

Only Downtown Greenway in the world, **Indianapolis Cultural Trail**



I have cycled in cities large and small all over America and the western world. And nowhere have I found a more bikeable downtown than the one here in Indianapolis. Not even close. And all of this is due to the fact that this history laden city (**NBG Histories** we developed as we built the 3 minute, 55 second

Cultural Trail Video)

has the only functional Downtown Greenway in the world.

The Indianapolis Cultural Trail (ICT) is the secret sauce needed to connect the Nation from one coast to the other with the Greenway we long have envisioned. This is so, because what it has done for the most centrally located metropolitan area in America can quite readily be replicated in all of our **NBG Anchor Cities**. Once a critical mass of people can see for themselves the giant playground the ICT has brought about in Indianapolis, all of our other population centers will all feel compelled to follow in its footsteps.

As the anchor for the Greenway Capital of the World (Indianapolis has the highest concentration of Greenways anywhere on the planet), the ICT is the crowning jewel for the greenway movement that has completely transformed the entirety of what used to be a

tired Rust Belt region. It symbolizes the return to people power that has had a ripple effect all throughout the counties that surround it. On the Cultural Trail itself, property values have skyrocketed and the businesses that service its users are flourishing. Not only has it also engendered a building boom along its right of way, it has benefitted many cutting-edge large employers (Anthem, Sales Force, Cummins, Eli Lilly, Rolls Royce, NCAA) who use it to help them attract and keep the best talent.

Because the retail establishments along the way have embraced it, they and their clientele know to be more mindful of the needs of ICT users, and by extension, bicyclists in general. It is this thinking that they often bring into the communities where they live. And here in Indianapolis, we often hear about the town fathers and mothers in other smaller population centers in the region who want to be connected to the greenways that feed the Cultural Trail.

In a city that once was drunk with speeding automobiles as symbolized by its world famous Indy 500 Motor Speedway, the ICT has become a breeding ground for cyclists young and old. It has spawned the creation of well over a dozen informal bike groups who meet regularly to ride on it. This has had the effect of making the bicycle attractive to young people who would normally turn to cars once they become old enough to drive.



Fourteen blocks wide and eighteen blocks long on just its main grid, the Indianapolis Cultural Trail is a functioning

Greenway locals use every day to do their lives. On it there is a state university, 67,000-seat, football stadium, 17,000-seat, basketball arena, the massive main library, a plethora of parks, as

well as concert halls, giant murals, fitness facilities, grocery stores, drinking establishments, book shops, hair parlors, restaurants, coffee, pastry and thrift shops, breweries, a theatre complex/dance venue, even a popular comedy club. For visitors who come from afar there is a healthy selection of lodging purveyors.

The ICT also connects a world class zoo, State Park, monolithic memorials, historic statues, a 12,000-seat baseball park, very soon a 20,000-seat soccer stadium complex, the 284-foot tall Soldiers and Sailors Monument of 1888, its globally renowned 1.5 mile Indy Canal, world class art and history museums, national calibre entertainment venues, the State Capitol, its massive Convention Center complex (the busiest in the world), the 600-foot wide White River, and Union Station, the first, in 1853, train station hub in the world. It was Union Station that connected the East Coast to the Transcontinental Railroad and the promise of California.

On the ICT, the smooth surface of a handsome, red brick has replaced concrete sidewalks to pass ten or so feet away from the front doors of the myriad of businesses it accesses. Add beautiful landscaping and tastefully designed interpretive signage that call out everything from old buildings and fire tragedies to other historical events that took place at the locations they herald. In such a way, this is how our Anchor Cities will also use their downtown Greenways to tell the stories about their own unique character

On the ICT, where there are retail businesses, shoppers on foot are often separated from cyclists by wide variety of greenery and gardens. This as the entire greenway is intermixed with historic churches, cathedrals and grand buildings.

Because the ICT's signature red brick, has the cyclist in mind, its smooth surface is tapered back down to the road level where it meets the street. As such, there is no bumping or jarring when it meets the traffic lights that favor the

cyclist. This as rental bikes can be seen ridden or in their stalls all throughout the Cultural Trail.



