



Planes, cranes and fishermen make a new north side brand



JUNE 25, 2013 10:45 AM • [LINDSAY CHRISTIANS | THE CAPITAL TIMES](#) | LCHRISTIANS@MADISON.COM

In all the debate over the east side versus the west side and who does it better, Madison can seem like a two-sided town.

Weary of being overlooked and convinced of its own abundant charms, Madison's north side has responded the way any community might — with a marketing plan.

"Madison is split into east and west," said Karen Bassler, the new executive director of the Northside Planning Council. "Thinking about the north side as a separate area is not something everyone in Madison has in their head."

The Madison Arts Commission led the branding initiative with an ad hoc committee, the North Side Public Art Selection Committee. That group (with the support of the planning council) recently approved a

set of six designs — cutout silhouettes — meant to brand their corner of town.

The images, designed by graphic artist Daniella Echeverria, may be used on everything from bus shelters and park entrances to stationery from north side nonprofits.

One panel shows a man and a little girl fishing, with a view of the Capitol in the back. A peapod and stalk of corn represent the north side's Troy Gardens, a large community farm and garden project. A crane and some willowy grasses recall Cherokee Marsh.

The "transportation" panel shows a plane taking off, a nod to the Dane County Regional Airport. Echeverria tweaked the image from a flying plane among clouds to a plane that's slanting sharply upward and to the right — the north side didn't want to evoke "flyover" country.

To make their origin abundantly clear, each design also says NORTHSIDE. Choosing images specific to the area was key.

"How does it represent your neighborhood, rather than Madison as a whole?" said

Bassler, speaking of the challenges with using lake imagery.

Echeverria, the artist, agreed.

"I wanted to make sure they weren't super generic," she said. "I think it's really easy to do public art that is a little bit boring. I tried to jazz it up a bit."

The north side planners wanted to capture "the the racial and economic diversity of the area," a challenge with black and white silhouette images.

Echeverria said that while the Madison Mallards baseball team is a touchstone of the north side, she decided instead to focus on people, some from minority communities, playing "soccer in the field, or basketball." (There is still a baseball bat included in the panel.)

The beginnings of the north side's branding initiative came in 2009, when city of Madison arts program administrator Karin Wolf led an ["art and design charrette"](#). She described it as "intense design planning," involving small groups of north siders going into the community to take photos and sketch ideas for a north side brand.

"We brought it to the larger neighborhood, went through a couple vettings," she said. Eventually the idea of a unified design was included in the [north side neighborhood plan](#).

"It's all coordinated, and that's what I like," Wolf said. "A lot of times you get a section called 'art and design,' and then when they're doing the roads ... or an economic development plan, they don't necessarily think of you."

Wolf's goal is to have these designs on seven bus shelters on the north side.

"We have a commitment for one, but it depends on funding — we don't know how much the materials cost," she said.

Whether other neighborhoods would do something similar depends, largely, on them, Wolf said. For her part, Echeverria thinks it would be fascinating to see how the east side would brand itself.

"All those neighborhoods are distinct," she said, recalling the Marquette, Schenk-Atwood and Tenney-Lapham neighborhoods. "It would be interesting to try to distill the four distinct sides of Madison. What makes the west side the west side?"