



2019 PLACEMAKING REPORT

BIG CAR COLLABORATIVE

Laker VERBAL

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Laker VERBAL

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WHAT MAKES FOR A GREAT PUBLIC SPACE?



Plenty of room, good design, a welcoming spirit, and pleasing programming. These ingredients proved successful during a 24-week test of human-scale creative placemaking at Lugar Plaza in 2019.



In the spring of 2019, the **Department of Metropolitan Development** invited Big Car to work with our friend (and one of our co-founders) Anne Laker of **Laker Verbal LLC** to activate this new plaza: applying our placemaking experience and expertise to create a playful vibe for “downtown Indy’s backyard.” Laker and Big Car staff co-developed a program slate, and co-staffed the plaza. Big Car managed the survey process, provided and maintained equipment, handled payments to performers, and served as a consultant to Laker. Laker took the lead on day-to-day marketing, partnership cultivation and developing the plaza brand and mood.

From May 1 to October 16, 2019, we brought Lugar Plaza to life with games, drop-in programming and bigger events like **Chreece** (hip hop fest) previews, percussion concerts, and movie nights. At least 3,861

have attended these programs. We enlisted program providers such as like **Charlie Redd of Haven Yoga**, sketch artists **Ken & Roberta Avidor**, and the **Rhythm Discovery Center** (to name a few) to present activities this year. **Indianapolis City Market** was among our 20 partners.

Outfitted by Big Car with foosball, ping pong, chess, checkers, jenga, soccer goals and badminton, Lugar Plaza became an especially good place to hang out on a summer night, with the lights of the splash pad and swing set glowing in the dark.

Our surveys show: “relaxing” is the most common word people use to describe Lugar Plaza. We’re proud to have helped

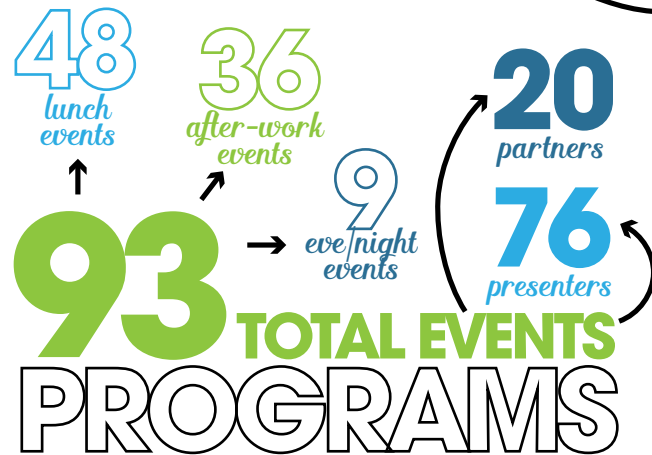
24 WEEKS OF PROGRAMMING

Approx. 276 HOURS spent staffing the plaza

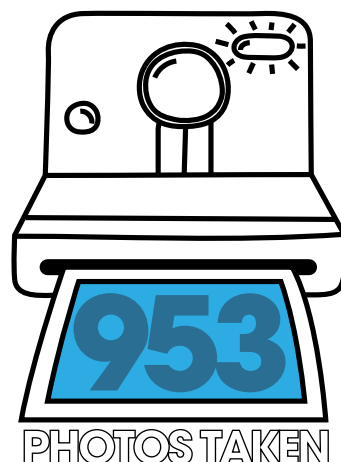
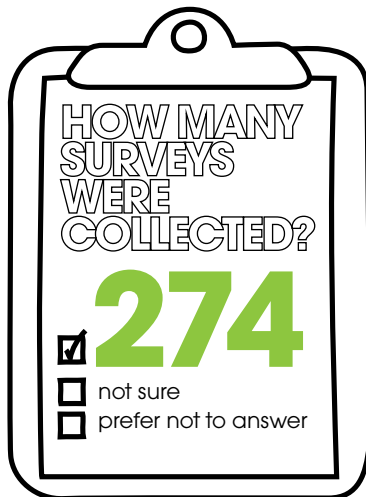
Regular staffing took place on
Mondays 11am-3pm; Tuesdays
4:30-6pm; some Thursdays
4-8pm; Fridays 11am-3pm +
special events

bring this space to life and hope to continue working with the City of Indianapolis and many others to welcome the citizens of Indianapolis to their place.

