

# THE BADGER HERALD

## ArtsEtc.: Feature

### Reacquainting cities with green

**Madison's first [Park It!] event will make statement about community use of parking spaces by replacing spots with public parks for one day**

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When it comes to owning our own means of private transportation around the city of Madison, we've all had our fair share of frustrations. Whether it's the measly ten minutes to a quarter given by a metered space, or the aggravation of circling the downtown area to find a spot to squeeze into, many students pay a steep price for the option to take a trip to West Towne Mall or the movies.

And while there are many days when we wish that accessibility to blessed heated vehicles in the middle of January might solve our winter woes, we often take for granted how much of our city has been industrialized to fit the needs of citizens and businesses. While we drive around the city, dodging students whose iPod buds drown out the sounds of Madison construction, we fail to look around us and ask the question — where's all the green?

Back in 2005, a San Francisco art and design studio decided to take back their city, and acquaint the urban setting with a bit of nature. Turning a single metered parking spot into a public park for a brief two hours, the studio brought awareness to the precious need for green in the city, launching a worldwide movement. Five years later, the concept of "Park[ing] Day" has expanded to over 140 cities, 21 countries and 6 continents, reaching Madison for the first time Friday.

Now, five years later, artists are utilizing their 270 square foot spaces in expressive and creative ways, straying from the typical "park" installation from back in 2005. Past participants have transformed their space into everything from free health clinics to a romantic 270 square foot wedding spot, really choosing to think outside the box (no pun intended).

Madison's first official Park[ing] Day calls itself [Park It!], and it's about time our forward thinking community joined the ranks of other environmental cities.

Tyler Mackie, [Park It!] coordinator and gallery owner of The Project Lodge, was immediately enthusiastic after hearing about National Park[ing] Day back in January. Excited to bring something new to the city, initial plans to utilize parking spaces around the capital loop were halted by businesses that were apprehensive about the project. However, after approaching her friend, Stephen Baraboo, Mackie found a supportive base for the project to progress further, along with a prime location to host their vision.

Baraboo, the owner of Thorps Haircuts & Color, not only felt eager to commence planning on the day's events, but also suggested that Mackie and other artists utilize the parking spaces along the 1900 block of Atwood Avenue where his salon was located. Soon enough, the project was underway, and Park[ing] Day found a new home in Madison, Wisconsin.

With partial funding by a BLINK Grant from the Madison Arts Commission, artists began personal fundraising efforts to raise awareness for the event and to promote their featured works. “Fighting for issues with art and activism,” as the official [Park It!] Facebook page claims, eight local artists will utilize spaces along Atwood Avenue, inspiring people to rethink how we use our urban spaces. Musician Patrick Breiner will use his 270 square feet as a miniature jazz festival on tree stumps, titled “Stumpfest 2010!”, while UW Faculty member Kyle Pfister will comment on how green space can prevent childhood obesity.

Mackie herself will be participating in the day’s events with picnic time that she calls “sincerely sweet and generous.” Participants and observers can reserve picnic time with Mackie, where they will join her in comfortable armchairs with candles lit at dusk. Using crocheting as a domestic artistic medium, Mackie has been preparing for [Park It!] by crocheting a gingham print Afghan to be presented at the day’s events. Alongside her personal piece, Mackie will crochet personal koozies on the spot to protect sentimental objects that her participants bring to her picnic. “It’s about sharing time with people,” says Mackie, “centered around objects and nostalgia.”

An official groundbreaking ribbon cutting ceremony will take place Friday morning at 10, where various dignitaries will speak on behalf of the project and the potential it has to raise awareness and celebrate our precious green space. “This is a celebration of where we’re at,” Mackie says with enthusiasm, “and an awareness that we can do better.” And for all the students who are plugged in and tuned out of reality, take a minute to slow down this Friday, and take a look around at a parking lot turned back into a piece of paradise.

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