DOWNTOWN SCULPTURE INITIATIVE

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

WORDS AND IMAGES BY
DAVID ENGDAHL

2026

BACKGROUND

Preston Haskell has long been interested in and a supporter of art throughout the Jacksonville community. He has traveled worldwide and noted how art, and in particular sculpture, can enliven the downtown area of cities. Preston liked how the colorful murals and sculptures in Johannesburg, South Africa, added vibrancy and brightened that city. Art Republic, under the direction of Jessica Santiago, created many murals by internationally noted muralists in the downtown Jacksonville area with Preston's support. He also undertook creating partnerships with downtown landowners to place sculptures that were visible to the public. Not wanting his name associated with the project, we named it the "Downtown Sculpture Initiative". The definition of "downtown" we defined as from the river to Duval Street N/S, and from Ocean Street to Julia Street E/W, all on the Northbank.

INITIATIVE INTENT

The objective of this initiative was to place significant, impactful, contemporary, privately-funded exterior sculptures on private property close to the city right-of-way throughout downtown Jacksonville. The expectation of this collaborative initiative was to install up to ten contemporary and colorful sculptures in downtown Jacksonville, with Preston Haskell contributing half the artwork cost. The landowner or building tenant would contribute the remaining half, would be responsible for site development, installation of the sculpture, and would own and maintain the respective sculpture.

SCULPTURE CRITERIA

- Installed purchase price of commissioned sculpture up to $50,000.

(We started with lower budgets but found that the lesser budgets did not attract sufficient quality of work.)

- In the range of 20’ to 30’ height.

(The height of the base added height to the overall sculpture installation.)

- Contemporary, abstract, non-representational, primarily solid, colorful in nature.

(Urban environments usually are visually chaotic, so we included this criterion to make the sculptures more prominent.)

- .We initially issued a national Call to Artists hoping to find artists with such sculptures in their inventory.

(We learned that sculptures of this magnitude are only created upon commission.)

- Appropriate to its specific location.

(About Jacksonville.)

- Appropriate for a high traffic public environment.

- Designed with consideration of the safety of the public.

- Constructed of permanent, long-lasting materials and virtually maintenance free.

(We found that the only realistic metal materials that are long-lasting in the Jacksonville environment are stainless steel and aluminum. Powder coating on steel with an UV clearcoat has a longer life than other coatings on steel, but none are maintenance free. UV clear coating is best for all metals.)

- Designed to be structurally secured to a concrete or masonry substrate.

(The artist and his structural engineer are responsible for the integrity of the sculpture. The owner is responsible for the engineered foundation/pedestal and anchorage of the sculpture thereto.)

- Capable of withstanding adverse weather conditions including high winds, high temperatures, high humidity, heavy rain, storms.

(Includes hurricane force winds.)

ADMINISTRATION

After the first two projects were completed, I assumed management of the initiative in 2015, coordinating with Preston Haskell.
I was on the Art in Public Places (APP) Committee until 2017 and the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville Board until 2018. Preston arranged for the Cultural Council to serve as advisor to the initiative for a fee of ten percent of the artwork cost, which he paid directly to the Cultural Council from his Foundation. I was the Cultural Council's volunteer management designee for the remainder of the initiative through 2021, even though I had reached my term limits in the organization and had rolled off the board.

My role consisted of working with identified landowners, finding new potential sites and opportunities, proposing specific sculptures, coordinating foundation design with the sculpture, coordinating lighting, and obtaining all necessary approvals. In the downtown area, any improvement visible by the public must have approval by the Downtown Development Authority (DIA) even if it is on privately owned land.

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For the upcoming sculpture at One Enterprise Center, Christie Holechek the director of APP and I developed and issued a national Call to Artists for the sculpture through the CaFE system using our criteria. We limited the Call to Artists in the USA since dealing with foreign countries would add a lot of complexity. And we were interested in proposals of existing sculptures. We received about 70 artist proposals (no existing sculptures) and together we shortlisted 12 artists for this project. The submissions became a resource for the remainder of the initiative projects.

For the last two projects, I negotiated a three-party contract between the Cultural Council, artist and sculpture owner. This agreement, along with peripheral agreements, allowed Preston to obtain a tax credit for his portion of the sculpture cost. Under the agreements, Preston would contribute his half of the sculpture cost plus the ten percent consultation fee to the Cultural Council. The sculpture owner would pay the artist half of the sculpture cost up front. When the project was completed, the Cultural Council would pay the remaining half of the sculpture cost to the artist.