VISITORS



BY THE NUMBERS

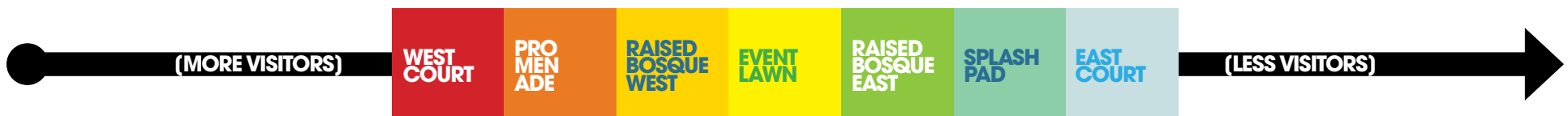
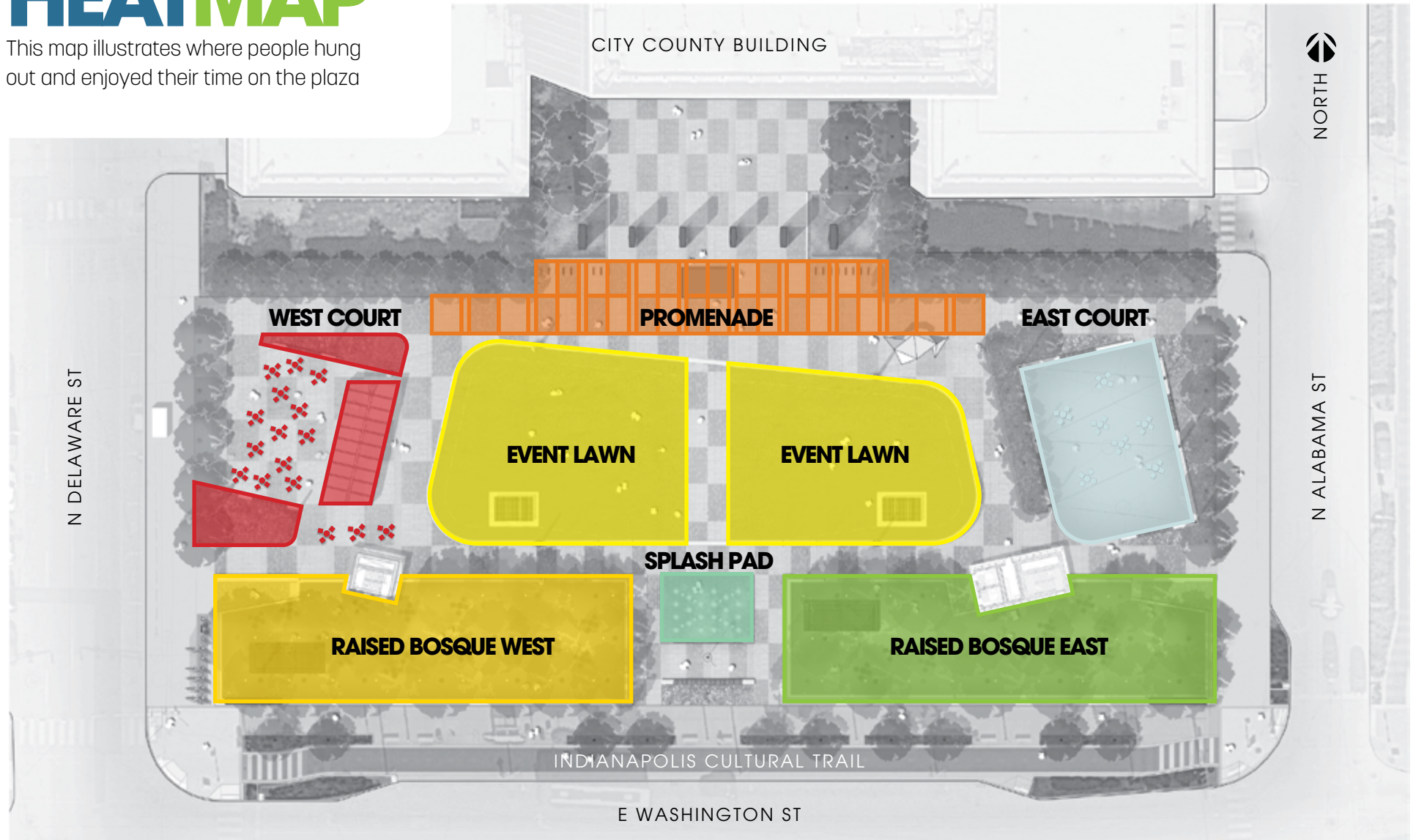


