

The 2016 US tour, Supported by The Knight Foundation

MUSICAL SWINGS: AN EXERCISE IN COLLABORATION

Impacts of a temporary installation on
public spaces in three US cities — a comparative
analysis

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Additional research & digital campaign by Daily tous les jours



* more * together * than * alone *

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SOCIAL IMPACT

3
Cities

19
Weeks

DAILY TOUS LES JOURS

1/3 of the participants reported
interaction with a stranger

1/3

Adjectives most
used to describe
experience:

— Happy, Calming,
— Therapeutic,
— Peaceful, Awesome,
— Pride

Happy

16 - 156

Per Hour

Weekday average attendance.

226,500

Total Attendance

+10%

Collaborated with a stranger
to make music

Increased foot traffic on Clematis street in WPB

56

%

45

%

Deliberate attendance

ECONOMIC IMPACT

246% ——— 340%

Spending by participants exceeding cost of installation

Direct Economic Impact

4,498,900 US\$

\$768,000 → WPB \$1.13 MILLION → DETROIT \$ 2.6 MILLION → SAN JOSE

35% ——— 56%

[Of visitors from the host city]

330,713 US\$

Tax revenue generated by 3 cities

1,978,000 US\$

Generated by increased traffic generated by the swings

\$45,313 → WPB
\$68,400 → DETROIT
\$217,000 → SAN JOSE\$369,000 → WPB
\$509,000 → DETROIT
\$1.1 MILLION → SAN JOSE

78% ——— 91%

[From respective metropolitan area]

60% ——— 70%

[Spent on eating and drinking]



"I think it's amazing how you can create so many different melodies with these in a random way. It all depends on who is on the swing at the time, but it makes it unique each and every time. Everybody does the swing different, from a child to an adult. It's beautiful, just beautiful. And they are different instruments – that is fascinating. I think it's so creative." (SJ)

Photo Credit: CrushyCreative

MUSICAL SWINGS: AN EXERCISE IN COLLABORATION

Inspired by the popular 21 Balançoires (21 Swings) installation, The Swings: An Exercise in Musical Cooperation is a standalone musical installation available for international touring.

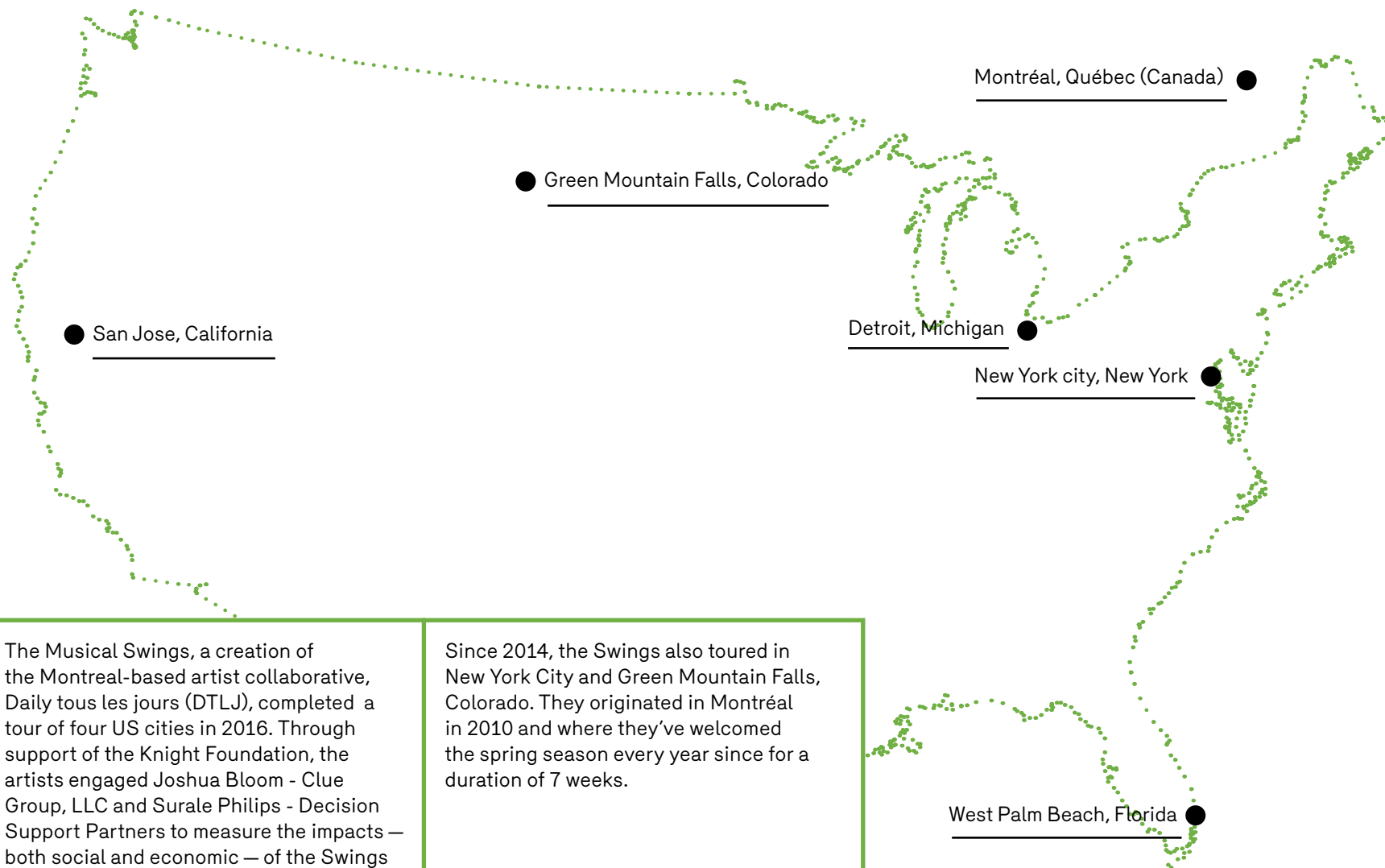
The interactive installation consists of a series of musical swings. When used all together, the swings compose a musical piece in which certain melodies emerge only through cooperation. It's a game where from the start you need to adjust to the actions of others.

The Swings allow participants to make music with their entire bodies, to connect to one another and to have a sense of ownership of public space due to the music they create. The result is a giant collective instrument that brings together people of all ages and backgrounds. The project offers a new experience in collective music making, available to enliven urban spaces, festivals, special events, and more.

Since 2011, the original 21 Swings installation has attracted millions of fans to the Quartier des spectacles area in Montréal, where every day each swing has swung an average of 8,500 times.

IMPACTS OF A TEMPORARY INSTALLATION ON PUBLIC SPACES IN THREE US CITIES — A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

MUSICAL SWINGS: AN EXERCISE IN COLLABORATION



The Musical Swings, a creation of the Montreal-based artist collaborative, Daily tous les jours (DTLJ), completed a tour of four US cities in 2016. Through support of the Knight Foundation, the artists engaged Joshua Bloom - Clue Group, LLC and Surale Philips - Decision Support Partners to measure the impacts — both social and economic — of the Swings in three of the cities: West Palm Beach, Florida; Detroit, Michigan; and San Jose, California.

Since 2014, the Swings also toured in New York City and Green Mountain Falls, Colorado. They originated in Montréal in 2010 and where they've welcomed the spring season every year since for a duration of 7 weeks.