OPPOSING FORCES

JAMES WELDON JOHNSON PARK

ARTIST: HANNA JUBRAN

OWNER: FRIENDS OF JAMES WELDON JOHNSON PARK

2015



1.OPPOSING FORCES

Preston Haskell began implementing his vision for sculpture in downtown Jacksonville with the purchase of this sculpture. As part of the Sculpture Walk project by Jenny Hager, this sculpture was on loan from the artist Hanna Jubran, a sculpture instructor at East Tennessee State University. Most of the Sculpture Walk works were located in Main Street Park; however, this sculpture was located on a parcel owned by Regions Bank at the SE corner of Forsyth and Laura Streets. Preston arranged for both the sculpture and the precast concrete pad it was anchored to be tansported from that location to placement in what was Hemming Park, now James Weldon Johnson Park. The sculpture is fabricated from steel plate with enamel paint. The original vibrant colors have faded, and the sculpture needs refinishing as of this writing. The sculpture is owned by Friends of James Weldon Park

HARMONIOUS ASCENT

JACKSONVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ARTIST: AISLING MILLAR-MCDONALD

OWNER: JACKSONVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2015



2. HARMONIOUS ASCENT

Continuing with his placement of sculptures in downtown Jacksonville, Preston commissioned local sculptor Aisling Millar-McDonald to create a sculpture for the Chamber of Commerce Building in an area on the east side of the building between Bay Street and One Independent Drive along the Main Street bridge descending ramp. The space was developed into a garden with the sculpture as the primary feature. Preston invited me to the unveiling ceremony, which was my first involvement with the sculpture initiative. The sculpture is fabricated from steel plate and then given gradated powder coat paint followed by a UV clear coat. A few rust spots have appeared over time, and those have been repaired by the artist. The sculpture is owned by the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce.

ENTWINED LINE

ONE ENTERPRISE CENTER
HOGAN AND WATER STREET

ARTIST: C.J. RENCH

OWNER: MICHAEL
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

2017



3. ENTWINED LINE

This sculpture, initiated in 2015, was the first downtown sculpture that I was involved with as leader and facilitator. It was a complex project due to the contributions of five different entities. Through the building manager, Preston learned that a new out-of-town tenant, First Tennessee Bank, had just moved into the building and wanted to make an impression on the Jacksonville community.

We met with representatives of the bank, and were joined by Trevor Lee, an architect who previously worked at The Haskell Company. Trevor was now area leader of the architectural firm, Gresham, Smith and Partners, who were tenants on the top floor of the building. First Tennessee Bank was interested in participating. At our second meeting, we reviewed with them the shortlist of sculptures submitted through the Call to Artists. The submission by C.J. Rench of Oregon was deemed most appropriate to the building. The artist had submitted images of a ten-foot-high sculpture he had made, and we envisioned the artist creating a larger sculpture of the same design, perhaps thirty feet tall, to be located in front of the building. The artist agreed to the enlargement, and we signed a contract with him to proceed with the sculpture, with First Tennessee Bank and Preston sharing the sculpture cost.

The location of the sculpture was formerly a raised stepped fountain with granite walls but the fountain was now defunct. The fountain equipment remained in a vault under the fountain. This created a formidable impediment for the foundation for the sculpture. Preston engaged (gratis) the engineers at The Haskell Company to create a foundation design around the vault, and I coordinated that design with the artist's base for the sculpture. We obtained a Building Permit for the base construction, having previously received Downtown Development Authority approval of the sculpture. Through Preston's sources, we developed a cost of $25,000 for the base construction, expecting the building owner to pay for the base. After a year's delay, the building owner, located in California, agreed to pay for the foundation and the project proceeded. Meanwhile, the sculptor in Oregon had completed the sculpture components, but could not ship them from his studio because it was winter and snow prohibited truck access to his studio.

