

INDYSTAR★COM

In preservation efforts, everything old is new again

I'm not sure what started it. Maybe it was the backlash over the city's decision to tear down thousands of abandoned properties in dozens of neighborhoods. Or maybe it was research that shows young professionals -- the people Indianapolis wants to attract -- prefer to live in **authentic** urban neighborhoods in cities with an identity. Maybe it was something else entirely.

All I know is there's a burgeoning interest in historic preservation in Indianapolis -- and that's a good thing indeed.

I don't believe in saving anything and everything just because it's old, but Indianapolis will never shed what's left of its vanilla reputation if we don't capitalize on the things that make us unique. The history of a city can be beautiful and should be celebrated.

Of course, this isn't the first time Hoosiers have become obsessed with historic preservation. Otherwise, revitalized neighborhoods such as the Old Northside wouldn't exist.

This is different, however.

This time around, preservation is about civic identity. It's also about sustainability

-- as in protecting **the environment**. Why create new, cookie-cutter stuff that will eventually end up in an overcrowded landfill when we can reuse the authentic and historic stuff we already have?

A prime example of this is a plan to salvage thousands of seats from the stands of Bush Stadium and install them at IndyGo bus stops. The project is still in the early stages, but it has potential on a number of fronts.

"It would be super-cool," said Samantha Cross, director of **business** development for IndyGo. "You're repurposing, and it's kind of like public art."

Consider that IndyGo has about 4,000 bus stops in Indianapolis, but only about 300 have benches, shelters or other amenities for riders. The rest just have a pole with a sign.

The seats at Bush Stadium, which hasn't seen any baseball action for 15 years and is about to be gutted and turned into

Advertisement



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

INDYSTAR★COM

apartments, are bright orange and have attached armrests. They're designed to handle the elements. The biggest hang-up is finding a way to remove them, and then getting enough money to refurbish and install them.

"There are 11,000 chairs sitting unused," said Michael Bricker, co-founder of People for Urban Progress (PUP), the nonprofit "idea incubator" that's behind the project.

So far, PUP has harvested about a half-dozen seats and, with IndyGo's help, plans to install them at a stop at Alabama and Vermont streets along the Cultural Trail. A larger pilot program would roll out in the spring, and some seats could end up in other public spaces, such as a park.

Imagine what it would be like to have bucket seats from Bush Stadium all over Indianapolis. How cool and historic and authentic to our city would that be? And how much garbage would that save from a landfill?

"I'm hoping this is not a trend," Bricker said. "I think it's just part of being in a responsible urban **environment**. Cities just have this tendency to tear down things."

Perhaps no one in Indianapolis understands that better than Tim Harmon.

He was heavily involved in the initial push to restore houses in urban neighborhoods in the 1980s and 1990s. During that time, he developed a reputation for owning a lot of architectural salvage. You know, like doors and sinks and stained glass

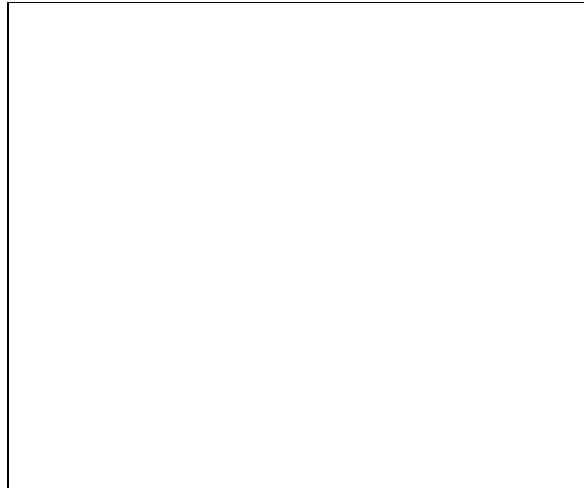
recovered from houses built in the early 1900s.

"It was on my front porch and it took over my living room. I had a couple of houses full (of it)," said Harmon, who owns several houses near Downtown. "To this day, I still have over 450 toilet tank lids – the most in the state."

There was a market for architectural salvage then, and with the renewed interest in preservation, there's a market for it now. Early next year, Harmon and his business partner, Julie Crow, plan to open a store called Another Fine Mess that will sell salvaged items.

Ironically, the store will be in a century-old building on East 10th Street -- just blocks from where the city has demolished dozens of abandoned houses. On the plywood covering the windows of the storefront, there are posters from the "I Am East 10th Street" ethnography project, which exists to celebrate the history and **civic** identity of the Near Eastside in the face of rapid

Advertisement



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

INDYSTAR★COM

revitalization.

"This is where your recycling comes in," Harmon said. "Instead of taking it into the landfill, we like to reuse that material."

Contact Star columnist Erika D. Smith at (317) 444-6424, erika.smith@indystar.com, on Facebook or on Twitter: [@indystar_erika](https://twitter.com/indystar_erika).



Ads by Pulse 360

Emerging Market - FTTN

Shale Gas Stocks are Turning Rapid Profits
Add to Your Portfolio Today
www.FirstTitanEnergy.com

57-Year-Old Mom Looks 25

Thiensville: Local Mom Exposes an Anti-Aging Miracle. Her \$5 Trick ERASES Wrinkles!
PopularLifestyleJournal.com

Thiensville: Become a Social Worker

Earn your degree in as little as 18 mos. Fin. Aid avail. for those who qualify.
Psychology-Colleges.org

Advertisement



Print Powered By FormatDynamics™