STUDY GOALS

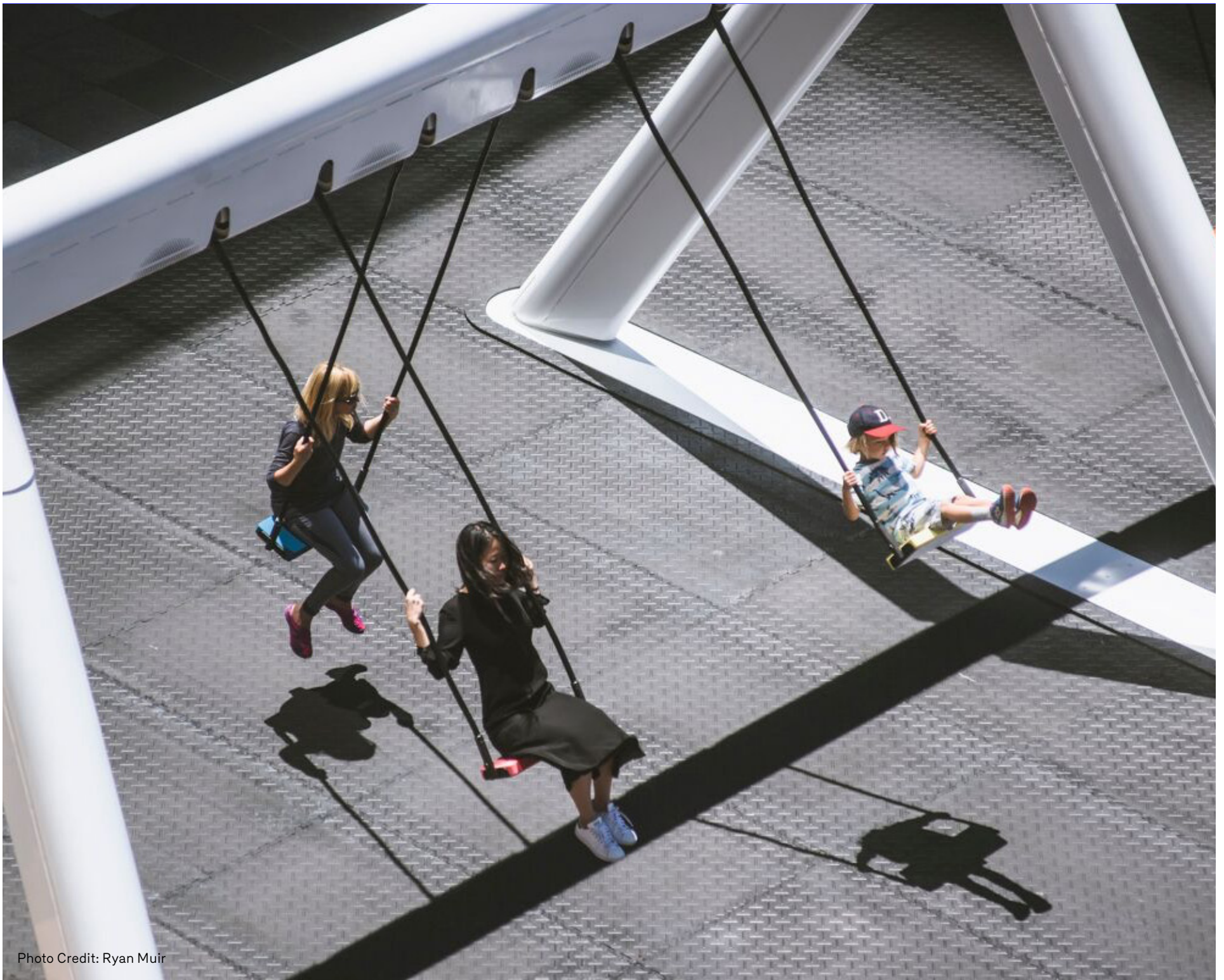


Photo Credit: Ryan Muir

STUDY GOALS

Urban interventions, artistic or otherwise, may have a variety of purposes, from entertainment to economic development. For Daily tous les jours, the Swings are an experiential tool to foster collaboration among people – across age, income, race, and background.

The Swings create an environment where people can make music together while enjoying the universal experience of swinging. Participants may further discover that, in addition to making notes of the musical scale as they swing, they can make more elaborate melodies by attempting to swing synchronously with people next to them. Visitors navigate an organic environment where there are few rules and they must figure out how to share and take turns. By designing the Swings as a platform for interactivity and collaboration, the artists sought to generate novel social interactions. It is not an overstatement to say that these types of interactions nurture civility and cultivate a democratic society. In this way, the Musical Swings demonstrate the intrinsic benefits of art in everyday life.

The host cities and their financial partners had additional goals for bringing the Swings to their communities. They may have shared the artists’ expectations for social impact, but they also desired recognition of their city as a creative place and they may have hoped to see an economic return on their investment in the project: By attracting people to specific downtown locations, the Swings could generate economic activity and thereby cover the costs of the installation. The presenting cities hoped, in attracting people and

creating positive experiences, the Swings would help spur revitalization and show how creative interventions can have multiple impacts. Partnering funders (like the Knight Foundation) and local sponsors shared many of these desired outcomes. In the case of corporate sponsors, they may also have sought to benefit from an association with a high-quality and universally-appealing experience like the Swings.

We developed a methodology to see if these groups had succeeded in their goals (or, in the case of the public, had a collaborative or transformative experience) by measuring quantitative and qualitative impacts of Swings installations in three cities.

The artists, funders, presenting cities, and the public each have expectations from installations like the Swings, some of which overlap.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP VS DESIRED OUTCOMES			
1. ARTISTS	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ENGAGEMENT• ENTERTAINMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AN “AH-HAH” MOMENT• RECOGNITION (AS ARTISTS)
2. PRESENTING CITIES	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• RECOGNITION (AS CREATIVE PLACE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• RETURN ON INVESTMENT• REVITALIZATION
3. THE PUBLIC	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ENGAGEMENT• ENTERTAINMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AN “AH-HAH” MOMENT

"The swings give you a good feeling especially in Detroit, to know there are still good things to enjoy here." (DT)

"I think it's awesome how it brings people together. It unites people. Creation and art is needed in the city to breathe life back into it. So cool. So fun."

Photo: DTLJ Photography





Photo: DTLJ Photography

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Most swings installations were one month, although the san jose installation was longer. The study methodology used direct measurement and sampling, through a combination of counting, surveying, and interviewing Swings visitors.

Working with DTLJ, we outlined a series of social metrics related to participation, awareness, attitude, access, collaboration, discourse, and value, plus economic metrics that included usage counts, direct spending, and indirect spending.

We designed a survey to collect data on behavior, knowledge, opinion, and user attributes (see appendix). At each site, we recruited and employed a small survey team, and team members were paid an honorarium. A two or three-person survey team was generally at the Swings sites during all hours of operation for a core sampling period of three days.

- ✕ COUNTS
The team used hand-held “clickers” to count (separately) people who came to the Swings site and people who actually used the Swings. The counts were taken for 15-minute intervals each hour. *
- ✕ SURVEYS
The team collected about 300 random intercept surveys at each installation. The survey asked direct, quantifiable questions about social interaction and spending. It also asked for place of residence, as well as open-ended questions about qualitative experience. It included a few demographic questions to allow comparison to local Census data.
- ✕ INTERVIEWS
We conducted 15-20 interviews at each site in order to understand visitor experiences more deeply and to collect descriptions of those experiences in the visitors’ own words.
- ✕ DIGITAL
We reviewed our social media channels to collect descriptions of those experiences in the visitors’ own words.