SOCIAL MEDIA EXPOSURES:

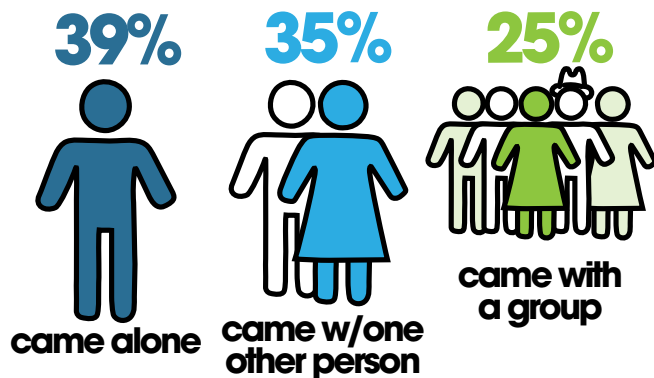
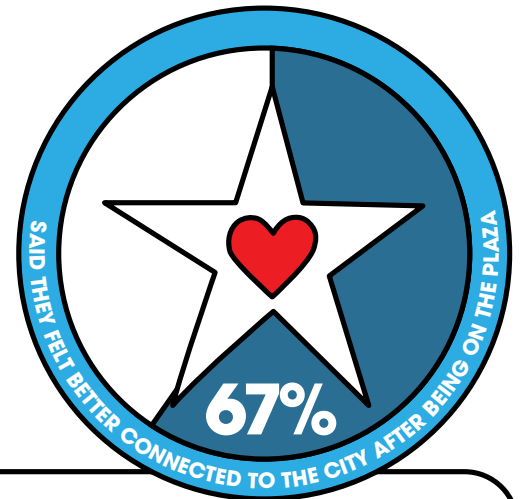
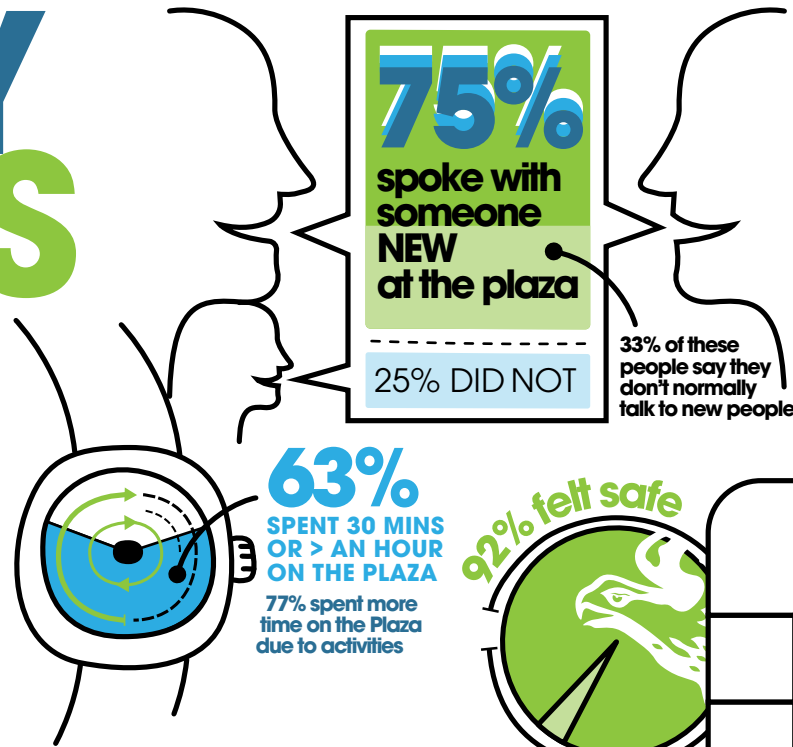


