

A Walk in the Art: Winston-Salem's Innovative New Urban Park Re-imagines the Term "Green Space"



From the towering red “smokestacks” that intermittently release clouds of water vapor (lighted at night) to the “artist performance shelter” that’s sculpted from silvery steel bands, downtown Winston-Salem’s latest attraction, dubbed ARTivity on the Green, is an eye-opening and smile-inducing new breed of public space.

The half-acre park, which sits between the city’s vibrant Arts District and Wake Forest University’s sprawling Innovation Quarter, was created through a private grant and spearheaded by Art for Art’s Sake (AFAS), a local nonprofit dedicated to making the arts accessible for everyone.

ARTivity on the Green officially opened on May 9, accompanied by a large crowd, live music, food vendors and a dignitary-studded ribbon-cutting.

“We wanted to create a space that speaks to Winston-Salem’s reputation as ‘The City of Arts and Innovation,’” said Harry Knabb, chairman and chief executive of AFAS, “while at the same time paying tribute to its industrial, tobacco-and-textiles past.”

Hence, the faux smokestacks and the liberal use of metal throughout the park – including rectilinear steel benches that resemble sawhorses.



Photos by Doug Rice Photography

Other unique features include sodded berms designed for lounging or picnicking; a large wall that will host murals by local artists; and eight-inch-wide red lines painted on the surrounding sidewalks to lead visitors into the park.

Another impressive fact: the entire ARTivity Park project, which cost \$2 million (and came in on budget), is a completely home-grown effort. Architectural firm STITCH Design Group created the conceptual blueprints; Stimmel Associates handled the civil engineering and landscaping; and Frank L. Blum Construction Co. oversaw the actual construction.

Visitors to downtown can find the park easily; it’s situated on Liberty Street, between Sixth and Seventh streets. Just follow the bright red lines!