In selling itself to the world, the Indianapolis Cultural Trail could almost just rest on the laurels of just one of its stops, the Indy Canal. Footsteps

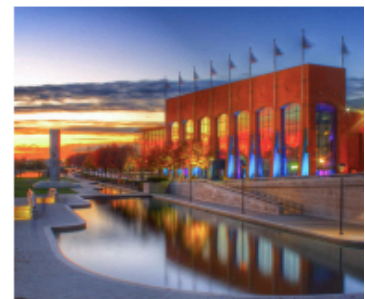
from the State Capitol that anchors its downtown is a man made canal that dates all the way back to 1836. Rebuilt beginning in the 1980's to serve as a recreational haven, the Indy Canal offers a little bit of everything to most anyone.

One can sit on a bench or in a restaurant along the canal and just watch the world go by. Tastefully designed buildings and beautifully landscaped grounds line this peaceful waterway. On its wide sidewalks, couples, hand in hand are gently passed by 2, 3 and 4-person pedal cars, often with families in them, that slowly scuttle about. In the water, 4-person pedal boats, kayaks and gondolas with opera singers stream by the several fountains that send bursts of water high into the air. Ducks, geese and other waterfowl come and go. A novel break from the city all around it, the white noise of water not only streams from the fountains in the middle of the canal, there are even walls that border the walkway that are covered in liquid cascades.

During weekday summer afternoons, public concerts at several different venues are a weekly

treat. And as Canal strollers revel in the wonder at hand, there is a park like area at its northern end that also features a music series. It is here, under a signature bike and pedestrian bridge that music performances are regularly scheduled throughout the summer months.

On the other side of this part of the canal, during the weekends, a drum circle can often be heard as they play alongside acrobatic yoga, even capoeira practitioners. Here picnics can be seen spread out on the lawns adjacent to the massive play structure that is filled with children. Hammocks hang from the trees. Zip lines support young people practicing their tight rope skills.



By bringing cyclists downtown with attractions like the Indy Canal, city government here is helping local bike riders and out of the area pedal tourists alike to spend money in the places of business in its central core. And as we as bicyclists help downtown Indianapolis thrive, we also help cyclists on all the roads in somewhat near proximity. This is so, because the people who run the city also know that in order to get our pocket books, they have to provide safe passage on the streets and paths that feed the city's center.

Besides city planners working to make it easier for us, as cyclists, to get to downtown with safer streets and paths, those in vehicles also want to help us get to where we can spend our money too. Because they often know someone who has employment because of us, a job related to the greenway, or others who have benefitted from our expenditures of cash, motorists near downtown seem to keep more of an eye out for us. More often than not, as we touched on above, we get the teence of wiggle room we may need from them for clear passage when our paths cross.



Consciously or subconsciously, drivers here also tend to react this way, even if they don't cycle themselves, because they often know someone who does. And as more of their neighbors and friends join us, those of us on two wheels are not seen as enemies to their transportation efforts but a part of their extended family of friends. It is with this realization that downtown Indianapolis cyclists are seen as an important part of the woodwork.

As on-line commerce pushes one brick and mortar business and industry after another to extinction, the only retail establishments that will survive will be those that offer people a place where people can socialize. Off the beaten path,

enormous, ceiling covered, temperature controlled shopping malls, surrounded by a sea of parking, once served the purpose of bringing humans together. However, as they age and lose their novelty, and as people tire of the car-centric lifestyles they require, Americans are returning to their downtown business districts.

Growing numbers of people are leaving the suburbs altogether. In removing traffic filled commutes from their personal living equations, those leaving the outlying residential areas are rejuvenating the new neighborhoods of America, its downtowns that are being revitalized everywhere. It is these rediscovered areas that will be looking to Indianapolis for the example it sets. And as they do they will see Indianapolis has the bicycle at its core.

There are many winners when the private automobile is not the ruler king of a city, especially its downtown. Not only do its neighbors get to know one another, but they are able to more readily share the world around them with people from places far and near and even from other

countries. When it is safe to move about on your own two legs to take advantage of the fun offerings that can be had, many non-fuel driven forms of conveyance can be enjoyed.

Besides one's own personal bike, like what we see here in Indianapolis, locals and tourists can also explore the city on rental bikes, and 2, 3 and 4-person surreys, even in bike taxis and on rental grade recumbent pedal machines. As more and more smiling, wide-eyed people let these fun new ways of self propulsion move them about, downtown Indianapolis has begun to feel more like a village. A happy place where we can spend our money without feeling like we are in a noisy city filled with foul smelling cars, trucks and buses that we have to constantly be on the lookout for.

