



PRESS RELEASE: July 22, 2015

Greater vibrancy and activation coming to Monument Circle *Daily programming and temporary public amenities launch Aug. 1*

INDIANAPOLIS –Visitors to Monument Circle will soon enjoy more places to relax, play games, exercise, socialize, and enjoy creative programming through an artist-led programming initiative called Spark: Monument Circle, a partnership between The City of Indianapolis, Big Car Collaborative – a local nonprofit placemaking organization – and Downtown Indy.

Big Car artists are leading this 10-week demonstration in collaboration with many partner organizations and individual artists and performers. Seven days a week, from Saturday, August 1 to Friday, October 16, hospitality staff will facilitate programming and visitor experiences for people who will enjoy bistro-style seats on custom-built wooden decks, interactive art, music, history experiences, yoga, guided walks, talks, and play experiences for people of all ages.

This additional programming will be free to the public, easily accessible, and designed to make the civic plaza a more vibrant place, thanks to a \$200,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and additional funding from the Central Indiana Community Foundation and the City.

"Monument Circle is the heart of our city," said Melody Park, the City's Director of Sustainability. "Offering more reasons for residents and visitors to spend time here every week through Spark will boost revenue for local businesses, support local artists and cultural organizations, and provide insight for the City's Monument Circle redesign team on how the space can be a more attractive, people-centered space."

Throughout the process, the Spark team is testing ideas and plans under consideration for the long-term renovation of Monument Circle. These plans include extending the area for pedestrians on the outside of the Circle. Temporary decks, or "parklets," will help demonstrate this wider zone. Big Car executive director, Jim Walker, the project's lead artist, said this approach is a cost-effective way to "pre-design" before the redesign.

"We're excited to test ideas and get a feel for what works best and share this with the City and with Downtown Indy," said Walker. Spark is a short-term project that will yield long-term, positive results for our city – both on Monument Circle and elsewhere as we begin to think more about not just building public spaces, but about enlivening them with activities and making them welcoming and comfortable for all people."

Downtown Indy agrees. "We heard loud and clear from input gathered to shape Downtown's strategic plan – Velocity – that folks wanted more activation of our public spaces," said Sherry Seiwert, president of Downtown Indy. "Spark will do just that while taking advantage



of our geographical and cultural hub of the city. We're excited to use data gathered during Spark to inform the eventual redesign of the Circle."

The City, Downtown Indy, Indiana War Memorial Commission, and other downtown stakeholders are working together to analyze possibilities including wider sidewalks, improved lighting, a sound system, public restrooms and a cafe zone, along with rehabilitation of the underground storm water and electrical utilities. Spark activities will not close the Circle to traffic, other than occasional single quadrant closures for special Spark events.

Spark's extensive evaluation plan, designed by Big Car's Urban Design Research Fellow Nicole Rebeck, will gather data such as visitor demographics, traffic speed, retailer revenues, programming preferences, how people get to the Circle, why they visit, how long they stay, and perceptions of the space as civic and public.

Throughout Spark's run, programming is organized with thematic days: Mellow Mondays, Talking Tuesdays, Walking Wednesdays, Throwback Thursdays, Phono Fridays, Social Saturdays, and Cycle Sundays. Here are some examples of experiences people can enjoy:

- A themed parade around the Circle every Saturday, curated by artist Rebecca Pappas
- Low key live music on Fridays, presented by Musical Family Tree, Square Cat Records, Classical Music Indy, and the Rhythm Discovery Center
- A motorbike sound machine created by Indianapolis artist Stuart Hyatt
- A visitor welcome trailer with an Indiana-connected design by Indianapolis artist Nat Russell
- An interactive, mobile "DoSeum" featuring commissioned work by artists Casey Roberts and Beatriz Vasquez
- A series of expert-led walks each Wednesday evening
- Academic experts available for conversation ("Ask an Expert") each Tuesday, presented by the IUPUI Arts & Humanities Institute
- Conversation prompts every Thursday, provided by Indiana Humanities
- Four historical characters engaging with each other and the public: Gov. Oliver Morton, city planner Alexander Ralston, businessman John Freeman, and the wife of one of Indiana's earliest governors, Mrs. Esther Brown Ray (with support from the Indiana History Society and Freetown Village)
- Yoga every Monday provided by All People's Yoga Studio
- Food trucks and other new refreshment options
- Soft foam pieces that assemble into a giant playground for kids
- Ping pong tables and board games for free play
- Open call for citizen participation at circlespark.org

In 2014, the City – with Big Car as its co-applicant – received support for Spark in the form of a \$200,000 Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, its maximum dollar amount.



Learn more about SPARK at www.circlespark.org, and about the Monument Circle construction project at www.indy.gov/monumentcircle. See full list of Spark partners at www.circlespark.org/sponsors/

-30-

SOCIAL MEDIA: @CircleSpark (Twitter) // # sparkplacemaking (Instagram) // facebook.com/sparkplacemaking (Facebook)

About the City's Office of Sustainability: *The City's Office of Sustainability was created by Mayor Greg Ballard to be the driving force behind SustainIndy. The Office provides a structure for implementation and policy recommendations for SustainIndy. The main charges of the Office of Sustainability are to lead sustainability efforts within City government; coordinate and collaborate on community sustainability goals; and establish public-private partnership opportunities to move forward aggressively on achieving the vision of a more sustainable city. Indy is committed to implementing sustainable practices that will enhance economic growth, attract and retain top talent and strengthen vibrant neighborhoods.*

About Big Car: *An Indianapolis-based 501c3 nonprofit, Big Car uses creativity as a catalyst to a better city. By providing and supporting unique, educational, participatory, playful experiences, Big Car engages people of all ages and backgrounds in art making and creative problem-solving – inspiring them to be creative thinkers and involved, connected citizens. More at www.bigcar.org.*

About Downtown Indy: *As a private, not-for-profit organization, Downtown Indy – also known as Indianapolis Downtown, Inc., is uniquely positioned to address issues that affect the area's growth, well-being and user-friendliness. Downtown Indy is charged with developing, managing, activating and marketing Downtown to make it a greater place to live, learn, work and play.*