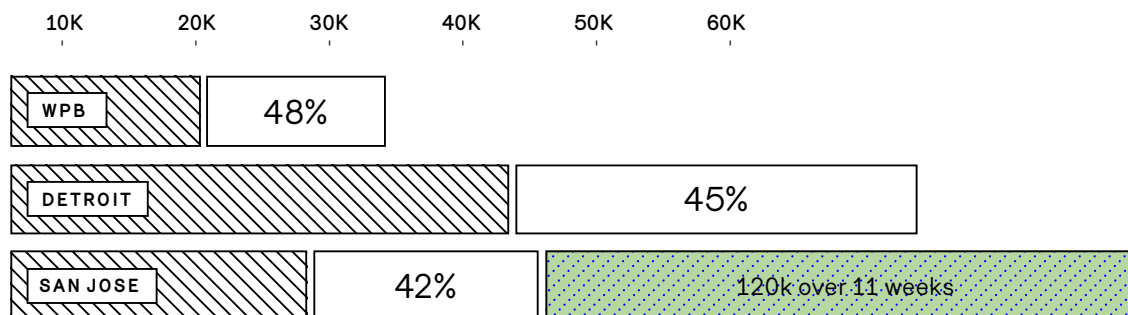
* At each site, several additional counts were taken outside of the three core survey days to confirm consistency and reliability of the sample counts. In West Palm Beach, pre-installation “baseline” counts were collected on the sidewalk near the Swings location.

The counts allowed us to calculate hourly visitor rates and the total estimated visitors during the run of the installation. The surveys provided data on size and spending of visitor parties. Tabulation of the volume of visitors (counts) and their spending (surveys) enabled us to calculate total economic impact.



FINDINGS / USAGE —

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SWINGS WAS OVERWHELMINGLY ENJOYABLE AND LEFT USERS FEELING HAPPY, UPLIFTED, AND INSPIRED BY THE INTERACTIVITY OF THE PUBLIC ART.



Attendance (1 month):

- ☐ Came to the swings intentionally
- ☒ Other

We used the survey to determine who came to the Swings deliberately (i.e., the Swings were the impetus for the trip to the site) and who came as a secondary function of a trip to the area initiated for another purpose. This allowed us to attribute a portion of visitor spending to the presence of the Swings.

FINDINGS / SOCIAL —

WE MEASURED SOCIAL INTERACTIONS AT THE SWINGS, PAYING SPECIAL ATTENTION TO INTERACTIONS AMONG PEOPLE WHO DID NOT KNOW EACH OTHER – A PARTICULAR INTEREST OF DTLJ.

			Our findings across the three cities were remarkably similar and highlighted many of the benefits of deliberate “placemaking.”	In all cities, the surveyors were frequently asked questions about who created the Swings and how they happened to come to their city.
			✕ INTERACTIVITY When Swings users were asked if they “talked with someone new,” 27% to 30% said they had. While this is a relatively small portion of visitors, it is almost certainly higher than the likely interactivity on a city sidewalk or in a public park. When Swings users were asked if they “worked with a stranger to make a melody,” between 9% and 12% reported they had.	✕ LONGER USAGE OF PUBLIC SPACES Upwards of 30% of Swingers stayed in the area longer than they thought they would and many of the open-ended comments on surveys and in interviews noted the visitors’ appreciation for how accessible the Swings were to people of all ages and from all walks of life. The Swings inspired conversation and facilitated social connections among people and families who did not know one another.
			✕ SOCIAL REACH Between 85-89% of Swings visitors said they would tell someone about the Swings, and 63-69% of visitors said they would post the Swings to social media. Most Swings visitors learned about the installation via social media, other word-of-mouth, or just passing by and feeling compelled to stop.	



"It felt like the little boy next to me didn't know that if we were swinging in unison that we could make more of a harmonious sound. He spoke Chinese, so I just slowed down and tried to swing with him so we were making a really beautiful sound together. That was really fun, even though we weren't collaborating on it consciously."

Photo: DTLJ Photography

“WHAT THREE WORDS WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE HOW THE SWINGS MADE YOU FEEL?”

Inspired, Playful, Wimsical, Curious, Different

Happy

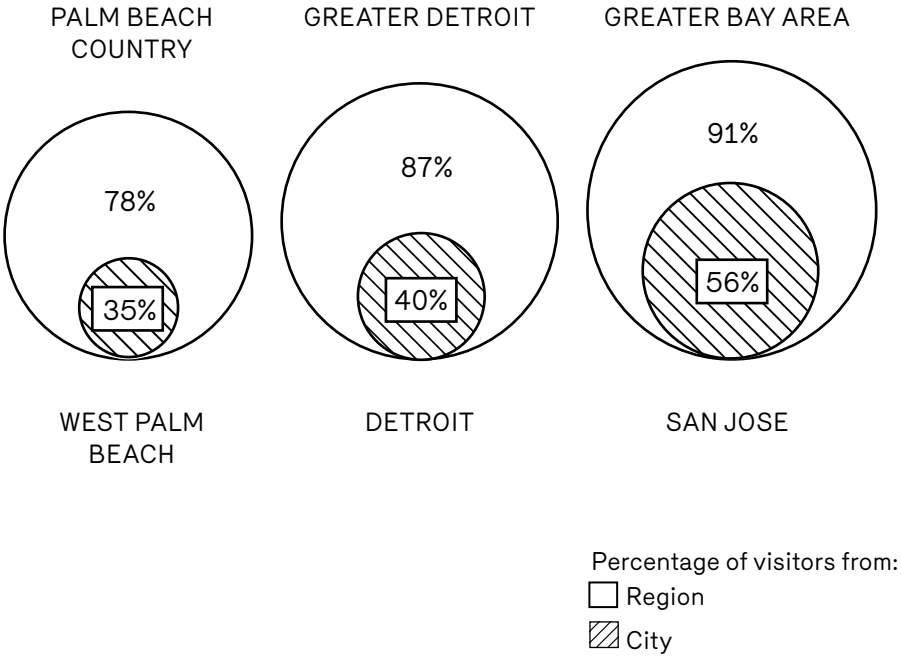
Fun, Peaceful, Happy, Joyful, Soothing, Great
Nostalgic, Entertained, Magical, Beautiful
carefree, carefree, Great

*Happy
*Happy
— Peaceful, Excited, Light
— Relaxed, Young,
— Calm, Fun, Free, Joy