HEATMAP

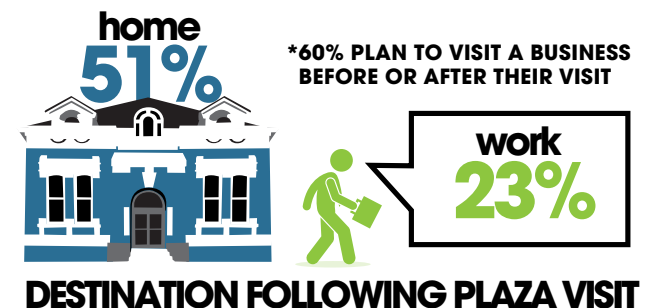
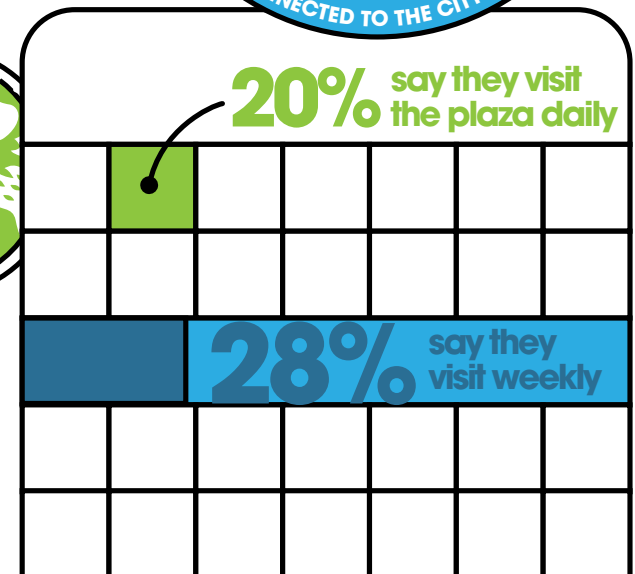
This map illustrates where people hung out and enjoyed their time on the plaza



SURVEY RESULTS



RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION "I FEEL ____ AFTER BEING AT THE PLAZA TODAY" INCLUDED:
happy (71 people);
relaxed/calm/peaceful/tranquil (72 people)
good or great (44 people)





HOW VISITORS GOT TO THE PLAZA

walking = 38%
motor vehicle = 32%
public transit = 15%
bicycle = 10%

HOW VISITORS HEARD ABOUT THE ACTIVITY OR EVENT

just walking by = 52%
social media = 17%
a friend or relative = 12%
email/CCB communication = 6%
flyer or printed source = 2%

SELF-REPORTED ETHNICITY OF VISITORS

European American, Caucasian, or White = 55%
African American or Black = 32%
Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx = 5%
Asian American = 3%
Multi-ethnic = 3%
International = 3% (from Germany, Mexico, Haiti, Greece, Vietnam, Africa)

WHERE DID PLAZA VISITORS COME FROM?

