

PATTERN



XII UNDER CONSTR UCTION



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GROUNDBREAKERS



In conversation with Indy's built environment **CHAMPIONS** and **INNOVATORS**.

WIL MARQUEZ

“I’m a designer, a creator; I’m curious and an agitator.”



Talking shop with Wil Marquez is like listening to an energetic Dalai Lama of Design.

The 40-year-old architect speaks with a unique balance of enthusiasm, warmth, and inspiration. He layers his language with careful insight, honed from seventeen years of architectural prowess. And he constructs his narrative with passion, emphasizing more than once the importance of “bringing people together.”

“Celebrate a community’s arts and cultural assets around a collective space that serves its local needs, and that will reinforce the connectivity among residents,” he says.

A specialist in urban design, his portfolio bulges with impressive projects that began when he worked for big firms during his days in Dubai and Morocco. These days Marquez’s philosophy on the future of design and placemaking appears in various publications, books, and blogs. And his speaking engagements pack lecture halls at renowned universities (from Tuskegee, Alabama, to Buenos Aires) and at conferences and professional organizations around the globe.

But he gets most excited telling folks about his work with young people and “contributing his skill set to more meaningful and relevant environments” – like the neighborhoods here at home – in Indiana.

“For a long time I thought that changing the world through architecture meant designing buildings, but to just say I’m an architect who sits in a cubicle and draws drawings, that’s not what I’m about,” he says. “I’m a designer, a creator; I’m curious and an agitator. I’m still loyal to architecture, but I also sort of stand on the outside of that ring and look inward and say, ‘What can we do to make this profession more available to the masses?’”

For one thing, he thinks architecture should be more publicly engaging and equitable. In 2009 Marquez founded the consulting company, “w/purpose,” which specializes in architecture services for clients who believe that good design can make a difference in both their lives and in the lives of others. His creative studio devises nontraditional solutions for homes, interior designs, public art, streetscapes, retail centers, and learning environments.

His concepts extend beyond sticks and bricks. “It’s not just about the buildings, but also the spaces between them,” he says. “That’s also architectural space.”

He thinks architects need to talk to people about ways a building can perform for the inhabitants inside, but also for what’s going on outside. As for his own designs, some of Marquez’s brightest sparks ignite in blighted communities.

Examples include a colorful bus-stop collaboration with Arlington High School students, a pocket park created with public art installations, and a chic apartment building resurrected from an abandoned candy factory.

W/Purpose partnered with Keep Indianapolis Beautiful to construct Purpose Park at Holmes and W. Washington streets. The little greenspace packs an artful punch with its bright-yellow, 1964 Pontiac Bonneville positioned upright on its nose as a centerpiece.

As the lead designers, w/purpose also helped transform the vacant Homer J. Williamson Chocolate Factory into The Overlook at the Fairgrounds – the new \$14 million, 4-story mixed-use building at 38th Street and Fall Creek Parkway.

One of Marquez’ ongoing passions includes the Design Bank at E. 38th street, which he and cofounder NaShara Mitchell renovated. It now stands as a twenty-first-century, hands-on learning center, featuring 3-D printers, scanners, and a design curriculum.

“We thrive at educating people in general. I’m committed to these things – to public space and cities that are committed to art and design, and to kids doing their work. They need platforms to do their most creative work. We want to develop those platforms.”

Additional projects on the books for Marquez include creating a makerspace for a Boys’ and Girls’ Club in Rocky Mountain, North Carolina, a 48,000-square-foot concept design for a community center in South Bend, and the master plan development for Evansville’s Main Street (1.9-square-mile neighborhood – the North Main corridor). And though his work keeps him crisscrossing the map, Marquez’ roots remain in the 317.

“I’ve been here 20 years, and I’ve made a commitment to dig my feet in and stay committed to the city,” he says.

PLACEMAKER