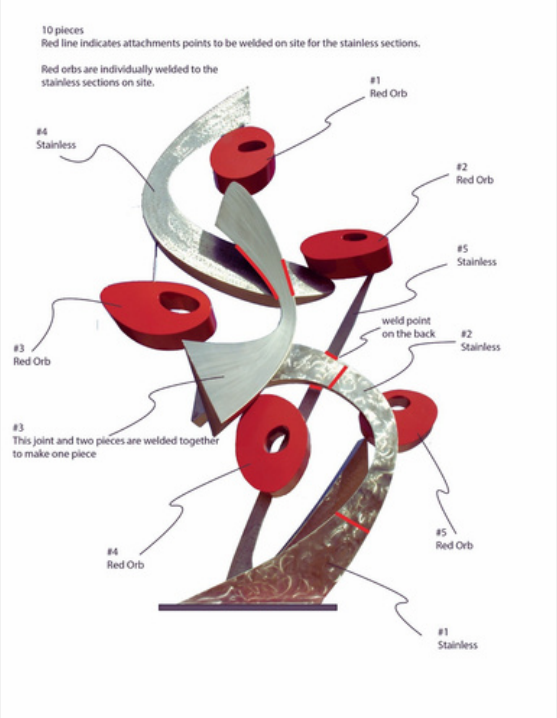
We arranged for crews to be present to install the Entwined Line sculpture on a Saturday in 2017, coincidentally the same day the Baladee sculpture was being installed at Main and Adams Streets. Installation was the responsibility of the building owner. The sculptor sent one of his helpers from Oregon to supervise the installation. After some difficulty and having to bring in a larger crane, the parts of the sculpture were assembled and bolted to the foundation.

The sculptor's representative polished and waxed the primary joint, completing the sculptor's responsibility. Lighting was added to highlight the sculpture, and the installation was complete and turned over to the building owner. First Tennessee Bank was no longer interested in being associated with the sculpture. Subsequently, new planting and a new sign, using the same material and colors as the sculpture, were added, designed by Gresham, Smith and Partners.

The sculpture was presented as stainless steel by the artist. We knew that material would hold up well in the Jacksonville environment. Until the sculpture finally arrived in 2017, we did not know that the sculptor had used an internal structure of mild steel with a thin stainless-steel exterior. The main structure was in two parts, so the internal mild steel structure needed to be welded first and then the stainless-steel exterior surface welded to cover that joint. Somehow, either in fabrication or in installation, the mild steel became embedded in the stainless-steel exterior of the sculpture and in less than a year the sculpture surface began to rust, particularly at the field joint. We notified the sculptor, who sent his helper to Jacksonville a year after installation to polish and wax the sculpture surface.

In the years since installation, the surface continued to discolor with rust. There is a constant breeze through the site, and in 2022, one of the

red “orbs”, which were suspended on stainless-steel rods, sheared off and tumbled to the ground. Fortunately, no one was hurt but the orb was dented. At that point, the red epoxy paint was badly faded through to the primer. I discussed these issues with the sculptor in Oregon, and he had his engineer redesign the suspension rod and embedment of the rod into the sculpture and orb. I got a paint expert involved, and he recommended Tnemec paint that is typically used on tower structures and that had an expected ten-year lifespan. The sculptor offered to come to Jacksonville to supervise the orb reinstallation work at his cost, but he would not participate in the refurbishment costs. I contacted the original installer and obtained his cost for repairing and reinstalling the orb. I put together the cost and schedule for the work, which totaled approximately $70,000, and presented that to the building manager. The building manager said that he would attempt to obtain approval of the owner, but the owner rejected spending any money on the sculpture. Subsequently the second orb sheared off, again no one was injured. At the point of this writing, the sculpture is in a complete state of disrepair.


10 pieces
Red line indicates attachments points to be welded on site for the stainless sections.
Red orbs are individually welded to the stainless sections on site.
#1 Red Orb
#4 Stainless
#2 Red Orb
#5 Stainless
weld point on the back
#2 Stainless
#3 Red Orb
#3 This joint and two pieces are welded together to make one piece
#4 Red Orb
#5 Red Orb
#1 Stainless





BALADEE

MAIN AND ADAMS STREET

ARTIST: HANNA JUBRAN

OWNER: FARAH & FARAH

2017

4. BALADEE

We contacted Eddie Farah of the Farah & Farah Law Firm, prominent in Jacksonville. He was interested in adding a sculpture in the corner of one of his owned parking lots, diagonally across from his renovated historic office building. From the national Call to Artists, we selected two artists to create proposals based on specific location criteria and their previous work. Each of the artists was paid a small stipend to produce a sculpture proposal. One of the artists was Hanna Jubran, the artist for the JWJ Park sculpture. He submitted two designs, and Eddie Farah immediately selected one of his designs related to the adjacent Cathedral District downtown. Eddie recognized the artist's name as being Arabic, as is Farah, and that fact may have influenced his selection. I worked with the artist and a local architectural firm selected by Farah on the site and foundation design. The sculpture site improvements included pavers and planting with the sculpture sited on the diagonal to serve as an entry from the parking lot to the Farah office building diagonally across the intersection. Many old solid concrete foundations lie beneath the site and needed to be removed to make way for the sculpture foundation and plantings.