It is this that will make our cornerstone cities attractive to large non-industrial employers. Here, for example, in Indianapolis, where the inner core is becoming more and more like a college campus setting, more and more new office towers are rising above the street. Locating in such fun circumstance makes it easier for employers to

give their employees places to eat and play when they are not on the clock.

Turning Anchor City downtowns into bicycle playgrounds has other ramifications for cyclists far and near to these cities as well. As it turns such business centers into biking destinations, it will spawn other pathways that connect to them. Surrounding areas will all build people powered connections to their Downtown Greenways. Already the Indianapolis Cultural Trail is served by the Centra Canal towpath, the Pleasant Run Trail, the White River Trail and the 18-mile long Monon Trail which will, in time reach Chicago.



People come from all over the world to experience the 10 miles of this amazing piece of bicycle infrastructure. It is unlike any greenway anywhere on the globe as it plants the seed for the greater peace and prosperity that can result when a town or city shifts its focus from a car-centric one to a bike-centric one. As a brightly glowing Downtown Greenway with no equal, these are the seedling miles that I am proud to be a part of. The Indianapolis Cultural Trail is the trophy we can now genuinely hold up as an example of what the entirety of our National Bicycle Greenway can become.

About the magic that prevails in downtown Indianapolis, because of the ICT, Mr. Greenway, Ray Irvin, says, “the ICT is a showcase of how the businesses of the future will all operate – car visits will not be encouraged, but human powered ones will.” It was Irvin who, from Indiana, led the charge that resulted in Greenways all over America and Europe. As the genuine prophet that Ray is, he says that “to be successful in the not too distant

future, your storefront will have to be on a people powered thoroughway – it will have to be bike friendly.”

In going forward with our plan to position Cultural Trails in all 19 of our other National Bicycle Greenway Anchor Cities, we need the Nation to understand that because of the ICT, Indianapolis has the most enjoyable, activity-filled and bike friendly downtown in America. We need cyclists from all over the country to want to come here to prove this for themselves. Whereupon, as they go back to their communities seeking to follow the example we have set, this will help us lay the foundation for replicating Cultural Trails in all 19 of our other NBG Anchor Cities.

Because city officials so greatly honor the Indianapolis Cultural Trail, here is the proclamation we have drafted that we look forward to getting read into the public record -

WHEREAS, the Indianapolis Cultural Trail hereinafter referred to as the ICT, is the only Downtown Greenway in the world; and,

WHEREAS, the ICT connects to Indy's broad Greenway network of trails, as well as its river, wild lands and burgeoning new business districts; and,

WHEREAS, at 10-miles long, the ICT safely connects cyclists to a broad selection of places where they can eat, sleep, shop and play; and,

WHEREAS, while business is being conducted a safe distance away, ICT journeys are augmented by history, art, beautifully landscaped grounds and a smooth red brick pathway on which their tires glide; and,

WHEREAS, as the ICT acts like beachfront property to greatly increase real estate values, new businesses and lodging opportunities regularly petition for inclusion; and,

WHEREAS, in making downtown vibrant and giving it a sense of community, the ICT acts like a Commons where locals regularly have face-to-face encounters; and,

WHEREAS, the ICT has a 7-person staff made up of professionals who efficiently look after its every need, from maintenance to promotion to community engagement, etc., the ICT will continue to grow as a beloved treasure.

Cultural Trail by the Numbers

(a 2018 Report):

Miles of Trail - 8 (10 in 2023)

Cultural districts connected - 6

Fountain Square, Indiana Avenue, Mass Ave, Indy Canal, White River State Park, and the Wholesale District

Millions of total project cost - \$63

Millions of total private funding - \$27.5

Millions of total federal transportation funding - \$35.5 (\$20.5 million TIGER grant)

Cubic yards of topsoil - 8,065

Millions of estimated economic impact - \$864.5

Estimated jobs created - 11,372

Acres of new landscaping - 5

Bike racks - 86

Square feet of storm-water planters - 25,400

Miles of Indianapolis Parks Greenway Trail system connected to the ICT - 40

Year Trail officially open as complete - 2013

Public art projects along the Trail - 7