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*Samples of Frisco's fine public art.
photos by John Scott Glass*

public beauty: frisco's outdoor art & sculpture

by dana gavin frank

WHILE ART PROGRAMS AROUND THE COUNTRY ARE DISAPPEARING, Frisco is cultivating a vivid awareness, most overtly through accessible outdoor sculpture installations located around the city. From the celebrated Texas Sculpture Garden to the bronze steers romping through the Frisco Bridges Park, the city of Frisco is on a mission not only to expose citizens to the outstanding work of local artists, but also to celebrate the intrinsic value of the creative spirit. Mayor Mike Simpson, along with the city council, is giving more than lip service to that celebration.

"I'm a big supporter of art in Frisco. People are able to not only see Frisco's sports facilities and parks, but also appreciate the visual art throughout the city," says Mayor Simpson.

To that end, the City Council isn't relying on private donors to improve the artistic landscape. "The leadership of Frisco has recognized the need for a visually appealing city, so they have committed 2% of capital improvement projects to go to visual arts" says Maher Maso, mayor pro tem and Frisco Association for the Arts board member. "The city has made a financial commitment to create a sustainable place to live and visit."

VISUAL HISTORY

Get off the couch and learn a little history: Frisco's past is being preserved in a visually arresting way, and in some unique locations. Central Park, located at Parkwood Boulevard and Seei Circle, commemorates Frisco's cowboy roots as a point on the Shawnee Trail through three-dimensional murals and enormous statues of cowboys astride their horses. Quotes commemorating the trailblazer's arduous journey line the steps that wind towards man-made springs. Across the street, tall obelisks continue the historical narrative, with nuggets of information for anyone who pauses to read.

ART FOR THE CORPORATE SOUL

"Craig Hall has done a fantastic job at the Hall Office Park," says Mayor Simpson, referring to the development's Texas Sculpture Garden. Mr. Hall's private collection is widely recognized for its volume of contemporary Texas sculpture, and it is on display free of charge to the public. Drivers on Dallas North Parkway, just north of SH 121, can hardly miss the graceful, arcing figures of Dancers MM, a concrete and steel creation by Sanger native Jerry Daniel, and the office buildings house works by Texas artists Jim Bowman, James Surls, Polly Gessell and many others.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Mayor Simpson envisions new and more elaborate art displays in the near future. He describes the cultivation of Heritage Park, west of the railroad tracks near Frisco Square, into "a living, working heritage center, featuring costumed workers, an old-fashioned barber shop, a Victorian house made into a bed and breakfast, and the old Lebanon Church that would be available for services and weddings."

The mayor details plans to "add sculptures along Preston Road at major intersections that would feature not only beautiful landscaping but art that would depict the progress of the city." As for the local connection, Mayor Simpson is positive. "We want to utilize local artists. We're not limiting it to that, but it is yet another draw."

The drawback? According to Mayor Simpson, "Even people in Frisco don't realize that within a half-mile radius, from one end to the other, there are over 100 pieces of art available to them."

Dana Gavin Frank is a Dallas freelance writer.