JEA required a separate service and meter on the small site to serve the sculpture lighting. On installation day, a cold day early in 2021, the sculptor rolled up with the components of the sculpture on a trailer. He had stayed at Eddie Farah's home overnight. The components were assembled on the ground, and a tall crane hoisted the sculpture onto its foundation. Eddie Farah and many of his relatives were present on site for the installation, creating a festive atmosphere.

The sculpture construction is mild steel plate with enamel paint finish. Over time some of the colors faded. Some vandals spray painted graffiti on one section. The city, thinking the sculpture belonged to them, repainted the portions with graffiti with a close matching paint. In 2020 I contacted a local sculptor to ascertain his interest in cleaning and repainting the sculpture. He was interested and provided a quote for the work. I contacted Eddie Farah, and he agreed to pay for the refurbishment. We had the original color samples from the artist. The new paint was enamel like the original, but we added an anti-graffiti UV clear coat on the lower ten feet. As of this writing, there is some fading of the colors.



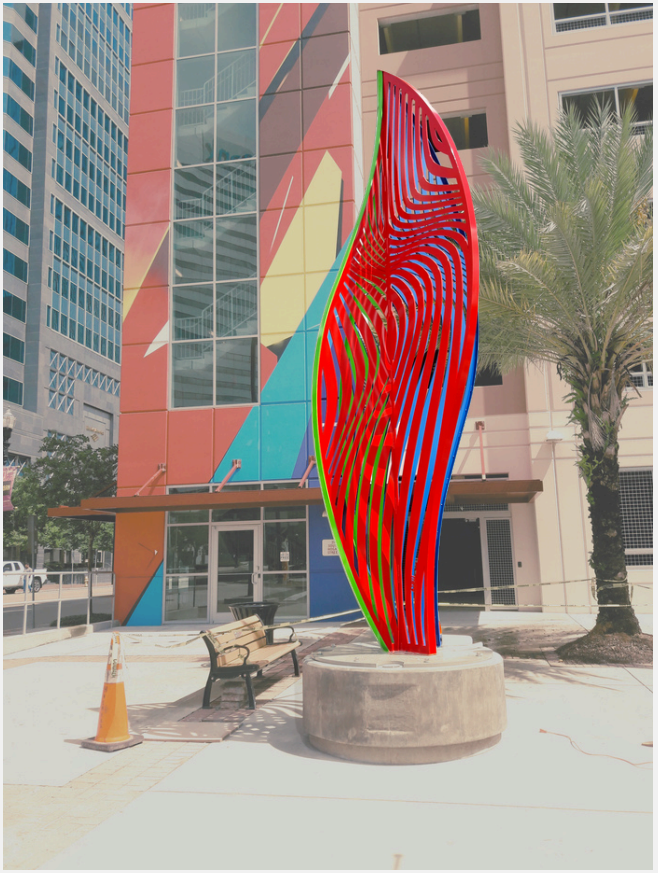
NOVA

BAY AND HOGAN STREET

ARTIST: CECILIA LUEZA

OWNER: VYSTAR CREDIT UNION

2021



5. NOVA

Preston set up a meeting with the new VyStar CEO Brian Wolfburg to discuss a potential sculpture on their property. VyStar was in the process making major renovations to two buildings downtown to serve as their corporate headquarters, and they welcomed the opportunity to include a sculpture. We selected a few of the artists' proposals to show Brian. Cecilia Lueza had submitted a sketch proposal, which was not required, with her proposal and Wolfburg immediately selected her proposal. By chance, Lueza had been the artist under APPC who received the commission to paint the skyway columns along Hogan Street, diagonally across Bay Street from the sculpture site. The design and colors of the sculpture reflect those of the columns. The site is within the area of the parking structure setback along Hogan Street. The original building developer had agreement with the Downtown Development Authority to set back the parking structure from the street to provide space for a one-story retail addition in the future. Location of the sculpture on the corner was outside the area reserved for future retail. One other influence on the sculpture design was a mural to be painted on the stairwell on the corner of the parking structure immediately adjacent to the sculpture site.