Our 274-person survey sampling revealed a nearly perfect balance of visitors residing in the north, south, east, west and central parts of town -- indicating that Lugar Plaza is a true crossroads.

Arab American or Middle Eastern = 2%
American Indian or Alaskan Native = 2%
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or Oceanian = 1%

WHAT MAKES LUGAR PLAZA UNIQUE?

When asked what brought them to the plaza today, survey respondents most often noted:

- ★ business at the CCB
- ★ seeking a place to eat/relax
- ★ curiosity / "just walking by"
- ★ with children and wanted a place to take them
- ★ drawn in by live music
- ★ came over from Transit Center

We observed that peripheral pedestrian traffic was slowest on Alabama and is also slim along Washington on the Cultural Trail.

The lawns and open greenspace on the plaza are one of its biggest draws.

Survey respondents offered way more gratitude than complaints. They are grateful for the plaza's restrooms, music, bike parking, relaxing atmosphere, and programming in general. One respondent even stated that the plaza "restores my faith in humanity."

STAFFING

SUCCESS STORIES

- ★ Interns from IUPUI's Event & Tourism Dept., compensated by DMD, served the plaza very well.
- ★ The AV personnel that Big Car provided was crucial for music and movie events.
- ★ Big Car staff invested quite a bit of time in maintaining the games: replenishing ping pong balls, chess pieces and soccer balls. Keeping games stocked (and trash picked up) sends an unspoken message about how much the plaza visitor is valued.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ★ A group of staff members dedicated to daily programming with the support of interns and program managers are important to ensure quality programming. Additional staffing is necessary for large events.
- ★ Staff need to be people-oriented and able to lift and transport heavy equipment.



SUCCESS STORIES

A guard from Eclipse Security named Alfred King [pictured] was the perfect guard for placemaking work: He took ownership of the space, its spirit, and its upkeep. He got to know regular plaza visitors, but maintained the authority to keep bad actors in line. He was helpful to programming staff. After Alfred left, subsequent guards did keep up with his level of contribution to the plaza's upkeep and did not feel as confident about managing visitor behavior.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✦ Screen security guard personalities carefully, train them well. In addition to what they are paid by the security firm, pay them a dollar or two per hour to perform functions like trash pick-up, maintaining game pieces, and helping with event set-up or tear-down – treating them as an extension of the programming staff.

SECURITY



MARKETING & BRANDING

SUCCESS STORIES

- ★ Big Car designer Andy Fry did a great job creating consistency and brand for the plaza website, bookmark, flyers and signage (all included a mini-map to educate on the plaza's locale).
- ★ Instagram account gained 577 followers over the course of the season.
- ★ E-blasts were sent every other week to CCB employees.
- ★ DMD's support on social media was crucial, and appreciated.
- ★ A great article about the plaza in Urban Times opened the season.
- ★ 2,000 bookmarks were distributed.
- ★ Flyers were shared on three occasions with Artistry building residents a few blocks east of the plaza.
- ★ A general promotional video was professionally produced halfway through the season.

- ★ A staff contact within Cummins routinely shared event info with Cummins staffers.
- ★ Notices about Lugar Plaza events were also shared with Salesforce & Angie's List..
- ★ Branded sandwich board signs invited people to "come and stay awhile" and "enjoy this space." More, with more direct messaging about how to enjoy the plaza, may help further.
- ★ Three yard signs advertising the plaza were placed around the Transit Center grounds halfway through the season and resulted in an observed increase in bus drivers taking their breaks on the plaza.
- ★ For the final movie night on the plaza, Whole Foods agreed to donate popcorn and dog treats. This came about after visiting the manager in person and then working with the marketing staff in Whole Foods' regional hub in Chicago.





