

**Project Name**

Washington Avenue Bridge, Plaza, and Amphitheater

**Project Location**

Golden, Colorado

**Quick Project Summary**

Golden's Clear Creek corridor has long been a valuable recreational resource, running from the mouth of Clear Creek Canyon to the Coors brewery and then to Denver's western suburbs. It also serves to separate Downtown Golden from the City's civic campus and businesses north of Clear Creek. When funds from Urban Drainage became available at the turn of the century to improve the Creek's flood capacity by replacing the aging Washington Avenue Bridge over the creek, the City quickly recognized the potential to create a unifying structure that celebrated the creek corridor and extended to City's successful downtown streetscape to the north. The City Manager's instructions to City Staff and the Design Team were to "Create a bridge and plaza that would be so striking, visitors would leave their cars just to enjoy the space." As a key member of the design team, the Landscape Architect was charged with creating the overall design theme, and then designing the public spaces, and bridge details that achieved this goal.

**Purpose of Project**

The design of the Washington Avenue, Bridge, Plaza, and Amphitheater needed to address challenges as varied as its context:

- Functionally, the bridge structure needed to improve Clear Creek's flood capacity and eliminate the bottleneck created by the old bridge structure.
- The bridge needed to provide multi-modal access for to Downtown Golden and extend the recreational pathway experience along Clear Creek to the east.
- The design needed to fit in seamlessly with the established architectural character of Historic Downtown Golden and extend its successful streetscape theme (by another landscape architecture firm 15 years earlier) to the north side of Clear Creek.
- The Bridge and Plaza needed to be exciting "people" spaces that provided a variety of plazas and gathering places to take full advantage of the spectacular setting created by the Clear Creek Corridor and views of the foothills to the west.
- The creek side improvements needed to be carefully installed in the creek corridor to minimize impact on the natural systems and riparian landscape.
- The final product needed to reflect Golden's pride in its history and quality design.

**Construction Budget Amount**

\$3.0 million

**Role of Landscape Architect vs. Other Team Members and Owner**

The Landscape Architect was responsible for a unique elements of the design—developing the bridge theme/aesthetics—as well as many other areas of more traditional landscape architecture, including: overall site design, streetscape design, planting design, park improvements. The Landscape Architect also led the public facilitation which included 3D visualization. The civil engineer served as the project manager and providing civil engineering for the bridge. The electrical engineer also provided lighting design for the site. A specialized lighting consultant designed the bridge illumination. The structural engineer also participated in the development of design concepts for the bridge. An irrigation specialist designed the system for the entire site.

Last, but not least, the client was an integral contributor in the design and construction process, setting the initial expectations and then providing timely feedback on alternative design concepts.

## **Significance**

The City of Golden has been consistently improving and revitalizing its downtown for several decades. Due to its “gateway-to-the-mountains location, Coors Brewery, and other attractions, the goal is to get its many visitors, local and out of state alike, to stop in Golden for more than gas and a snack. Furthermore, Golden has been working to create a City that is truly connected, both physically and with the City’s illustrious history. Recreationally, Golden is a hotspot within the state. The Clear Creek recreational kayak park is attracting users from across the country. Rock climbing, hiking, and hang gliding are also central recreational amenities for the City.

The Washington Avenue Bridge and Plaza aids the City in achieving interconnectedness and consistency within the downtown. Visitors to the downtown can grab lunch, walk across the bridge to the plaza, and sit next to Clear Creek before continuing shopping. Recreationalists can finish rock climbing or kayaking and walk to downtown for dinner or shopping. Travelers can easily access downtown for a quality experience before continuing into the high country.

## **Integrate into the surrounding context**

Key objectives of the design were to provide exceptional pedestrian amenities, make a distinctive statement, yet “fit” into the historical context of the downtown. The use of the mining tower theme and dramatic suspension cables add drama to the features, yet maintain historical overtures. The use of sandstone, and brick-like masonry materials further complement the existing buildings of the downtown.

## **Special Features**

The bridge plaza, with historical photo panels, benches, and tables transforms a mere bridge into a true pedestrian experience, with sounds of the creek rushing below, with dramatic views of the water, the foothills and the downtown itself.

The creek side plaza, amphitheater, and walking/biking paths all provide extensive access to the river. Winding stairs, ramps and even a children’s tube slide all invite users to move from level to level.

Attention to detail is a highlight: historical references, sculptures, carefully designed columns, connectors, railings, paving patterns, accent colors—all add to the delight and discovery of the Bridge/Plaza—there is something to discover on each visit.

## **Sustainability**

Finally, the bridge is designed to pass more than 100-year flood flows, and the creek side amenities are designed to withstand inundation. The City staff participated throughout in critiquing the maintenance aspects of the project. Existing vegetation and creek hydrology were respected in the design process.