The sculpture was fabricated from one-half inch thick aluminum plate with laser cut openings. The base is 1" thick aluminum anchored to a concrete base constructed by Haskell and paid for by VyStar. Finish on the sculpture and aluminum base is powder coating with a clear UV coating and seems to be holding up well as of this writing. I coordinated lighting cutouts in the sculpture base plate between the artist and Haskell, and electrical with a timer that was run from the parking structure. An extra set of conduits were installed in the concrete base from light fixture to light fixture for use in the event the original ones failed. A flat area was designed into the concrete base for a plaque which is zinc with a bronze finish. This was the first sculpture of the Downtown Sculpture Initiative to receive a plaque.



LAURA'S FLOWER

LAURA AND FORSYTH STREET

ARTIST: GUS & LINA OCAMPOSILVA

OWNER: FARAH & FARAH

2021



6. LAURA'S FLOWER

In 2016 Farah & Farah was owner of the former Barnett Bank Building at the northwest corner of Laura and Forsyth Streets and asked whether we could place a sculpture there. The building was built to the property line so there was no site for sculpture placement. There is a way to locate a sculpture on the City of Jacksonville sidewalk, if approved by all governing entities, called a Revocable Permit and Indemnification Agreement. Under this agreement, either the requesting party or the city can request removal of the improvement upon 30 days' notice. Farah and Farah are owners of the sculpture and hold the Revocable Permit and Indemnification Agreement with the City. The contractor needed to obtain an additional Right of Way permit to do work on city property, and the project also needed a building permit.

Eddie and Chuck Farah chose the second sculpture we had received a proposal on for the Main Street site from Gus and Lina Ocamposilva. They proposed a sculpture of brushed and painted aluminum with acrylic paint. Given the mostly shaded site due to adjacent buildings, the paint and the brushed aluminum finish are holding up well. The artists had named the sculpture Tropical Flower, but we wanted to tie the name more to Jacksonville.

With the artists' approval, we renamed it Laura's Flower after one of Jacksonville's founders Isaiah D. Hart's daughters, for whom Laura Street was named. Hart had another daughter, Julia, and hence Julia Street, and a son Ossian, for whom Ocean Street was named. We also recommended a change of colors from red and yellow to blue and green, to which the artists agreed.

I worked with Bill Joyce, Deputy Director of Public Works over a period of three years, coordinating with Eddie Farah and the artists to obtain all of the necessary approvals. Prices of materials had increased, requiring the artists to adjust their cost a number of times. The dilemma was the DIA requirement for 12 feet clear of the building for potential future sidewalk dining from restaurants within the building, however the project only had 10 feet clear of the required foundation. Even that clearance projected the proposed sculpture beyond the curbline. With my guidance, the artists revised the dimensions of the sculpture to bring it into compliance with requirements, and the DIA allowed a minimum of ten feet clear of the building.

Although I was representing the Cultural Council, leadership there changed, and the city approvals proved both time-consuming and difficult to achieve. To facilitate the project moving forward in 2017, we proposed that Haskell and Farah gift the sculpture to the APPC. I made a proposal to the APPC, but the committee turned down acceptance of the gift.

At a subsequent meeting, I made the same presentation request, but with Preston Haskell and Eddie Farah both there. Again, APPC refused acceptance, for a reason I still don't understand.

Finally in 2020, all approvals that were required were achieved, and we authorized the artists to proceed with fabrication of the sculpture. Haskell designed and built the foundation for the sculpture, reusing the same form as used for the Nova sculpture at VyStar. We installed a plaque similar to the one at VyStar. I obtained approval from Bill Joyce to tie the sculpture lighting into the city street lighting system which is operated by photocell. There was an electrical utility box in the sidewalk within the site. That required several onsite meetings with Jacksonville Electrical Authority (JEA) representatives to work out logistics of that tie-in.

Finally, early in 2021, the sculpture was installed, a five-year project.





