Project Description:

The is the story of the design of a project during a pandemic. There was never an in-person kick-off meeting and only one initial site visit – alone. We never shook hands with the client and smiled, excited to get a great project off and running, but instead spent time learning Zoom to conduct meetings online in mid-March 2020 when Connecticut was going through the initial stages of the Coronavirus.

The project entailed turning an empty space behind an old mill building, now a brewery, into a vibrant, open-aired gathering space. Digital perspective sketches were developed that illustrate potential use areas and precedent images identified elements of traditional Biergartens and proposed material options. Two options were developed for the project.

A final plan includes a stage for live music performances made of historic Connecticut brownstone, an open gaming area and dance space, a covered bar area and pergola structure, casual seating around two fire pits, diverse seating options, custom fencing, landscaping, wall murals, and varied accent lighting. Once finalized, construction drawings were prepared for the site.

As Covid-19 spread through Connecticut and out into the rest of the country, construction on the Biergarten progressed quickly. It was important to the owners to get people back into the brewery/restaurant and provide an outdoor dining opportunity as indoor dining was currently restricted. To stay abreast of the construction, the design team found that social media posts provided valuable insight into the project’s progress.
Elicit Brewery was once home to a thriving paper mill and most recently a restaurant. Local restaurateurs and brewing experts purchased the historic building and turned it into a lively colorful brewery.
Pre-pandemic, Elicit Brewery was hopping! Packed with people indoors, smiling and laughing, enjoying fresh, local beer...until we all learned of Covid-19, and people were separated and tables moved into the parking lot. It was time to design and build a Biergarten!
The rear of the old mill building was deemed the best location for the Biergarten, currently a blank canvas and wedged between the brewery coolers (green roof) and an adjacent property that contained a large aluminum-sided warehouse. At one end of the space sits the historic mill spillway.
Using photos from the site visit, we developed perspective sketches to create a vision for the outdoor space.
Perspective sketches illustrate an open garden with murals, lighting, varying paver colors/textures, and seating options.
Biergarten precedent images helped the client understand the “feel” of a traditional Biergarten and reference images provided options for outdoor activities. Two concepts were ultimately developed with phased approaches and a final plan was decided on.
The final plan includes different use areas, an outdoor bar and pergola, a stage with historic spillway backdrop, fire pit areas, socially distanced seating, landscaping with columnar trees to screen the adjacent building, artistic murals, and accent lighting.
Construction level plans and details were developed and sent to the client to begin construction!
As Covid-19 spread across the country, the Biergarten construction was underway! We found that the best way to follow progress was through social media posts. Our preliminary concept for the outdoor bar roof and the social media post of its construction!
The design includes a stage for outdoor performances using historic brownstone to retain the stage and match the existing dam/spillway. Connecticut brownstone was quarried heavily 200 hundred years ago but the quarries have all disappeared. We located a stockpile of brownstone once removed from a historic bridge abutment.
Social media posts highlight the process of installing the brownstone block, patrons enjoying new beer offerings, and the final stage in use!
The design team proposed a series of murals in key viewsheds and worked with a local artist to develop themes and concepts.
Landscape Architectural Design – Built Works, Corporate/Institutional
Elicit Brewery Biergarten – Site Design During a Pandemic by Milone & MacBroom, Inc.
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With the Biergarten near completion, and Oktoberfest on tap, the design team can't wait to visit the project to acknowledge the hard work that went into … designing a site, at home, during a Pandemic!