

Animating Infrastructure Program | Sample Projects

Each of these projects demonstrates integration of the arts into a community, a connection to a community's shared narrative, community engagement via the arts, or all of the foregoing. They are not intended to serve as model projects, but as inspiration to spark your ideas.

Bike and Pedestrian Path

A downtown organization working in partnership with the school and the parks and recreation department identifies a location for a community bike path and would like to include sculptural signs and bike racks along the trail. The placards would reflect the community history -- an important stop along the Underground Railroad. A sculptor is hired with Animating Infrastructure Grant funds to design the signs and bike racks. The community now has the vision and specific designs/budget in place to actively fundraise to implement the project. The path will be open to pedestrians and bikers daily from dawn to dusk.

Small Wind Tower and Solar Panels

A town select board working in partnership with the local energy company wants to install a small-scale wind turbine or solar panel to generate power for the town offices. The design — developed with a team consisting of an engineer, architect, and artist hired with Animating Infrastructure Grant funds — will be made not only as functional, but also to reflect the unique aspects of the community history in the machine tool industry. The energy company will hold community seminars on the benefits of wind/solar energy during construction. The structure is visible to the community and there is information about the work at the town office, the local library, and on the town website.

Local Bridge

A town planning commission is faced with replacing a small bridge on a road in the community. A sculptor is hired with Animating Infrastructure Grant funds to work with an architect and engineer to design artistic enhancements for the bridge. A design is developed for a new covered bridge that has images that reflect the community transportation history carved in the overhead entrances. Carvings of trains, carriages, bicycles, tractors, and cars found in images from the historical society's collection of photos are included in the design. With the artistic enhancements already designed into the bridge, the town now has a plan with a specific vision that is reflective of the community and unique to its place. There is a sidewalk on the bridge and information about the images is provided at the site.

Farmers Market

A downtown association working in partnership with area farmers wants to create a series of permanent farm stand structures that are attractive, uniquely artful, and able to support regular farmers market activities. The farm stands will be designed in partnership with an architect and artists hired with Animating Infrastructure Grant funds to offer a visibly distinctive experience that attracts visitors and customers – not just for the world class food, but also for the exciting visual experience in the space. Each farm stand design reflects a unique element of the community's agricultural history. The structures will be used for weekly farmers and artisan markets.

Public Library

A local public library is about to undergo a design process to build an addition to its historic building. Working in partnership with the local elementary school, the library uses Animating Infrastructure Grant funds to hire a visual artist to work with the community to develop artistic enhancements to the building that reflect the importance of reading. The artist works with the project architect and the library's board of trustees and staff as well as teachers from the school to suggest project enhancements that make the space more efficient and offer a better patron experience; these include a new children's reading room, and outdoor reading garden that include permanent sculptural seating elements designed in the shape of letters of the alphabet. Weekly storytelling sessions will be hosted by community elders.

Fire Station

XYZ Town is funding the construction of a new fire station. Working in partnership with the local antique auto history museum, an artist hired with Animating Infrastructure Grant funding is engaged to design a sculptural frieze for the building, representing the various antique fire trucks and equipment that was used by the fireman over the town's history. Workshops sponsored by the museum introduce community members to the art of relief carving; one section of the frieze is completed by the volunteer fire fighters. In addition, as a partner on the project, the village improvement association is placing planters in the shapes of antique fire trucks in ten locations around the village.

Gutters and Rain Barrel

The City of ABC is constructing a new municipal building and would like to manage storm water runoff from their building and others in the adjoining alleyway. The city has partnered with the local science museum to hire a sculptor with Animating Infrastructure Grant funds to create a whimsical and colorful series of rain gutters through which the rainwater travels -twisting, turning, and making sounds as it moves. Eventually, the water collects in the sculptural rain barrel below the gutters. The rain barrel is shaped like a giant brook trout, a native fish living in the river that runs through the city.

Municipal Drinking Water System

The City of CLW is upgrading its municipal water system. The new facility is located near a city park with a playground. The city has partnered with the local arts council and the CLW Middle School to hire a sculptor with Animating Infrastructure funds to design a series of four sculptural drinking water fountains — to be located at the park, the middle school sports field, the arts council and on Main Street at the trailhead of the rail trail. The designs of each fountain are whimsical and fun and relate to unique activities that happen at each site: A horse and a colt at the playground (which used to be the site of a horse farm); a soccer, baseball, basketball, and football at the middle school sports fields; an abstract sculpture at the arts council; and a tricycle at the rail trail. The students, working with the artist in an integrated art and science curriculum, have learned the science behind clean, safe drinking water as well as the physics and engineering necessary in the design elements to make the art functional. The city engaged local businesses in the process and has been able to acquire commitments from sponsors to support the creation of the drinking water fountains.

Watershed

The Town of XYZ is located in the ABC Watershed. Within the town is a 10-acre area along the ABC River in need of erosion control as well as floodplain and habitat restoration. The regional planning commission in the area partnered with the local river conservancy and a contemporary art museum to hire an artist with Animating Infrastructure funds. The artist will work with community volunteers to collect natural materials from the site and help the artist to design and install a series of abstract, all-natural sculptures. These works are located along the riverbed and in the floodplain. The wooden and natural plant materials are intentionally temporary; they decompose and change over time. The material aids in preventing riverbank erosion and provides shelter and habitat for turtles and fish and other wildlife. The sculptures are visible from a town overlook on the highway and have become an attraction for visitors and residents alike as they observe the changing sculptures over time.

Community Revitalization

A community revitalization organization identifies a number of vacant buildings, empty lots, public spaces, and local businesses in their village. They partner with the community theater group, the historical society, and local businesses to hire an artist with Animating Infrastructure funds. For a period of a year, the artist will work with partners and volunteers to plan, design, and set up temporary pop-up public art, cultural events, and arts activities in the identified spaces. The goal is to attract visitors, generate more economic activity, and increase community pride, vibrancy, and social connection to the village. Community members will be given a chance to vote and provide input on things they would like to see continue and/or develop into the future.