MARKETING & BRANDING

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ★ A Lugar Plaza Facebook page.
- ★ Reach out to “mommy bloggers” to attract families.
- ★ Use Instagram advertising campaigns as promotional tools.
- ★ Produce pocket-sized event calendars with program dates and times.
- ★ Plan far ahead to develop a story with IndyStar that fits into their coverage plans (a press release sent mid-season did not yield any stories).
- ★ Develop a photogenic spectacle on the plaza to warrant TV coverage.
- ★ Continue event-based partnerships with Whole Foods, and advertise the idea of getting a picnic at the grocery store and bringing it to the plaza.
- ★ Focus marketing efforts to residents who can easily walk there (within a half-mile).

WANT TO BE A SUPER CITIZEN? Meet your democracy face to face

TAKE THE MIC

Curated & hosted by
ANDY D
Beer by
SUN KING

Three Wednesdays
5:30 to 6:30 pm
Outdoors @ Lugar Plaza
200 E. Washington St.
If it rains: events move indoors to City Market.

JULY 10
Interview The Media
Adam Wren of Politico and local journalists get real about their role in shaping politics.

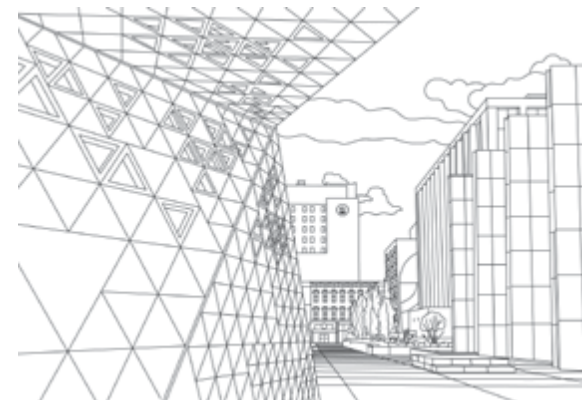
JULY 17
Dissent With Flair
Activists reveal how to go about opposing government actions you don't dig.

JULY 24
Imagine Yourself, Elected
What's it really like to be an elected official, day in, day out? Ask one.

BIG CAR COLLABORATIVE | **indyhub**
TAKE THE MIC is presented by Big Car Collaborative for Lugar Plaza with support from Indy Hub.



- ★ Emphasize the Red Line as a great way to get to the plaza.
- ★ Keep pushing Indianapolis Cultural Trail, Downtown Indy, Indy Hub, and the Arts Council as promotional partners or cross-promotion sources whenever possible.
- ★ Investigate promoting the plaza via Next Door (nearby neighborhood message boards).
- ★ Incentivize visits from nearby neighborhoods with free food/drink or prizes, marketed through Next Door or Urban Times.



Listen in as **FIVE GLOBETROTTERS** bring back **INSPIRATION** to Indianapolis with quick 8-minute presentations about a country they've recently visited. Expect to hear about the **AMAZING**, the **TROUBLING**, the **UNFORGETTABLE**.

FEATURING: Sean Oreo: MADAGASCAR Manon Voice: SPAIN Tony Wiederhold: CHINA
Ash Robinson: INDIA Alex Brooks: TANZANIA Danica Monét: MEXICO DJ Gabby Love: DJ

SHARE YOUR OWN TRAVEL EXPERIENCE WITH NEW FRIENDS BEFORE OR AFTER THE PROGRAM.

FOOD FOR SALE BY **Poke Guru**
DRINKS FOR SALE BY **Tomlinson Tap Room**
PRESENTED BY **BIG CAR COLLABORATIVE**
PROGRAM STARTS AT 8 PM
MON DAY 9:30-10:19
MUSIC + MINGLING BEFORE
LUGAR PLAZA
200 East Washington St.

Travelogue Night
LUGARPLAZA.ORG/EVENTS @LUGARPLAZA FREE!

