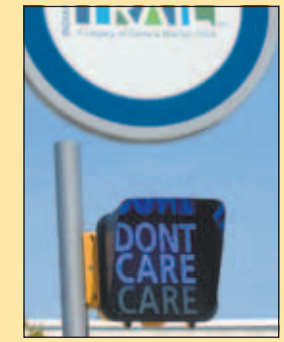
IBJ photo/Julie Kirkendoll

While admirable in intention, it's tough to discern the structural reasoning behind the surfboard-ish tributes to historical figures that make up the Glick Peace Walk. Placing the bulk of the pieces on Walnut Street between Meridian Street and Capitol Avenue does help brighten up a trail dead zone, but why are Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. deeper downtown, away from the rest? That diminishes the impact of the overall main walk. And why create pieces that are best seen at night for a primarily daytime trail?

Where the trail hits the American Legion Mall, it loses its signature paving, leaving minimal signage as a guide. Here and elsewhere, the trail isn't always clear. And while it's called the Cultural Trail, there's nothing yet indicating which cultural institutions you are near. Along the way, the Scottish Rite Cathedral, the Madame Walker Theatre and the Athenaeum are just a few of the (you'd think) hard-to-miss locations that a casual trail walker could miss completely.



IBJ photo/Perry Reichanadter

With "Swarm Street" yet to be installed on Virginia Avenue, "Care/Don't Care" by Jamie Pawlus takes the easy win as best Cultural Trail artwork. (It's much more interesting than "Prairie Modules 1 & 2," which looks like a failed, biggie-size science fair project.) Simple, playful and conversation-generating, "Care/Don't Care" is an unexpected pleasure on Mass Ave and just a short walk from where the Cultural Trail meets the Monon Trail.

The Cultural Trail's path can redefine how we look at existing buildings. For instance, City Market's west face now becomes its front door if you're on the Alabama Street leg of the trail. Market officials are wisely considering how to make its west side more appealing. FYI: The site will be the convergence point for four marching bands at the May 11 "Get Down on It" opening event.

Warning: There's a food/retail/rest room dead zone between Pennsylvania Street and White River State Park. I'm thankful that the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art and the Indiana State Museum make for convenient stop-ins.

The biggest Cultural Trail question mark still remains under the Virginia Avenue parking garage, where "Swarm Street," a work of art featuring LED lights that follow pedestrians and bikers, has yet to be completed because of water issues (apparently, a covered parking lot doesn't completely keep out the rain).

IBJ photo/Perry Reichanadter

The clear success story of the trail is Virginia Avenue from downtown to Fountain Square. Fountain Square now feels connected to downtown, not like some funky Oz-like kingdom reachable only by traversing seemingly dangerous territory. Perhaps those north-siders who think anything south of South Street is Kentucky will discover a new place to eat and play.

This column appears weekly. Send information on upcoming arts and entertainment events to lharry@ibj.com.

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