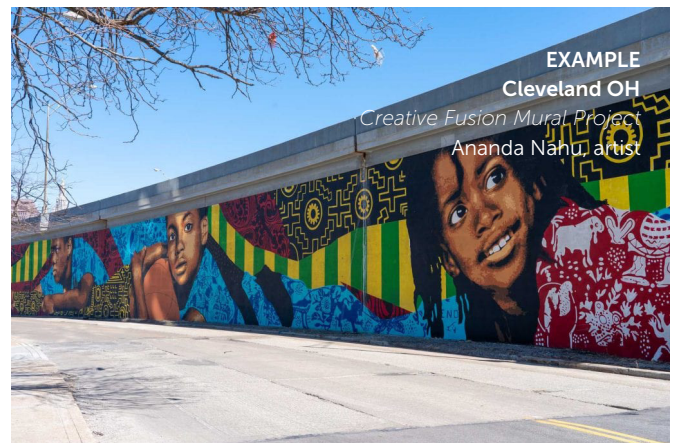
Purpose:

- Highlight local neighborhoods, residents, and institutions

- Build connections between the Bikeways and the communities it serves

- Create opportunities for artists across a range of skill-levels

- Allow the opportunity for grassroots engagement with the system

- Place-specific marketing

Location:

- Proximate to participating institutions

- Neighborhoods

- Places where larger installations would not be appropriate

- Areas with an engaged citizenry

Partners:

- Schools and educational institutions

- Arts organizations

- Libraries

- Residents

EXAMPLE
Cleveland OH
Creative Fusion Mural Project
Ananda Nahu, artist

EXAMPLE
Cleveland OH
Love Doves
Erin Guido and Joe Lanzilotta, artists

→ Recommendation #9 (continued)

Public Art: Series pieces

Installations base around a series of smaller-scale pieces placed throughout a portion of the system (can be multiple of the same object or objects that adhere to a theme).

Purpose:

- Provide a sense of discovery and intrigue

- Mark and/or market specific routes

- Passively market system

- Engage local citizenry

Location:

- System-wide

- Places that encourage further exploration and discovery

- Highly-trafficked routes

Partners:

- Schools and educational institutions

- Arts organizations

- Libraries

EXAMPLE
Sidewalk Illustrations
David Zinn, Artist

EXAMPLE
LAND Studio, Cleveland OH
Edgewater Hill Neighborhood
Blue Birds
Mark Reigelman II, Designer

Project Partners
Neighborhood Connections
Edgewater Hill Block Club
Detroit Shoreway Community
Development Corporation
Councilman Matt Zone

→ **Recommendation #9 (continued)**

Public Art: Temporary installations

Public Art that has a defined timeline for placement that will be updated periodically (i.e quarterly or yearly)
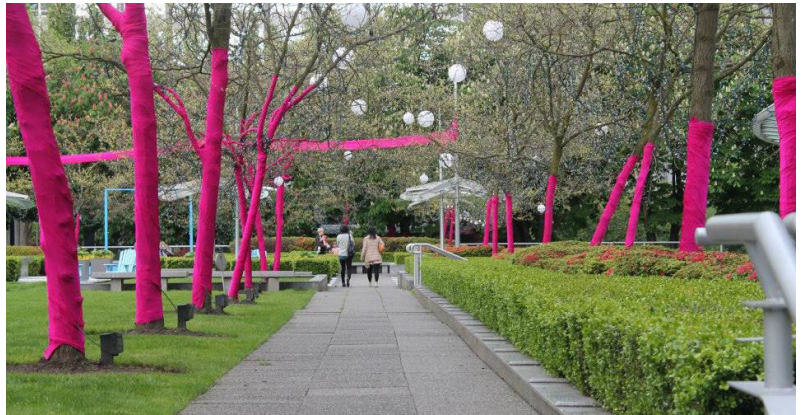
Purpose:

- Adds a dynamic element for repeat users

- Encourages increased usage

- Provides opportunities for more artists to engage

- Place or event-specific marketing

Location:

- System-wide

- Highly-trafficked routes

- Proximate to participating institutions

- Areas with an engaged citizenry

Partners:

- Schools and educational institution

- Arts organizations

- Local government

→ Recommendation #9 (continued)

Public Art: Functional pieces

Creatively-imagined infrastructure pieces like bike racks, benches, transit shelters, storytelling signage or route markers

