

Media Release
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Artful Crossings Initiative Takes Root Redesign of Pedestrian Flag Holders to Feature Work of Local Artists

Madison, Wisconsin – Why did the pedestrian cross the road? To see the art on the other side, of course! Safe Communities Madison-Dane County is thrilled to announce the Artful Crossing Initiative with the recent installation of three newly-designed pedestrian flag boxes on February 16; the goal is to redesign additional crossings throughout Dane County with interested partners.

The Artful Crossings Initiative is a collaborative effort between City of Madison Traffic Engineering, Dane County artists, Sector67 fabrication interns, as well as neighborhood and business associations, schools and the community at large. Installation of upgraded pedestrian flag boxes is now complete at three crossings, including: Atwood Avenue-Ohio Street (featuring artist Laura Meddaugh); Atwood-Sugar-Oakridge Avenue (featuring artist Peter Patau); West Mifflin-Fairchild Street (featuring artist Romano Johnson).

Pedestrian flag boxes replace the plastic tube-style holders of the bright orange flags, with unique art on each side of the street, representing the creative work by hundreds of county-wide artists. Safe Communities hopes the initiative will inspire bike and walking tours and other projects and events to bring the community together.

Artful Crossings is a project which stems from a locally well-known and successful pedestrian flag program, led by Safe Communities Madison-Dane County that began in 2002. Originally started as a way to increase intersection safety, the pedestrian flag program has also shown improved walkability and bikeability at intersections where flags are installed. This initiative also helps to improve public health and connections to one's community, and encourages changes to sedentary lifestyles by incorporating exercise in daily activity to reduce obesity. More than a decade later, the Artful Crossings Initiative is taking the project to a new level of community engagement.

Mike Fisher, lead engineer for the pedestrian flag boxes, partnered with local hacker space Sector67 and student interns to create a new look for the boxes to be visually appealing, sturdy and functional. The project also offered a job development and training opportunity for the youth in our community and provided practical skills with an enhanced learning experience.

There is a strong movement in Dane County focusing on placemaking initiatives, which is a community-inspired, creative, quick and easy enhancement that immediately connects people and place. Upgraded pedestrian flag boxes such as the ones created for the Artful Crossings Initiative will engage and excite pedestrians and give credit to local artists for their contribution to our community, and provide a sense of place for those who live, work and play in it.

Safe Communities is actively seeking partners to host crossings in Dane County, or to provide financial support for the project. For more information about Safe Communities Madison-Dane County, visit www.safercommunity.net or contact 608-441-3060.0

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