

FIND YOUR WINGS

A Community created, interactive art installation for downtown Middlebury

A Bundle and Lacewing Productions collaboration



Introduction

While the United States and the rest of the world struggle with a global pandemic's devastating effects, Middlebury continues to face the challenge of building a thriving Main Street. Even before the country had to shut down, Middlebury was working to fill empty storefronts, find new and creative ways for residents of our town to engage with business on Main Street, and foster an authentic cultural identity. Throughout our nation's history, it has been proven that the arts play a vital role in meeting and resolving these challenges in many communities. Lacewing Productions and Better Middlebury Partnership are bringing together community members, local artists, and businesses for a collaborative project to find solutions to our challenges in hopes of continuing to strengthen our town as we celebrate each other's contributions.

What is Find Your Wings?

Find Your Wings (FYW) is a four-part interactive, community-driven art installation. The project is intended to start late Fall 2020 and finish with installation in early summerr; May/ June 2021. However, the time could be extended or shortened based on the town's needs and the community's response. The art installation has a clear set of goals. These goals include supporting local artists in creating works which will enhance the beauty and appeal to the downtown district; producing a fun, district-wide activity for all members of our community both online and in-person; encouraging traffic to downtown businesses and giving the community a sense of ownership by inviting them to partake in the creation of art and culture in town.

Part One: Twilight Park Community Creation Day

This one-day event invites the community to collaborate with local artists in decorating a kaleidoscope of wings. Before the community arrives, the sets of wings will have been outlined in the artists' desired shape on weatherized materials such as treated plywood or treated canvas. Then the community will be invited to add to the artwork under the guidance of the artist.

Adhering to Vermont State protocol and guidelines for COVID-19 is a major concern and will be strictly followed. To ensure that the proper safety precautions are being taken, coordinators will provide the following infrastructure:

- All coordinators, artists, and volunteers, will be required to wear PPE, such as facemasks/shields and gloves.
- All participants will be required to wear PPE before admittance to the event.
- This event is a first-come, first-serve event with a limited number of participants.
- Participants will be asked to reserve a time slot to read and acknowledge the event's COVID19 protocol. Each time slot will be given a designated time allowance to move through the event.
- Proper social distancing and wayfinding signage will be in place to ensure there is no backtracking.

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- A registration table will be stationed at a designated entrance and exits with 2-4 volunteers to ensure speedy admittance and ensure no lines form.
 - A network of volunteers will be strategically positioned to keep a visual read on any crowding that may occur and to enforce social distancing.
 - Volunteers will be given hand radios to communicate with coordinators so that a clear line of communication is in place.

Part Two: Wings Installation Throughout the Downtown District

Once the wings have been decorated, they will be further weatherized, liberated from excess materials, then mounted on secure platforms or poles around town. It is intended that the placement of each set of wings add a fun, colorful, and engaging element to its environment. The wings are not intended to block traffic, business, or sidewalks. There are many possible installation locations and we'll work in concert with the town of Middlebury and private property owners to identify the most suitable locations.

Part Three: Collaboration with local businesses and cultural institutions to create continual virtual and in-person engagements.

Part three of this art installation intends to create a series of activities such as scavenger hunts, "collect all for a prize", and historical walking tours for tourists, families, and students. These activities would be a collaboration between Lacewing Productions and the businesses in downtown Middlebury. Companies could include the Vermont Folklife Center, the Henry Sheldon Museum, American Flatbread, The Marquis Theater, The Town Hall Theater, The Middlebury Community Music Center, The Vermont Book Shop, The Stone Mill, and Edgewater Gallery.

Adding a virtual component, a Find Your Wings website, or a link on an already existing website, would give community members the ability to interact with the wings from home. This virtual portal may include artists' profiles, pictures of the community creation event, a schedule of walking tours, printables for small children, a printable scavenger hunt, a 'wings passport,' and a feed of people's pictures posing with their wings.

Part Four: The Future "Takes Flight"

Part four has been deliberately left open with the intention that there is a future for the wings IF they are removed from their initial public display. Here are some ideas on using the wings that could continue to draw tourism and enrichment opportunities.

- A parade of the wings through Main Street when the wings go into storage
- A park is created to house the wings for the public to visit.
- A virtual park is created for community members to reference wings they worked to develop.

Budget

A project of this scale requires a capital campaign. Ideally, this is a community effort in which local businesses would be willing to sponsor artists or donate materials.

A budget for this project hinges largely on local permits, the pricing of materials, and compensation for those overseeing the project. The number of materials will be based on how many artists will be involved. At r.k. MILES, the less expensive pine plywood is approximately \$35 per sheet, while the top-end plywood (cabinet grade, smooth surfaces, no knots) are \$65 per sheet. Add the cost of safety supports, and you're looking at around \$150-\$200 for each set of wings.

The cost of spray paint and other paint materials varies. At Home Depot, a can of spray paint is \$4. Ten cans per every two artists, seven artists is roughly \$140. The higher quality paint that many artists use is undoubtedly more expensive.

Based on these numbers, for ten artists/wings, the cost of materials alone will be under \$3,000.

Paying the artists, a technical director, and project coordinators will add to the overall budget to estimate at least \$20,000 to \$25,000 for the whole project.

Conclusion

Bringing art and culture to downtown districts in a community-driven way has been proven to give the members of those districts a sense of ownership and pride. Town and statewide traditions are often built this way. The Find Your Wings project aims to bring more youth engagement, celebration, and pride to Middlebury as a community and local community and tourist foot traffic through downtown (Middlebury) and the surrounding areas. This project also has the potential to create an economic stimulus to the many businesses that would help make the wings and support local artists.