- ★ Surveys of stakeholders and/or the general public (via social media) can reinforce community buy-in and yield some good ideas for programs.
- ★ The “Alloy” sculpture or other place on the plaza can be promoted as a selfie station featuring the #LugarPlaza hashtag.
- ★ Pursue the “NDY” sign from Visit Indy (it was not available when we checked in July).



AUDIENCES / PARTICIPANTS

SUCCESS STORIES

Our team worked to be welcoming to all plaza visitors: whether they had just been released from incarceration or finishing a probation hearing -- or whether they were an architect visiting from a nearby city. In establishing the spirit of the plaza, our team worked hard to invite

participation on equal level, make conversation and assume the best about everyone until proven otherwise.

Judging by our survey demographics and general observations, Lugar Plaza is a diverse place. The lunch hour language classes we held were well-received.

Grandchildren with grandkids were frequently observed users of the plaza and splash pad.

We made a priority of enlisting CCB workers as a program presenters. Operations guy LaShaun Mitchell took part in an impromptu rap session. Bailiff Ken Skelton performed with his blues duo. And Lona White of the Marion County Clerk's Office taught wreathmaking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✦ More programs that leverage the talents of city workers and nearby workers (Salesforce, Angie's List, etc).
- ✦ More programming with an international flair.
- ✦ More family programming.
- ✦ Weekend and evening programming.
- ✦ Some patrons noticed people experiencing homelessness on the plaza and the need for services for them.



SUCCESS STORIES

Our best attended program was the bike-in movie night with 250 people. The second- and third-best attended were the two hip-hop events presented by Chreece.

An unexpected success was a percussion quartet concert presented on a Saturday night in August by our partner, the Rhythm Discovery Center. About 200 people either showed up specifically or were drawn in by this free concert on the lawn.

Drop-in learning experiences such as language lessons and beekeeping workshops were well-received and if consistently done, could grow in popularity.

The plaza is a great setting for movies (but wind was often an issue).

Speaking events (such as Take the Mic and Travelogue night) were well attended. The only difficulties were due to wind and heat/lack of shade, but would work well if a semi-permanent, heavy-duty tent were deployed.

We experimented with an unscheduled street theater performance on the plaza on two occasions, both involving “performers” wearing oversized pigeon heads and tossing bread at people, with irony. This was a strategic programming choice to see how plaza visitors react to an unexpected, humorous intervention. Most found it amusing, but one individual did not! Thanks to DMD, this person spoke with Anne and the air was cleared; she was subsequently invited to present a program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ★ On warm nights, after the sun goes down, the plaza becomes more populated. Schedule concerts and music events at these evening times.
- ★ Survey respondents requested more weekend fitness (yoga, meditation, tai chi, zumba, etc.) programs.
- ★ Test screening movies on Friday or Saturday nights.
- ★ A well-publicized program series aimed at kids/families would likely be popular.
- ★ Larger live music events would be great to attract people to the plaza.
- ★ Spoken word programs would work well also.
- ★ Participatory programs like drumming or artmaking should be aimed at/scheduled for families in addition to downtown workers and adults.
- ★ Continue with street theater performances. Public surprise, spontaneity and the right sort of humor are memorable approaches to placemaking -- and more flair of this kind signals Indianapolis as a more mature, interesting city.



INFRASTRUCTURE / EQUIPMENT / USER EXPERIENCE

SUCCESS STORIES

- ★ Ping pong, soccer, badminton and foosball were fitting activities for the plaza.
- ★ While staff worked hard to maintain chess and checkers pieces, the wind on the plaza requires replenishing these games often.
- ★ The plug-and-play audio system on the plaza is superb.
- ★ We created a Lugar Plaza audio cheat sheet so City communications managers can plug into the system and set up spontaneous press events on their own as needed.
- ★ The Vibenomics soundtrack added a lot to plaza ambiance.
- ★ We placed all the games on the most



populated corner of the plaza, and began situating many programs there, given the shade created by the swing set.

- ★ After realizing that adults and kids

were enjoying the plaza and its creative lighting later into the evening, we extended the splash pad hours.