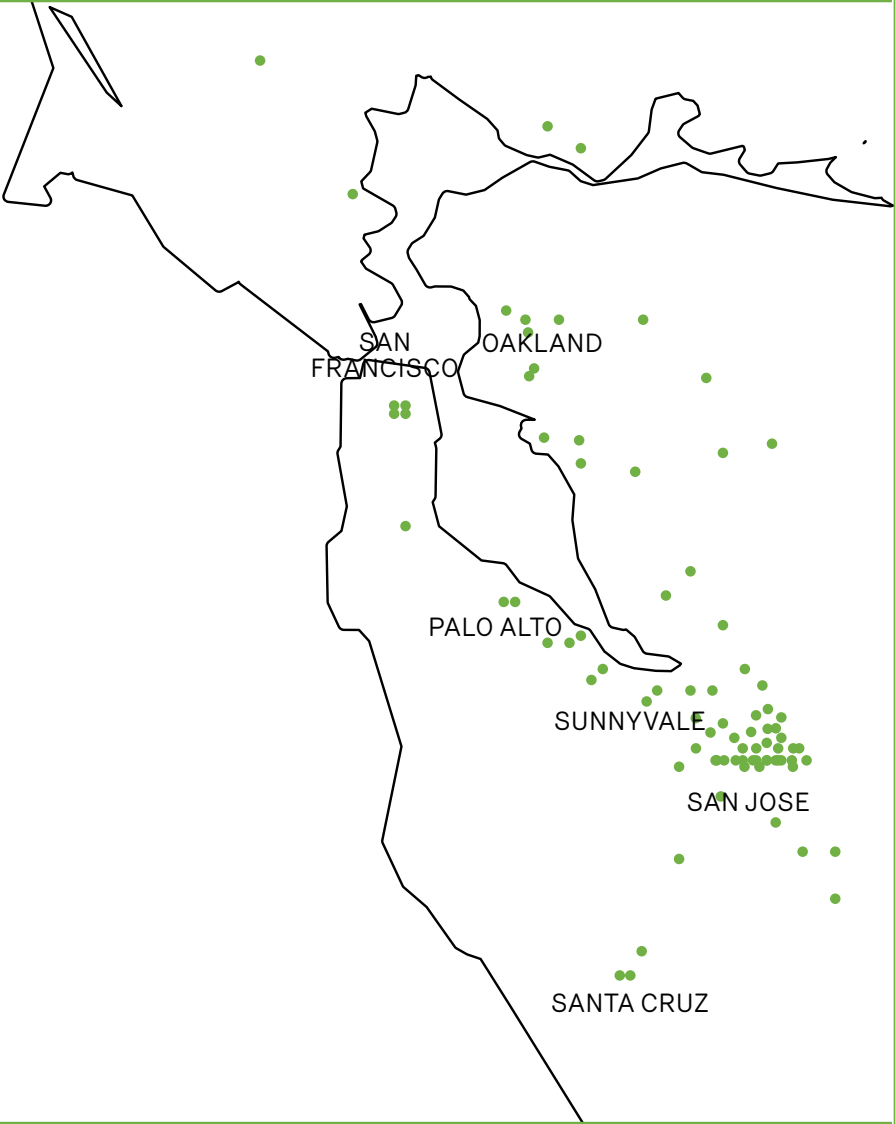
*Amazing, Serene, Curious, Carefree, Nostalgic
*Amazing, Serene, Curious, Carefree, Nostalgic
*Amazing, Serene, Curious, Carefree, Nostalgic
*Amazing, Serene, Curious, Carefree, Nostalgic
*Amazing, Serene, Curious, Carefree, Nostalgic
*Amazing, Serene, Curious, Carefree, Nostalgic
*Amazing, Serene, Curious, Carefree, Nostalgic
*Amazing, Serene, Curious, Carefree, Nostalgic

ECONOMIC

In each of the three cities studied, the Swings were a regional attraction, drawing between 35-56% from the host city and a total of 78-91% from their respective metropolitan areas.



The counts allowed us to calculate hourly visitor rates and the total estimated visitors during the run of the installation. The surveys provided data on size and spending of visitor parties. Tabulation of the volume of visitors (counts) and their spending (surveys) enabled us to calculate total economic impact.

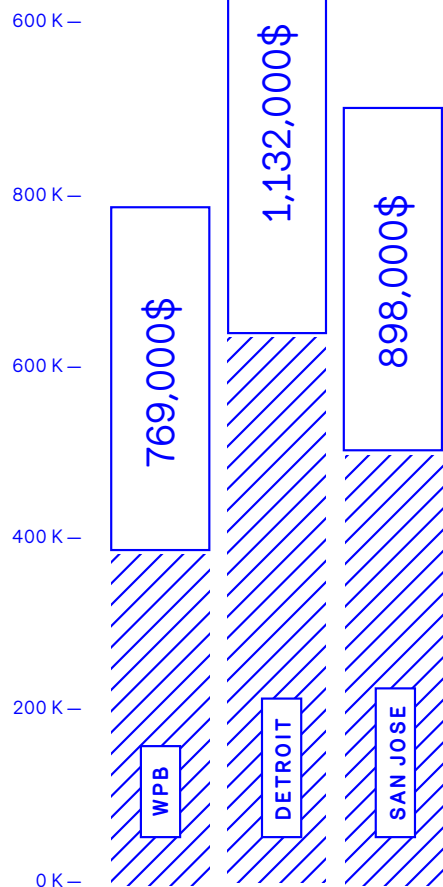


California, San Jose:
● Swings visitor distribution for San Jose

"I was here at the swings last month with my girlfriend. I'm obsessed! Combining a childhood joy with music is just too much fun. The musical swings put me at ease and remind me of childhood."



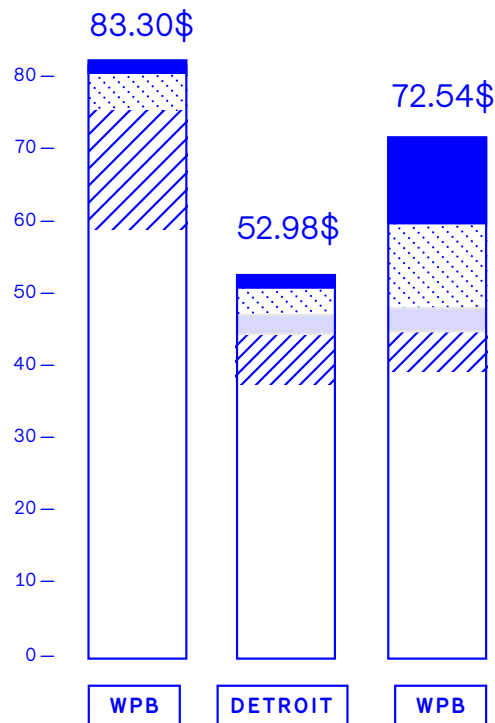
SPENDING —



Total Spending (1 Month)

□ Swings-Attributable Spending

▨ Other



Average Spending per Party:

□ Eating, Drinking Downtown

▨ Shopping Downtown

■ Parking

▤ Overnight Lodging

■ Other Spending

Several factors affect the level of spending, including affluence of visitors and the proximity of nearby commercial establishments where people might dine or shop.

Spending by Swings visitors was calculated in two ways: Total spending by visitors, and spending by the proportion of visitors who said the primary purpose of their trip downtown was the Swings. (The proportion of intentional Swings visitors varied slightly by city, from 42% to 48%.)

EATING AND DRINKING WAS THE MOST FREQUENTLY REPORTED EXPENDITURE (67-70% OF RESPONDENTS); LODGING WAS THE LEAST-FREQUENT EXPENDITURE – A FUNCTION OF MOST SWINGS VISITORS BEING REGIONAL.

SPENDING —

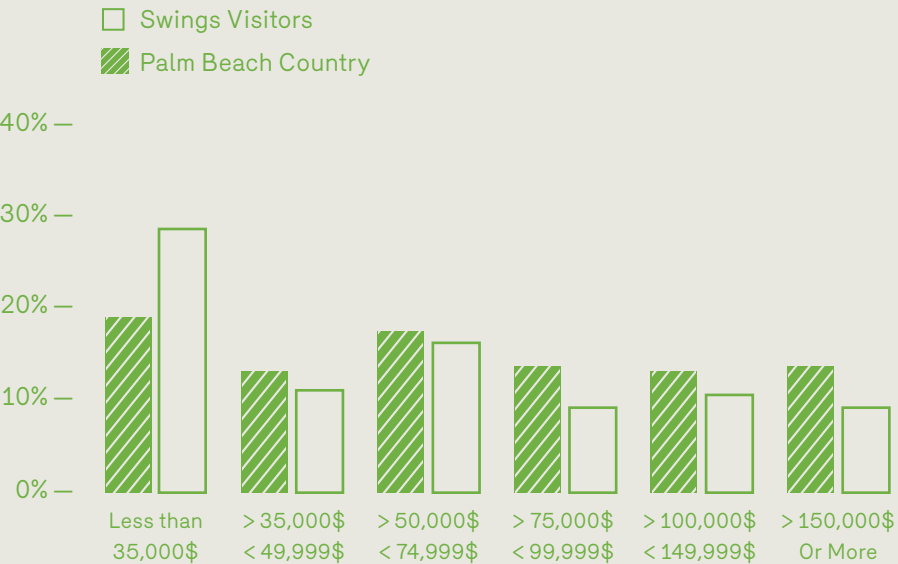
The survey asked about spending downtown (since the Swings were located in the downtowns of all three cities studied). Most attendees lived in their respective metro areas, but not in downtown. For intentional Swings visitors, the Swings caused their spending – spending that might otherwise have gone elsewhere in the region – to be captured downtown.

