

Nickel Plate Trail

Fishers, IN

Landscape Forms Elements:

Arne Area & Wall Mounted Lights, Americana, Bravo Bistro Tables & Chairs, Generation 50 Benches, Generation 50 Litters, Catena Table & Chairs, Emerson Bike Racks, Jessie Rails, Rosa Planters

Design Partners:

Browning Day

Team Members:

Meyer-Najem, City of Fishers, Fishers Parks and Recreation Department, ESL Spectrum

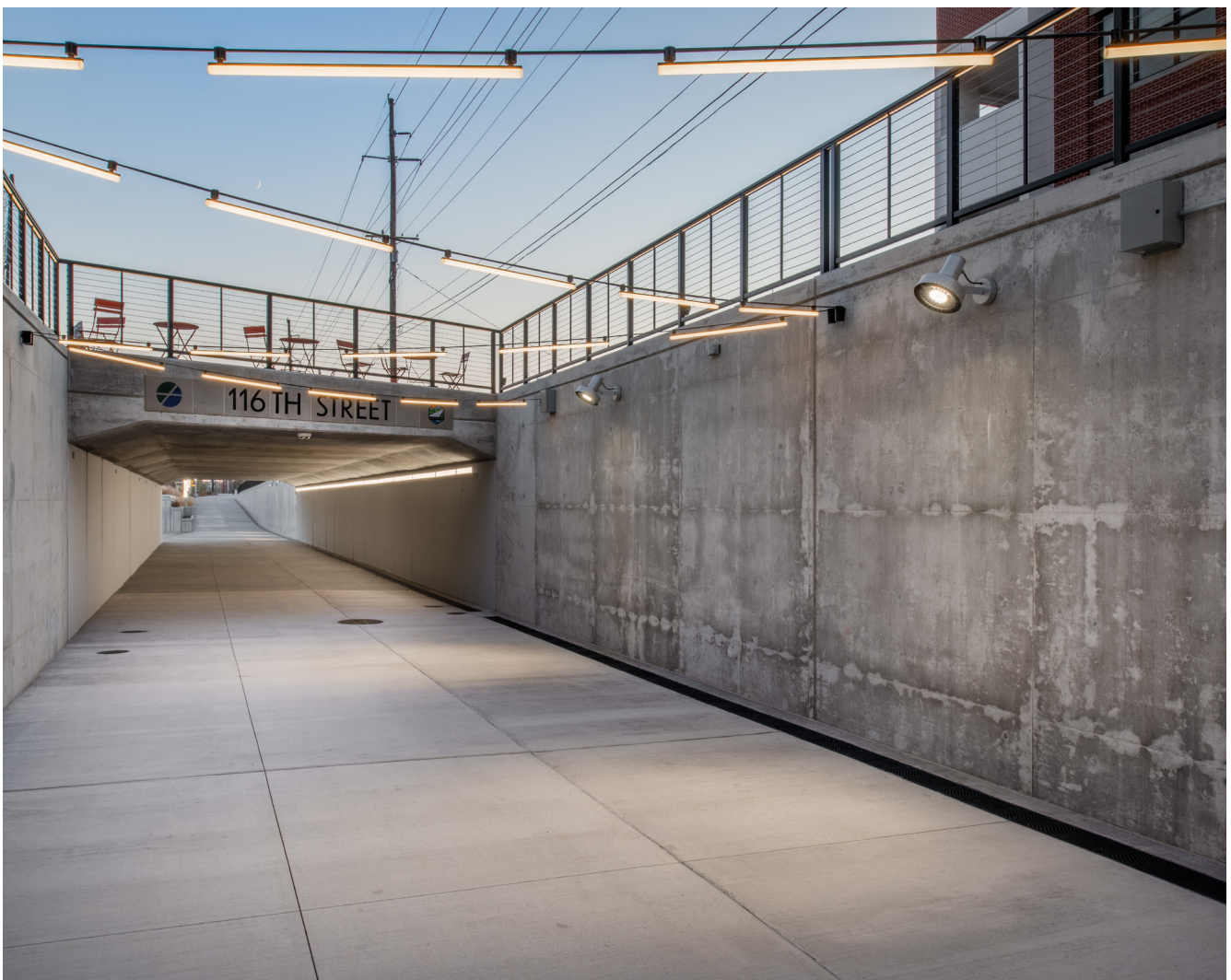
The Nickel Plate railroad long ago ceased being an active rail line, only running occasionally for recreational purposes. The City of Fishers explored alternative uses, landing on a rail-to-trail project that is converting nearly five miles of rail line into a pedestrian corridor and linear park. The City’s goal, says Fishers Parks and Recreation Director Sarah Sandquist, was to “provide an amenity for the community in the form of a multimodal trail passing through Fishers. Our grand vision is to ultimately connect to the Monon Trail in Indianapolis and Midland Trace trail in Noblesville, creating an amazing 40-mile regional trail.”

The landscape architecture team from Indianapolis-based Browning Day was selected to work with the City to implement portions of a master plan that would include a linear park in the downtown core area and gathering spaces along the trail. Drew Braley, principal and director of landscape architecture at Browning Day, describes the linear park as the “the icing on the cake” for the Nickel Plate Trail.

The project was not without its challenges. First, 116th Street, a major thoroughfare through Fishers, divided the downtown portion of the trail corridor from north to south. The solution: a pedestrian tunnel that allows for a seamless connection and flow through the primary activity zone of these public spaces. The Monumental Stairs on one side of the tunnel navigates a 15-foot grade change with terraced seating and retaining walls. A seating area at the other tunnel entrance includes lounge chairs and tables and chairs for relaxation and people watching. “The areas surround the 116th Street tunnel have become the hub of this pedestrian corridor,” says Braley.

The linear park’s 6am to midnight hours reflects the City’s desire to activate the downtown portion of the trail and invite people dining or attending events to linger and enjoy the trail.

“Lighting became an important element to creating a safe and accommodating outdoor experience. ”





Arne pole lights illuminate both the trail and the park, and Arne wall-mounted lights guide visitors down the ramp and into the tunnel.

The second challenge Braley's team faced was designing around the easement that utility company Duke Energy owns along the trail corridor. While Duke Energy gave the city a portion of the easement for the linear park, Browning Day's design could not include permanent structures or affixed furnishings – nothing to impede any power line maintenance. Braley found plenty of movable options in Landscape Forms seating and was also able to introduce splashes of color into the concrete and gray infrastructure and architecture along the trail. "We were careful in selecting seating that would offer variety to appeal to all ages and abilities," says Braley. "Lounge chairs, tables and chairs, and chairs with arms to help people get up and down furnish the park and provide that variety."

The former Fishers Nickel Plate train depot structure was transformed into a series of urban swings of varying sizes and shapes. The swings, says Sandquist, "are the cornerstone piece within the trail and much loved by the community." Braley selected Generation 50 benches and litterers for the depot area for their wood and aluminum construction that complemented the swing materials. Generation 50 bench tops are also installed on wide cast concrete stadium style seating.

Both Braley and Sandquist sing the praises of this highly successful addition to Fishers. Opened in May 2022, the trail is popular all times of day. "What at its basic element is a multiuse trail is really so much more," says Sandquist. "We've seen this with the trail's phenomenal use. The swings are a destination, but the trail has also become a mode of transportation for people going to downtown events day and night." Nickel Plate Trail is spurring development as well, from a hotel to office building and future partnerships with businesses along the trail to sponsor trailhead locations. "The trail will not only become a regional connection, but it's also connecting the neighborhoods and residents of Fishers," says Sandquist.

