



The plan for Midtown established a continuously walkable corridor by wrapping the Monon Trail with a new urban avenue.

With Gehl and RAI. 2019 Charter Award Winner, Congress for New Urbanism

Carmel, Indiana has made great strides in introducing walkable urbanism to a largely auto-dependent region, with a renovated Main Street and a new Civic Center that are both mixed-use and scaled to attract pedestrian activity. Unfortunately, these two areas were unable to coalesce into a greater whole, because they were separated by a half mile of empty and light-industrial parcels. With the goal of creating a unified city center, Mayor Brainard commissioned Speck Dempsey (then Speck & Associates) to create a plan for these one-hundred acres.

The greatest challenge surrounded the disposition of the Monon Trail, a regional recreational trail (and former rail corridor) that bisects the site. Rather than placing it at the backs of buildings as suggested by previous plans, this proposal surrounded it with a grand avenue, where it is now celebrated as the heart of its neighborhood. This avenue expands into larger civic spaces where it is crossed by other streets.

This proposal was commissioned after three previous proposals failed to win the support of City leadership. Upon completion, this design was enthusiastically embraced and quickly lined by new businesses and housing. The downtown of Carmel, once “bipolar” is now continuous.

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