DEMOGRAPHICS
Much of DTLJ’s work, including the Swings, intentionally seeks to break down social barriers and societal strata. We compared household incomes, race/ethnicity, and age with the Census data for the core geographic draw areas. The income and race/ethnicity charts for the West Palm Beach (below) illustrate a trend seen in Detroit and San Jose: In general, people at the lowest income levels were less likely to come – perhaps because they had not heard about the Swings or did not have time or resources to come.

The racial and ethnic mix was more nuanced and varied by city: In West Palm Beach, the Swings attracted a more diverse set of visitors than the reference population (e.g., fewer white visitors), while Detroit and San Jose attracted a higher proportion of white visitors than the reference population.

The Swings successfully attracted diverse audiences in all three cities studied. For any placemaking initiative or other public art installation, there are many barriers to attracting the full spectrum of regional residents, especially at the lowest ends of the income range. Lower-income households often have more constraints on their time (e.g., work multiple jobs), mobility (e.g., lack of car), or awareness (e.g., not connected on social media) than higher-income households.

Household Income



Race and Ethnicity

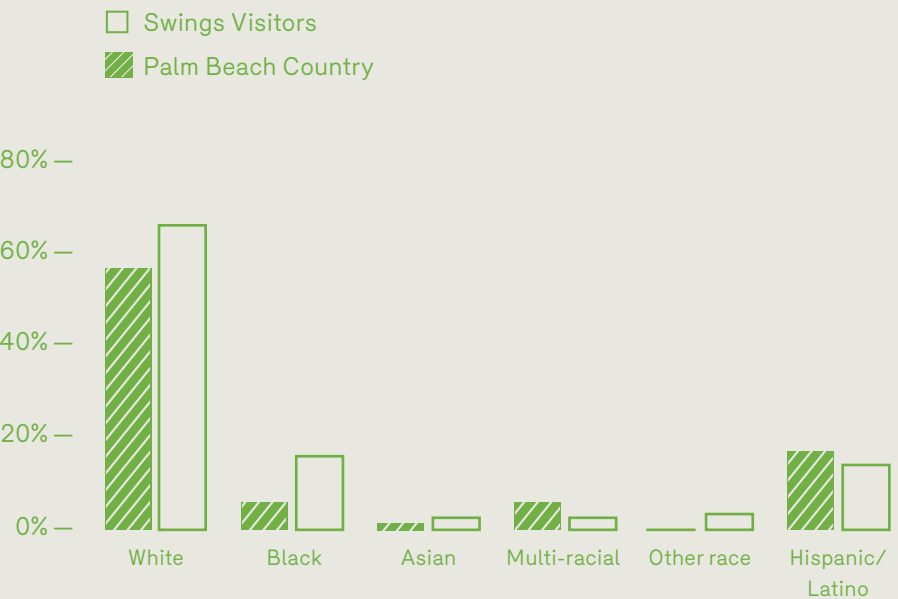




Photo: DTLJ Photography

CAMPAIGN DESCRIPTION	
	<p>In parallel to the 2016 physical tour of The Swings in West Palm Beach, Detroit, New York City and San Jose, DTLJ set out to create and nurture a digital community. This community served as an agora not only to increase awareness about the project and Daily tous les jours but also to listen and respond to conversations being sparked around The Swings and in the long-run, to stimulate new types of dialogue on public space and urban interventions.</p> <p>DTLJ created Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts as well as a branded hashtag, #MusicalSwings. This information was included in all communications in each city, from on-site signage to press releases. DTLJ additionally, we carried out a website, newsletter campaign and media outreach in each city. While</p> <p>The Swings were traveling from place to place, social data was captured through Nexalogy, an analytics platform.</p> <p>A content calendar was created to efficiently spread out all of our messaging throughout the four city presentations. In each city DTLJ focused on revealing stories behind these cities' citizens interacting with the installation. We set out to discover how The Swings had influenced their relationships with and perspectives on public space. Visitors were interviewed as well as key stakeholders in presenting cities to create social content, including photoquotes, short videos, interviews and more.</p>



"We came here specifically for the swings. He and I have been here a couple of times so we wanted to bring our friends and we had dinner first down here." (WPB)

"I have a mood disorder, I was walking downtown to relax, the swings drew me in and calmed me down. I hope they stay forever. I usually drown myself out with music, but the swings made me pause and listen to the city. I'm visiting again before they go." (SJ)

Photo: Ryan Muir

FACEBOOK — @THEMUSICALSWINGS

The Musical Swings Facebook page, by Daily tous les jours, was created towards the end of January, just before the installation landed in West Palm Beach. While The Swings were activated in each city, we were posting regularly, sharing visitor content as well as our own. Photos, short video (embedded) and articles were shared on this platform.

Towards the beginning of the year we experimented with Facebook events. DTLJ found this to be a great way of targeting specific communities on social media, engaging active Facebook users as well as stimulating conversations locally. Facebook events are an excellent channel to directly reach users – attendees receive notifications every time the event owner publishes a post. However, Facebook events have a maximum life-span of 2 weeks, which discouraged us from maintaining this strategy.

Paid support on Facebook helped us initially get the word out about The Swings in each city. In West Palm Beach, DTLJ concentrated our efforts on creating a handful of paid advertisements that were targeting individuals living within a certain radius around the city that had an interest in art, theatre, music and design. DTLJ also boosted the Facebook event to get the word out quickly. Following West Palm Beach, we steadily decreased our spending as we received more support from press and word-of-mouth. Overall, we found these paid efforts to be worthwhile, especially towards the beginning of the tour when we were building awareness.



OVERVIEW

- 856 page likes
- 5.2K post likes in total

WEST PALM BEACH Feb 4 - March 6

- Total Reach: 16,940
- Organic: 7,981
- Paid: 8,959



DETROIT April 7 - May 8

- Total Reach: 29,624
- Organic: 11652
- Paid: 17972



NYC June 10 - July 7

- Total Reach: 8,460
- Organic: 6386
- Paid: 2074



SAN JOSE Aug. 4 - Sept. 30 (date of last post)

- Total Reach: 25,640
- Organic: 25,545 (wow!)
- Paid: 1095



PAID ADVERTISING

We set-up a handful of stand alone ads and boosted posts on our page throughout the year. The type of ads included post engagement, page likes and event responses. These spends generated over 1,156 results (post engagements), a total reach of 36,101 and over 1,616 clicks.



POSTS ENGAGEMENT

Photo posts performed the best (average engagement at 86) then videos (14).



AUDIENCE

- 81% women & 18% male
- English: 775 & French: 58
- The majority of our Facebook fans are located in the United States (679) and in Canada (111). More specifically, we have the most fans in San Jose (104), Montréal (88), Detroit (64) and New York City (46). This demonstrates that our follower base directly correlates with where The Swings visit.

