

The downtown buzz: Honeybees move into their new home on the roof of The Sanctuary at the Mark



The custom multi-colored hives on the roof of the Sanctuary at the Mark in Seattle are designed by ZGF Architects, the firm that designed the adjoining F5 Tower.

COURTESY ZGF ARCHITECTS

By [Patti Payne](#) – Columnist, Puget Sound Business Journal
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There's some extra buzz in Seattle coming from the roof at the Sanctuary at the Mark.

Literally, a buzz. A 1969 Daimler Limousine from British Motor Coach is delivering thousands of Carniolan bees from High 5 Bees in Rochester, Washington, which will live atop the church-turned-event space. The bees' arrival is being overseen by Gavin Stephenson, executive chef and food and beverage director for the Sanctuary.

Wednesday morning, the bees, including four queens, will be lifted by street crane to the top of the roof of the building that once housed Seattle's oldest church, joining three other hives that are already in place ready to receive them.

The custom multi-colored hives are designed by ZGF Architects, the firm that designed the adjoining F5 Tower, and will be visible from offices nearby and from people walking along Fifth Avenue.

Stephenson is thrilled.

“ZGF did a fabulous job on these,” he says.

The move underscores the importance of the company's sustainability efforts in a city environment, he said.

Stephenson is no stranger to keeping urban bees. He introduced the concept at Seattle’s elegant Fairmont Olympic Hotel as its executive chef there for 18 years. He made quite a name for himself keeping bees on that hotel’s roof, a project he started in 2009 and which grew to an estimated 500,000 pollinator bees.

The golden honey from those hives is used in all sorts of ways including in specialty ale and vodka.

“When I started this at the Olympic I wondered what we were going to do with all this honey, but my culinarians and mixologists were so creative and it was like we never had enough,” Stephenson says.



Gavin Stephenson, executive chef and food and beverage director for the Sanctuary, with one of four hives of honey bees to be transported to newly built hives on the roof of the Sanctuary at the Mark in Seattle where they will live.

At the Sanctuary, Carniolan bees, known to be gentle and great producers, will have upper and lower ventilation and lots of plants as well.

Each of the four hives will have 10 frames, which Stephenson says could grow to 40 frames in each hive.

“We did single frames which means the bees have a good strong chance of making a honey crop. At the peak we could get as much as 50 to 200 pounds of honey per hive,” he says.

And since bees can fly a range of six miles, Stephenson has no doubt that this bee congregation from the Sanctuary will meet up with the ones on the Olympic roof and elsewhere.

“I think they’re going to interact when the queens go on their mating flights,” he says.

That means “bringing back an array of nectars that make complex and delicious urban honey,” he says.

Stephenson says it’s all about sustainability and doing their part to help address the issue of colony collapse.

“This owner gets it and he’s about doing the right thing,” says Stephenson, about Kevin Daniels, president of Daniels Real Estate and owner of the Sanctuary.

“Preservation of history, preservation of architecture, preservation of civic stories, and now preservation of urban honey bees. When the former church opened in 1906, there were downtown fields with wildflowers and I’m sure honey bees,” Daniels said in a statement. “It all comes full circle when you connect the past to the future in a meaningful way.”