

THE ARCHITECTURE OF APICULTURE: ZGF DESIGNS BEEHIVES FOR THE SANCTUARY



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A typical client project for architecture firm ZGF might be a 350,000 square foot [cancer institute](#) in Miami, the [headquarters for Nintendo](#), the [development plan](#) for Portland's river district, or even a [smart city](#) in Japan. With more than 600 employees, ZGF has offices across the U.S. and in Vancouver, B.C. But last week, and for the past month, members of the Seattle office turned their attention to a significantly smaller scale client—though, it could be argued that it is one of its most important ones to date—the honey bee.

After last year's completion of The Mark, a quarter block development project for Daniels Real Estate that includes a 44-story hotel and office tower and the historic First United Methodist Church in downtown Seattle (featured in GRAY [last August](#), and host of the 2017 [GRAY Awards](#)), ZGF was asked to come back to design for The Mark's executive chef Gavin Stephenson. The hives will be installed on the roof of the church, newly named The Sanctuary, this May. They will become a source of raw honey for Stephenson's culinary creations, and also provide the colonies with their own sanctuary in a world where experts have been reporting for years that the world's bee

population is facing dramatic die-offs and habitat loss. After years of successfully keeping bees on the roof of neighboring hotel, the Fairmont Olympic, where Stephenson was executive chef for 18 years, he is continuing his legacy of apiculture at The Mark.

"We asked ZGF Architects to harness their creative talents to elevate the beehive designs in a memorable way, given that the hives will be visible from the street and neighboring offices. I was thrilled that they said yes and created a staff competition; they are a great community partner," says Kevin Daniels, president of Daniels Real Estate and owner of The Sanctuary. The firm turned the project into a friendly internal competition, made up of staff across teams in its Seattle office, to create five designs that would then be voted on at an exclusive event in celebration of all things honey bee on April 11, 2018, where GRAY was asked to take part in the judging process.



The April 11 event's signature cocktail, the Sticky Finger, made with gin, honey, egg white, and prosecco, with bee pollen and honey "tulie" garnish.

As the teams went to work crafting concepts and visual treatments for the bee boxes, they had to learn about what makes hive design successful. "Surface treatments on the outside of the hive will be light and colorful so as not to overheat the hives," explains ZGF design partner Allyn Stellmacher. "And they require adequate ventilation, as condensation needs somewhere to go. Moisture makes bees susceptible to illness." Not to mention that when they are occupied, the hives will weigh approximately 300 pounds each, so part of the design was about creating a platform so that they remain steady and balanced. Taking into account design and engineering that goes into them makes an architecture firm, it turns out, the right pick for the job.

Although the teams were all working within the same constraints of the vertical cube structure of the bee box, they crafted surprisingly diverse design outcomes. Where one played up a graphic representation of the flight patterns of bumblebees, another utilized the chemical composition of

honey as inspiration. Still, other teams took a largely artistic approach, such as the design that incorporated a whole backstory involving Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin and featured hand-painted boxes. A glowing lantern atop another design was conceived of as an abstract take on the inner working of a beehive in nature, and yet another invoked traditional Japanese lacquer techniques.

After much deliberation, the judging panel awarded best design to Team 1 and its concept for "Beecon," featuring a lantern and brightly colored stripes, for its contemporary approach, juxtaposed with the historic site, and for its success as a design that will be seen from all angles. The remaining teams' work turned out not be in vain, however, because Sanctuary general manager and beehive judge Rod Lapasin was so impressed with all five designs that he wants to continue adding hives as time goes on using each one of them.



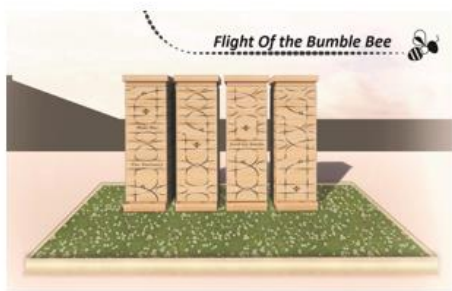
The winning design. Team 1: *Beecon* | Ashley Dimick, Wenwei Wu, Irene Song, Hans Woestenborg, Ryan Cheng, Flana Booth, Kyle Keirse.

So, what does beehive design have to do with an architecture firm, anyway? "We're all busy, and sometimes it's helpful to step back from architecture and prompt ourselves to re-examine our connection to the natural world," says Stellmacher. "The dialogue sparked by the beehive project is renewing our perspectives, which will only benefit our work." And while Daniels is busy helping to craft Seattle's future landscape, he is also an avid preservationist. Daniels adds, "The Sanctuary began as a preservation story and today showcases how we can continue to honor our past while celebrating today. Providing a sanctuary for urban honey bees and helping to address the degradation of the bee habitat seemed appropriate." Talk about sweet new beginnings.

Stay tuned when the built hive designs are unveiled in May. Want to help bees in Seattle? Check out the [Puget Sound Beekeepers Association](#) for more resources.



Team 2: *Beauty's in the eye of the Bee-holder* | Sarah Schwab, Catherine Elia, Scott Weimer, Grace Stevenson, Maeve Zolkowski. Each box will be hand painted with a floral motif (pictured).



Team 3: *Flight of the Bumble Bee* | Lydia Claxton, Liz Shearer, Azadeh Zanjani, Megan Pryor, Russell Brown.



Team 4: *Floral Landings* | Amy Shoulder, Katharina Stall, Sabina Beg, Alfonso Galan, Sarah Wright.



Team 5: *Hibiki-Bako* | Scott Simpson, Addie Suchorab, Matt Rothlisberger, Haruka Saito, Michelle Mills.