

## Elevator B

### Silo City, Buffalo, New York, USA

Elevator B is an urban habitat for a colony of honeybees, which originally occupied a boarded window in an abandoned office building in Buffalo, NY. The project has generated a great deal of public curiosity because of the combination of the colony of honeybees, an interesting and until very recently, restricted-access site, and an aesthetically pleasing object. The site, Silo City, contains a group of largely abandoned grain elevators and silos on the Buffalo River. Elevator B is intended to be a symbol of the site's environmental and economic regeneration. The 22-foot tall tower is a honeycombed steel structure designed and built utilising standard steel angle and tube sections. It is sheathed in perforated stainless steel panels that were parametrically designed to protect the hive and it's visitors from the wind, and allow for both solar gain in the winter and shading in the summer. The bees are housed in a hexagonal cypress box with a laminated glass bottom through which the bees can be observed. This "beecab" provides protection and warmth and separates entry access between bees and visitors, who are able to enter the tower, stand below the cypress beecab, and look up at the colony of bees behind glass, as they build their hive. Beekeepers gain access to the hive by lowering it, allowing them

to ensure the health and safety of the bees. This feature also caters to school groups that visit the site, encouraging children to get a close up view. Visitors to the site range from school groups discussing the natural ecosystems of Western New York and the Great Lakes, to adult photography classes using Elevator B and the site as a subject.

A nearby nature preserve has also led several field trips to the project and is in the process of developing a formal education program centered on the bees and on colony collapse disorder, which threatens the species. Interpretive signage about honeybees and the site is currently under development and will be part of the larger redevelopment plan for Silo City.

The questions asked by visitors range from the simple to the complex, but they would never have been asked in the first place if the visitor did not have the access to bees that is fostered by Elevator B. This is a clear demonstration of how architecture can do more than serve aesthetic or structural purposes. In Elevator B, it sparks children to learn and adults to reconsider what they thought they knew. This includes the designers themselves, who have not only designed for the needs of their clients but have become inspired to become advocates for them as well.

Environment: industrial  
 Material: stainless steel  
 Photographs: Hive City Design Team  
 More information: [hivecity.wordpress.com](http://hivecity.wordpress.com)