- ★ The bistro tables and chairs wore reasonably well throughout the season.



INFRASTRUCTURE / EQUIPMENT / USER EXPERIENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✦ Enlist a civil engineer to design a wind-proof shade solution for the East Court.
- ✦ Individual umbrellas could work on the plaza, but only if there is adequate staffing to take them in and out daily at strategic times, or to watch the weather each day and decide if it's suitable for having the umbrellas out.
- ✦ Classical Music Indy, who performed at Lugar Plaza ten times over the course of the season, argues for a permanent awning to shield

performers, and a small stage in the West Court.

- ✦ Address the issue of the power tripping due to moisture in the boxes on the West Court.
- ✦ A water fountain & water bottle filler would be a wonderful addition to the plaza.
- ✦ Arrange furniture and other infrastructure to create intimate "rooms" within the plaza. It is a vast space, and creating these spaces would help people feel comfortable congregating or gathering.
- ✦ Determine splash pad dates and hours and make them clear at the beginning of the season; same with restroom hours.

- ✦ More time could be invested in Vibenomics musical curation and recorded messages for the plaza.
- ✦ The bistro tabletops need a focused cleaning every week to maintain the plaza's desirability as a place to eat lunch.
- ✦ Purchase windsocks for microphones to prevent wind interference for music performances or speeches.
- ✦ As time goes on, new or rotating public art programs (prioritizing art that's interactive) would be a photogenic, engaging, and keep people coming back. See the Arts Council report from 2016.

FOOD / BEVERAGE

SUCCESS STORIES

- ★ Gomez BBQ and Three Days in Paris were good food partners for special events
- ★ A hot dog vendor occasionally set up on the southwest corner of the plaza

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ★ A water fountain needs to be installed.
- ★ A beverage sales cart would encourage longer stays on the plaza. Beer gardens would be a great way to keep people coming back and staying longer.
- ★ Consider other beer vending options, as Tom Tap's lack of customer engagement and lack of branding were a challenge.
- ★ Food sold from a cart or table is preferable to food trucks in creating a welcoming atmosphere.
- ★ Popsicle/ice cream sales were never achieved.
- ★ The most common suggestion received on the summer-long visitor survey we did was "food, snacks, drinks for sale."



PARTNERSHIPS / EXTERNAL EVENTS

SUCCESS STORIES

The following corporations reached out during the season with an interest in renting the plaza or paying to have a presence: Angie's List, Delta Airlines, Indianapolis Motor Speedway, & AT&T.

We partnered with the following entities on events: Rhythm Discovery Center, Haven Yoga, ReCraft Indy, City Market, Classical Music Indy, Indianapolis Public Library, Immigrant Welcome Center, Indy Ultimate, Circle City Athletics, Know No Stranger, IndyHub, Tomlinson Tap, Chreece, Garfield Honey Company, Indy Humane, Indianapolis Animal Care, Whole Foods, Bike Indianapolis, Italian Heritage Society of Indiana, Hoosier Beer Geek, and Hoosier History Live.



PARTNERSHIPS / EXTERNAL EVENTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

★ Our two-event partnership with Chreece, the hip hop festival, was the most successful, bringing a young crowd and attracting passersby with free music. Also successful was the event co-planned with Bike Indianapolis. They

brought their fans and free guarded bike parking that was used by at least 50 people at the September movie night.

- ★ Enticing existing, established event planners to locate their event at Lugar Plaza.
- ★ To build up the external events rental program: market Lugar Plaza to marketing firms and event planning firms.

★ The greatest successes happen when there is time to co-plan events, not simply request partnership after an event idea is fully formed. Partnerships need to be developed 4 to 6 months out to be most effective.

★ Pursue the Cultural Trail as a partner: they co-promoted one Lugar Plaza event but never followed through on a meeting invitation.



BIG CAR COLLABORATIVE

visit us at www.bigcar.org



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