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Svigals + Partners completes Main St. overpass project in New Britain

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New Britain, CT Civic leaders and residents celebrated the new “Beehive Bridge,” a project combining structural reinforcements for a highway overpass with a complete redesign incorporating public works of art, sidewalks, bike lanes and pocket parks. Architecture, art and advisory firm Svigals + Partners has completed the Main St. overpass project with collaborators Fuss & O’Neill engineering, designers Pirie Associates, Richter + Cegan landscape design, SignPro fabricators, and Laveiro as general contractor.

Orchestrated by mayor Erin Stewart with the support of civic leaders and locals, the project has been championed by Mark Moriarty, P.E., director of public works for the city, who has provided leadership and actively engaged community stakeholders. The renovation marks the completion of the latest phase of this streetscape project to unite the city, both literally and symbolically, which was long ago divided by a highway, Rte. 72. City officials and project team members convened on the site on September 19th for a dedication ceremony to mark the project’s completion.

“The people of New Britain needed more than just simple pedestrian access,” said Marissa Mead, director of art integration at Svigals + Partners. “To attempt to reknit a community divided long ago by modern highway infrastructure required creating an inviting space for pedestrians and cyclists, that would also offer residents a unique place to interact.”

With the primary goal of creating an active business and entertainment corridor in the downtown area, the project connects Broad St. with the Little Poland neighborhood and the New Britain Plaza business district. Working from the firm’s stated vision of “A world of prosperous, compassionate communities,” Svigals + Partners created a design scheme for a pedestrian-friendly streetscape with an abstract take on the “beehive” theme that has long been associated with the city. The city’s official seal prominently features a beehive and the motto “Industry fills the hive and enjoys the honey” in Latin.

The concept envisioned by Svigals + Partners for the 265 ft long overpass features colorful translucent panels in an abstract honeycomb pattern that separate the overpass visually from the highway below. In shades of gold and yellow, the panels produce a variety of patterns and colors depending on the time of day and position of the sun. Building on the theme, the design then incorporates contemporary artwork integrated directly into the structure: Four large-format

stainless-steel honeybee sculptures, and an outsized beehive in the center of the bridge. Energy-efficient LED lighting illuminates the bridge, ensuring safety for pedestrians and cyclists after dark.

The design also increased the width of the sidewalks across the bridge and incorporates bike lanes and two “pocket parks” on the north side.

“From the beginning we worked alongside Fuss & O’Neill and Pirie Associates to engage not only with civic leaders but directly with members of the community,” said Chris Bockstael, architect and partner at Svigals + Partners. “The result is a reinvention of the city that belongs to, and reflects, its citizens. We expect residents and visitors will enjoy this unique space for decades, and in a variety of ways.”

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