NOTES

- * Facebook posts triggered only positive reactions.
- * The decrease in post reach during New York City is due to the dip in outgoing pay-supported posts. Our content was 'lost in the noise' as there is a lot happening in June in NYC.
- * In general, organic posts did extremely well.

INSTAGRAM — @MUSICALSWINGS

Similarly to Facebook, DTLJ created The Swings Instagram account in January 2016. We attracted followers by posting photos of The Swings in previous cities as well as behind the scenes footage. In each city, we shot and shared photos of the set-up, opening day and dismantle.

DTLJ easily had the most engagement on Instagram, despite not having contributed to paid support. There is a strong visual and audio component behind The Swings that visitors are very keen on documenting. Instagram became the perfect platform to do so as its focus is on pictures and video and attracts users from a wide range of demographics. DTLJ were able to track all posts and engage with visitors by monitoring #MusicalSwings.

Presenting cities would often throw their own hashtags in the mix, for example #MusicalSwingswpb in West Palm Beach and #MusicalSwingsDetroit in Detroit.

Content for our website and other platforms was often sourced from Instagram. To reward visitors for their social media efforts, DTLJ often regrammed our favorite #MusicalSwings photos with a credit shoutout. We also reached out to local influencers on Instagram and profiled them on our website. For instance DTLJ came across the renowned Detroit-based photographer Jay Fenech's evocative shots of The Swings at night on Instagram, which led us to interviewing him for our website.

- ✕ OVERVIEW
- 579 instagram followers
 - #MusicalSwings hashtag used x 2,679
 - #MusicalSwingswpb used x 249
 - #MusicalSwingsDetroit used x112
 - Average engagement (post likes and comments) per post: 67.5

TWITTER — @MUSICALSWINGS

The least active social media platform under our belt, The Swings Twitter account was only activated in May. No particular strategy was created for Twitter, the account was established for the specific purpose of capturing conversations and establishing a presence.

- ✕ OVERVIEW
- 77 twitter followers
 - #MusicalSwings used +/-500 times since January

Twitter users were the most active with #MusicalSwings mentions during Detroit.

PINTEREST

Although The Swings did not have their own Pinterest account, photos of the musical swings were included in a variety of boards, such as 'Ideas for the House', 'Urban Details', 'Public Space', etc. The Swings were treated as an art project and piece of urban furniture on this platform.

WEBSITE — MUSICALSWINGS.COM

Musicalswings.com is the official website behind The Swings, with information and content devoted exclusively to the project. The website features a blog, information about the artists, tour and booking information. The website attracted a significant amount of traffic since the time of its creation in late January 2016. DTLJ tracked the websites performance as of November 2016.

✕ OVERVIEW

- Total visits: 47,938
- Page views: 66,788
- Unique visitors: 33,701

✕ GOOGLE ANALYTICS:

- Average session duration: 2:07
- Pages per session: 1.42
- Top city visitors: San Jose, San Francisco, New York, Santa Clara, Detroit, Los Angeles, Montreal
- % of new sessions: 80%
- Top channels: Visitors were coming from social media (39.06%), organic search (26.8%), direct (22.87%) and email (1.6%).
- The most visited page site was <http://www.musicalswings.com/sanjose>, with over 7,043 visits.

✕ SQUARESPACE REFERRERS (sample based on the past month)

- 57% Google
- 31% Direct

Notes:

- * The website received the most traffic in July. This could be because of certain press we received around NYC (Designboom, The Contemporist) and/or buzz around NYC & SxSW announcement.
- * Unfortunately, the data we have for referrers from Squarespace does not accurately represent incoming traffic from social media as we have not been active in the past month on all three platforms.



"How precious life is and to always remember to be thankful because life is beautiful." (WPB)

*"It's the coolest thing ever!
Brings out creativity in others."*

Photo: DTLJ Photography

MEDIA COVERAGE		NEWSLETTER CAMPAIGN
<p>At the beginning of each presentation, DTLJ worked with city representatives on media outreach to boost media attendance at the opening events and overall coverage. Our independent efforts were focused on local and international art, technology and design outlets. Media highlights include features in Designboom, The Contemporist, Creators Project, Mental Floss. In general, The Swings generated a large amount of local buzz everywhere the project went. Stand-out print publications such as TimeOut London & Elle Decoration Thailand also covered The Swings.</p> <p>✕ COVERAGE STORIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• West Palm Beach: 16• Detroit: 17• New York City: 23• San Jose: 12• General articles on the tour: 6 <p>✕ TOTAL: 74</p>		<p>Following the West Palm Beach and Detroit presentations, DTLJ sent out a newsletter to all individuals and organizations who had previously expressed an interest in the project. Newsletter content included initial key findings from the impact study conducted by The CLUE Group that had been following The Swings on tour to date. The newsletter outperformed the industry average with total opens of 1,149 (based on a list of 543 recipients).</p> <p>✕ OPEN RATE: 41.2% (Industry average is 17.2%)</p> <p>✕ CLICK RATE: 6% (INDUSTRY AVERAGE 2.1%) musicalswings.com was the most clicked URL</p>

DIGITAL MEDIA SUPPORTS A PUBLIC SPACE EXPERIENCE

The digital platform was a test by DTLJ to see how it can support the promotion and experience of the Musical Swings. In general DTLJ observed how the Swings generated a large amount of buzz on social media in 2016, notably on Facebook and Instagram. DTLJ observed, there was a positive sentiment attached to the project on all platforms. People weren't shy to translate their physical experiences online, tag their friends and share both inspiring and personal stories.

Social media played a positive role in driving traffic to musicalswings.com and creating awareness on a local level about The Swings. The CLUE Group measured that between 85-89% of visitors said they would tell someone about The Swings, and 63-69% of visitors said they would post The Swings on social media. Additionally, most swings visitors learned about the installation via social media and word-of-mouth (which could very well also be social media). Popular hashtags and words prove that The Swings generated positive reactions on social media. Words used in Instagram posts such as 'community' and 'Detroit love' restate that The Swings were emblematic of city pride.

Even though The Swings is a project that takes over and transforms physical space, it's interesting for DTLJ to see such a digital presence take shape in parallel. While there isn't exactly a plethora of traveling urban interventions that have had similar digital marketing campaigns to benchmark, the online buzz behind Swings acts as a case study that testifies to the role of social media in promoting public activations.

LESSONS LEARNED



Photo: Soski

LESSONS LEARNED

EVALUATING THE IMPACTS OF THE MUSICAL SWINGS PROVIDED MANY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, BOTH ON THE IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES OF THE SWINGS THEMSELVES AND ON THE EVALUATIVE PROCESS.

Some of these relate specifically to the Swings and some can be generalized to other types of installations or interventions.

ON ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- ✕ PUBLIC ART CAN PAY FOR ITSELF.
Art can have many purposes but, for cities, the “bottom line” is often a motivating factor. Our research demonstrates that public art and placemaking interventions can pay for themselves – even when that was not the original intent of the project. In the case of the Musical Swings, the total shared cost was approximately \$150,000 for a one-month installation in each city. We found that the total spending generated by the Swings exceeded.
- ✕ IT HELPS TO BE NEAR ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.
Economic impact (e.g., visitor spending) is greater if the Swings (or other placemaking interventions) are located near commercial amenities like retail stores, outdoor markets, or restaurants and bars. In all three cities studied (and in New York), the Swings were installed in a downtown environment – and they drew visitors to the downtown. The closer the Swings are to commercial activity, the more opportunity there is for visitors to spend money while they are in the site location.