Purpose:

· Bring life to those amenities that already enhance the system

· Mark and/or Market specific routes

· Provide opportunities for different types of artists to engage with the system

Location:

· All routes and associates spaces

Partners:

· Arts organizations

· Local government

· Libraries

· Transit authorities

EXAMPLE
HIGH TRESTLE TRAIL
BRIDGE

→ **Recommendation #9 (continued)**

Public Art: Place/Circumstance-specific installations

Installations that take advantage of particular circumstances in the environment (spatial geography, views, proximity to natural or cultural assets).
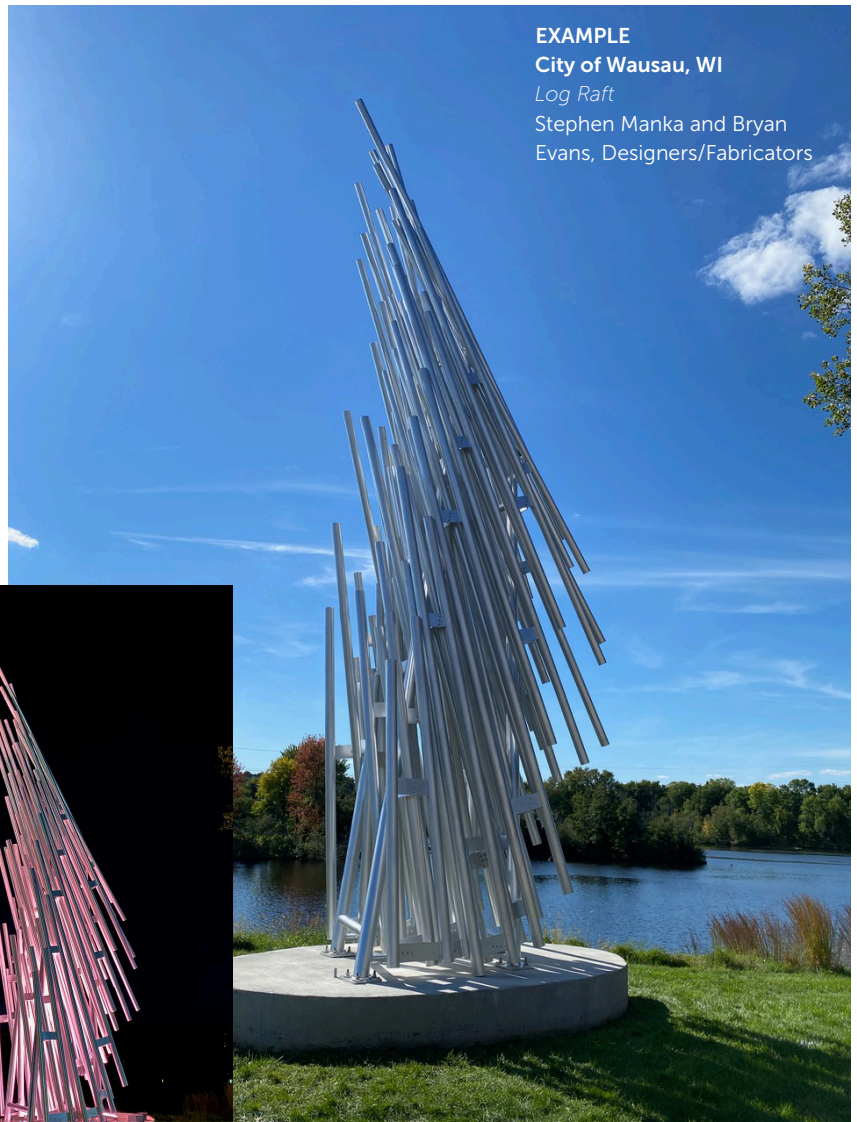

Purpose:

- Highlight specific places or features by directly engaging them with art

- Bridge Bikeways system with adjacent neighborhoods and uses

- Tell stories

- Frame views or mark paths

Location:

- All routes and associates spaces

- Highly-trafficked nodes

Partners:

- Schools and educational institution

- Arts organizations

- Local government

- Private business owners

- Transit authorities

EXAMPLE
City of Wausau, WI
Log Raft
Stephen Manka and Bryan Evans, Designers/Fabricators