ADJUNCT SCULPTURE: PROGRESSION

THE JESSIE

ARTIST: LANCE VICKERY

7. PROGRESSION (ADJUNCT SCULPTURE)

Before my term had ended on the Cultural Council, then Executive Director Tony Allegretti received a call from the Jessie Ball DuPont Fund. They requested help with a surprise sculpture gift honoring the long-time Chief Executive Officer of the DuPont Fund Sherry McGill. They had renovated the former mid-century modern Haydon Burns library building, designed by Taylor Hardwick, into The Jessie Ball DuPont Non-Profit Center (now known as "the Jessie") and wanted the sculpture to be located in a former planter in a covered recess in the building at the SW corner of Adams and Ocean Streets, adjacent to the ROW. Allegretti asked me if I could help them. I met with representatives of the DuPont Fund and shared budget and process information. The DuPont Fund Board announced the sculpture and budget ($50,000) at a retirement event for Sherry McGill. They then left the remainder of the project up to Sherry and me. We created criteria for the sculpture and selected four noted area sculptors to make design proposals for the sculpture, providing each with a small stipend. Of the proposals, Sherry and I selected a sculpture titled "Progression" by Lance Vickery of HAVIC. The design of the sculpture was consistent with the design of the building.

It was to be constructed as a series of aluminum plates which created the overall form, and the finish was powder coated blue. DuPont engaged the architect for the renovation and the contractor who constructed the building renovations to help with the installation of the sculpture. We modeled the new marble plaque honoring McGill on the original building dedication plaque. Sherry was pleased with the final resultant sculpture. I insisted on working gratis, but the DuPont Fund provided me with a small stipend at completion of the project.

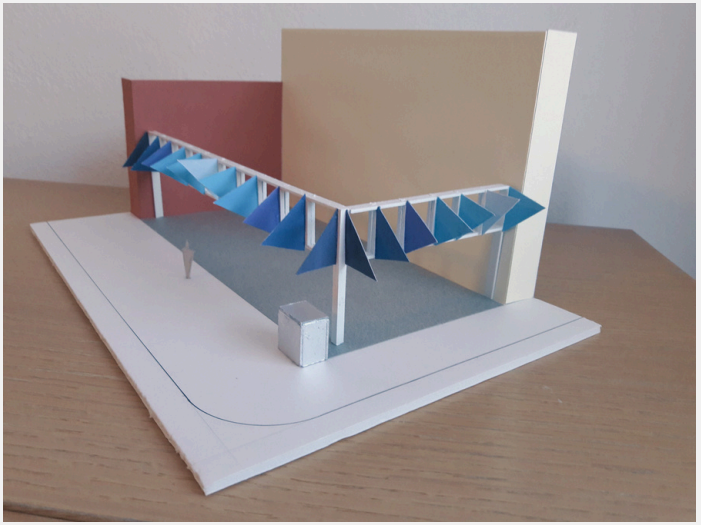


INITIATIVE CONCLUSION

We ended the initiative with the onslaught of the pandemic, which very much limited our ability to interface with potential clients and locations. Six of the sculptures were in place of the ten originally envisioned. We had many conversations with downtown landowners that did not move forward. Those included: Wells Fargo tower (One Independent Drive) corner of Laura and Bay Streets; VyStar at Tower entrance on Laura Street; EverBank (former Bellsouth) Tower eastside; and Farah & Farah Main Street site at their building courtyard. Other sites we looked at included; CSX Tower along the Riverwalk; Bank of America Tower at Bay and Laura Streets; and The Performing Arts Center entrance on Water Street.

One site for which we proceeded with design and pricing in 2018 was the Daily Record site, NW corner of Bay and Newnan Streets. Jim Bailey owned the Daily Record building and site and was interested in providing a sculpture on the vacant corner lot. A complication was that the vacant site was used for parking. I developed a concept of a structure along the ROW on both Bay and Newnan Streets, symbolically replicating the building that once was there, with aluminum sculptural elements

projecting out over the sidewalk. I brought in Lance Vickery, local sculptor, to design the sculptural elements. Haskell Steel designed the structure. We developed budgets for the structure and sculptural elements and reviewed it with Jim Bailey. I built a scale model of the installation. As Jim was considering the sculpture project, he sold the Daily Record along with the building and site. Thus, the project did not move forward.



INITIATIVE LEARNING

- There are downtown Jacksonville landowners and tenants willing to invest in sculpture.
- Sculptors do not maintain an inventory of large-scale sculptures.
- Some artists will not compete on a shortlist of three or four, even if offered a stipend.
- Outdoor sculptures require regular maintenance, whatever the materials.
- Use stainless steel or aluminum metal in the Florida environment. Mild steel will rust over time.
- Don't mix mild steel and stainless steel on one sculpture.
- Coatings: The best coating for painted sculpture is Powder Coated with UV protection clear coating. Tnemec is also long lasting, as is acrylic paint in a direct sun protected environment.

DOWNTOWN SCULPTURE INITIATIVE