- ✕ EATING AND DRINKING ARE THE MOST COMMON PURCHASES.
Because visitors to the Swings were more likely to spend money on eating and drinking than on other things (like retail purchases, lodging, or other services), it helps if there are eating and drinking establishments nearby that stand to benefit from the visitor traffic.
- ✕ THE AUDIENCE FOR THE SWINGS IS REGIONAL – BUT THE SWINGS STILL INCREASED SPENDING DOWNTOWN.
In general, we found that 78% to 91% of Swings visitors live in the metropolitan area around the installation – and therefore, the visitor spending they attracted was regional. But the Swings successfully attracted regional spending to a downtown core – one of the goals of the local hosts and funders.



It draws the public in positive ways. It made Detroit feel like a genuine urban destination.” (DT)

“It reminded me how important it is for community building and increased economic productivity in the area and increased cultural participation.” (DT)

Photo: WPB ArtsAndEntertainmentDistrict

ON SOCIAL IMPACTS

✕ UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCES DRAW BROAD PARTICIPATION.

The universality of the experience of “swinging” was something appreciated across ages, races, and incomes of participants – and created a setting for interactions that probably would not have otherwise occurred.

✕ SATISFYING CURIOSITY MIGHT DEEPEN THE EXPERIENCE.

At all sites there were a lot of questions about who made the swings. Providing more prominent signage, social media hashtags, website address, or even a video where people could hear from the artists might stimulate more conversation and engagement.

✕ A “MANAGED” SITE FOSTERS LESS INTERACTION (AND DISCOVERY) THAN AN “ORGANIC” SITE.

The Detroit installation (and New York, which was not studied) was highly managed during peak periods and swingers were limited to two minutes. In Detroit, swingers were also encouraged to try swinging synchronously with others via a megaphone. Much of the interactivity that happened at other sites (and at the Detroit installation during off-peak periods) came about naturally, when people were relaxed and involved in their experience and were more open to interaction with others around them. This also suggests that extremely busy locations may be less suited for fostering social interactions, as they require some level of crowd control.

✕ BRINGING AN INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE LIKE THE SWINGS TO A VERY BUSY SITE REQUIRES CAREFULLY CALIBRATED SITE MANAGEMENT.

In Detroit (a very busy site in the heart of the central business district), the hired “host” mediated visitors’ experiences by encouraging people to swing together and limiting their turns to two minutes. It is preferable to have a subtler form of site management where a host reminds users to take turns, but still allows room for organic, self-directed discovery. In addition to a live host, a posted “code of conduct” could help crowds to self-regulate – a goal in keeping with the artists’ intentions.

VISITORS APPRECIATE BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND CONTEXT.

More prominent printed (or multi-media) information on the artists would enhance visitors’ understanding of the artists’ work.

✕ IT HELPS TO HAVE PLACES TO SIT.

In installations where there were seating areas nearby (park benches, moveable chairs, a temporary parklet), Swings visitors tended to linger longer. People sitting and observing became part of the public’s interaction with the Swings and with other visitors.

PEOPLE LIKE A LITTLE GUIDANCE WHEN EXPERIENCING PUBLIC ART.

In the West Palm Beach installation, which had very limited explanatory signage, few people discovered the collaborative aspect of the Swings experience. In later installations, signs offered the suggestion to try swinging synchronously with a neighbor and more people discovered that the Swings would make a melody.

ON MEASURING

✕ GATHERING SPENDING DATA.
Spending data (e.g., retail, dining, lodging, etc.) were collected through an intercept survey. In our initial surveys, we found that most respondents skipped the question about downtown spending, probably because they found that it required time and thought to answer. We quickly adjusted our methodology to add a verbal instruction when we handed over the clipboard to a respondent: “There’s a question on here about spending. Please make your best estimates.” Adding this instruction yielded a response rate of 70% to 76% for the downtown-spending question, depending on the city.

✕ PAYING THE SURVEY TEAM.
We believe it is important to pay the survey team (rather than ask for volunteers) because it motivates the team and engenders reliability

✕ BLENDING IN.
Initially, the survey team wore professional-type attire and name badges. We quickly found that this “official” look disrupted the organic nature of the Swings experience. (For example, people would come up to us and ask where they could buy a ticket, or if they needed to sign-up to use the swings.) We then dispensed with the name tags and dressed more casually.

✕ WEATHER AFFECTS THE SAMPLE.
In each city, we chose three consecutive days for surveys and visitor counts. (In most cases, we also collected a handful of samples on other days in order to test the consistency of our counts.) We collected surveys and recorded visitor counts using a sampling methodology. For non-sampling days during the month, we applied adjustments, where needed, based on the recorded weather at the site. We applied adjustments to visitor

✕ counts based on the actual weather recorded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and based on our observation of how visitor attendance was affected by pleasant or inclement weather.

IT HELPS WHEN PEOPLE ARE HAPPY.

The Swings create an almost magical environment where people just seem happy – and they reported on this happiness in the surveys. In such a pleasant context, people visiting the Swings were very receptive to being surveyed. People wanted to talk about the Swings and sometimes even approached the surveyors. (This stands in contrast to other surveys we have done, such as shopper intercept surveys.) We had a decline rate of less than five percent.

WE DIDN'T MEASURE (OR ANTICIPATE) IMPACTS ON CIVIC PRIDE.

In each city, many survey respondents and interviewees mentioned how the Swings’ coming to their city made them feel prideful.

✕ This was particularly true in Detroit. It was an impact we had not anticipated. Future surveys at the Swings or other public art installations could include a question to measure impact on civic pride.

CONSIDER INTERACTIVE SURVEY AND COMMENT BOARDS.

It may not be feasible to conduct a formal study at each installation, but data could still be captured, albeit informally. For example, survey boards with a few key questions onto which people can put dots or post comments on sticky notes could be incorporated. Or a chalk board with key questions that encourages people to write comments could also be considered.

"We came down here just for our day off, but we had heard about them so we were looking for them. We heard about them on Facebook and saw pictures on line and on the news." (DT)

"These swings are a perfect example of how public art is a social experience and how it brings people together."

Photo: WPB ArtsAndEntertainmentDistrict



ON OTHER THINGS

✕ PUBLIC ART (OR PLACEMAKING) INSTALLATIONS ARE DIFFERENT FROM SPECIAL EVENTS.

Special events (like parades and festivals) are often designed to draw people to a downtown area and they may last an afternoon or even several days. Temporary art installations like the Swings are different: While temporary, their duration is longer than a festival, and discovery continues throughout the run. They build moment through word of mouth and social media. But perhaps more importantly, installations like the Swings foster a different kind of interaction with a downtown than special events. An installation like the Swings is not disruptive to normal downtown life in that it doesn't involve street closures or cause general crowding. It doesn't involve vendors (like food trucks or kiosks), so visitor spending tends to benefit existing downtown businesses. And an installation like the Swings tends not to place heavy demands on public services, like public works or police departments.

✕ FOR STRONGEST ECONOMIC IMPACT, THE BEST LOCATION APPEARS TO BE A MARGINALLY-UNDERPERFORMING SITE.

Positioning a temporary, interactive installation like the Swings in a commercial setting enlivens the site and the area around it. When the Swings are placed in a regularly-programmed, busy site (like Cadillac Square

in downtown Detroit, or Brookfield Place at the World Trade Center), they probably do not generate a large increment of additional visitors – and the direct impact on nearby businesses may be limited, if that is a key goal. On the other hand, if the Swings were installed in a depopulated or blighted urban area, they would also have limited economic benefit because of the lack of commercial amenities available. It was our observation, based on the locations studied, that the “marginally-underperforming” commercial site offers the best opportunity and economic outcome: It attracts visitors to a less-visited part of a commercial district or downtown, while fostering an economic connection to nearby businesses.

✕ PUBLIC ART AND PLACEMAKING INSTALLATIONS CAN BE PART OF BREAKING A DISINVESTMENT CYCLE.

Urban revitalization often presents a core challenge that seems to be unsolvable: new businesses will only come where there are customers, and customers will only come where there are interesting businesses to patronize. How can a city attract one without the other? Public art and placemaking can act as interventions that disrupt a loop: An installation like the Swings attracts people, and the people then patronize existing businesses as a function of their proximity. West Palm Beach offered the best context for

testing this hypothesis because the Swings were installed in a vacant lot on a secondary downtown commercial block. We measured baseline foot traffic before and after the Swings arrived and we found the Swings increased foot traffic on the sidewalk 56% over typical usage. We also know that the Swings generated spending at nearby businesses. It is easy to imagine that regular programming in the spirit of the Swings could continue to build foot traffic, and that increase could ultimately create an environment where new business development could be supported.

✕ MANY CITIES ARE LOOKING FOR ART THAT ENGAGES, BUT NOT JUST ANY ART CAN ACCOMPLISH THIS.

By creating art with interaction and social impact, the Musical Swings and DTLJ offer important lessons for civic arts organizations and, even, for developers incorporating art into their site programs. The Swings offer a different type of engagement than traditional “sculptures” – objects installed to be observed and appreciated, but not touched or climbed upon.



CONCLUSION

Measuring the social and economic impacts of the Swings in three cities began with the goal of learning if the artists were catalyzing the social impacts they sought and whether cities were seeing a return on their investments in public art. The endeavor came to embody a larger idea: How do you measure the success of public art – or the success of other public interventions, like temporary installations or more permanent public improvements? And how is success viewed by different partners – artists, cities, the public – for a given intervention?

Measuring the Musical Swings provided an opportunity to quantify outcomes for DTLJ and its partner cities. It also provided an opportunity to develop a methodology that, while specific to the Swings, could be adapted to other projects. “Art for art’s sake” is a reasonable end. But it is also reasonable to ask whether the art is reaching people and having the intended impacts on their perceptions, experiences, and emotions. Similarly,

it is reasonable to ask whether art can create an economic benefit, especially as so many cities work to leverage the arts as a path to revitalization.

When we began this assignment, we had few assumptions. We did not assume that people would understand the collaborative intent of the Swings. (And, in fact, most visitors did not “get” the collaborative aspect of swinging synchronously) Similarly, we did not assume that the Swings stimulated economic activity equal to or greater than the cost of hosting them. But, in fact, they did spur economic activity far greater than their cost. Our hope is that this research will inspire cities to work with artists to identify the intended impacts of their work and to consider how to measure and evaluate successes based on the intended impacts.

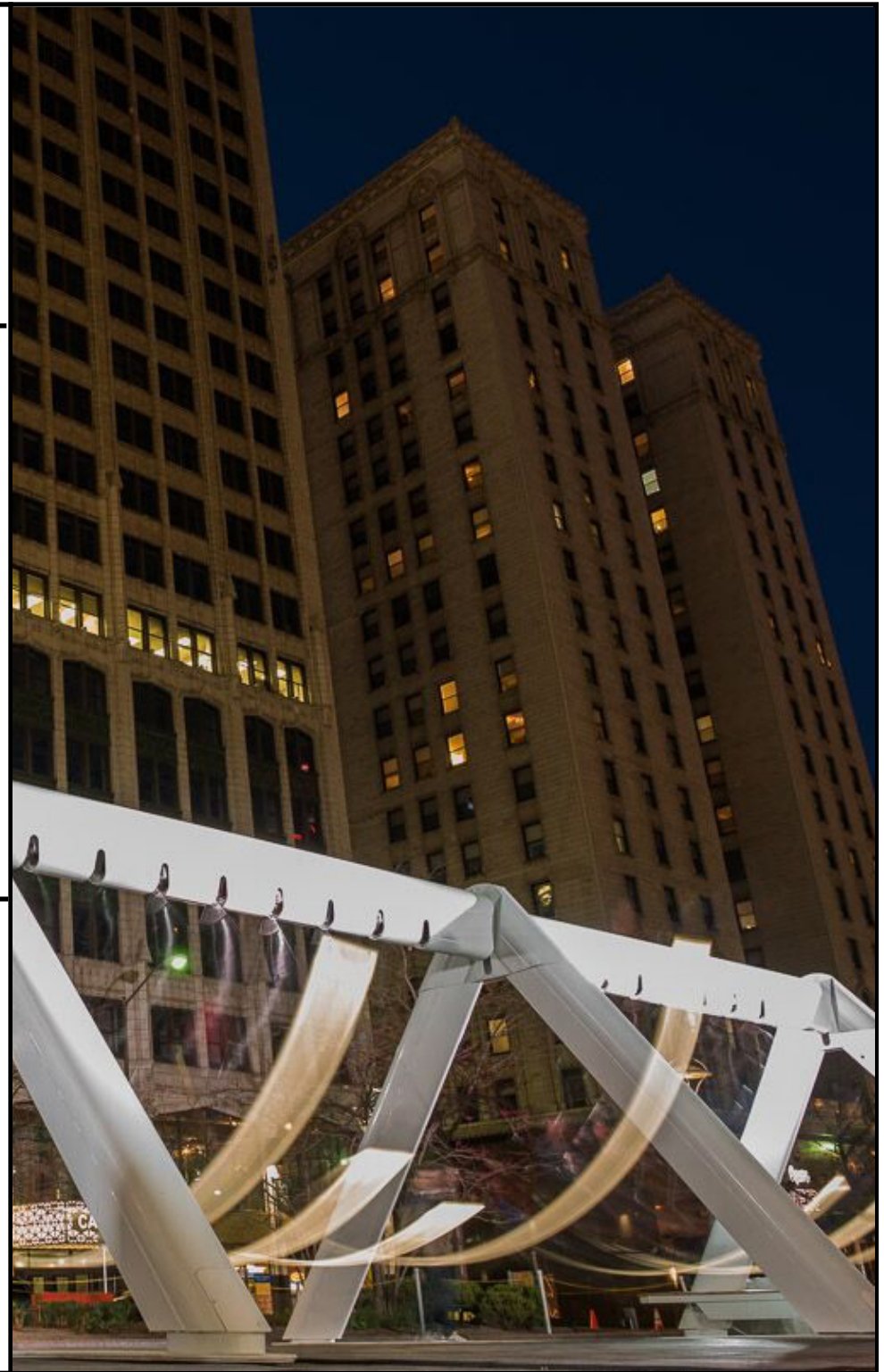
THE ENDEAVOR CAME TO EMBODY
A LARGER IDEA: HOW DO YOU
MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF
PUBLIC ART – OR THE SUCCESS OF
OTHER PUBLIC INTERVENTIONS,
LIKE TEMPORARY INSTALLATIONS
OR MORE PERMANENT PUBLIC
IMPROVEMENTS?

"It increases the level of civility in society."

"I never thought swings could be so calming." (DT)

"Any art is beautiful, but interactive public art brings art to life and maybe makes art more real for those who take part." (SJ)

Photo: Jay Fenech



This report was prepared with the support of The Knight Foundation. The on-site assessments and the following recommendations were conducted by Joshua Bloom, Community Land Use and Economics Group, llc and Surale Phillips, Decision Support Partners. Additional research & digital campaign by Daily tous les jours.

If you are tempted to dive deeper into this topic, there are detailed reports on each individual city available. Please get in touch if you'd like a copy.

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* more * together * than * alone *