



**DESIGN  
CONCEPTS**

Community + Landscape Architects

**NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Design Concepts Celebrates 35 Years of Thriving, Innovating and Shaping Communities**

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Lafayette, Colorado . . . August, 2016 — Design Concepts, an award-winning community and landscape architecture firm, celebrates 35 years creating innovative outdoor spaces and enhancing communities.

Founded in July 1981 by Axel Bishop and Robby Layton, the firm’s earliest mission was to design socially-thoughtful spaces to bring people together. “This remains a core of our design and business philosophy. Hard work and great projects and clients have made our business a success story over the past 35 years,” says Carol Henry, president of the firm.

During those earliest years, two important social questions spurred the firm’s vision 35 years ago:

- Does the typical schoolyard bluegrass savannah invite children to learn and play?
- Does the same static landscape invite anyone to learn and play in a park?

### **Today’s Schoolyards**

Since those early years, the firm has not only has figured out how to incorporate nature and learning into schoolyards, they have led a national design narrative intertwining nature and play, incorporating learning into schoolyards, and design of inclusive playgrounds. “Our vision has become a reality and is greater than ever imagined. Our parks and playgrounds have involved into inclusive destination sites for all ages. Before, bland sports fields, plain asphalt play pads, wall-to-wall turf or pea gravel, and minimal social sites dominated the school grounds. Today, equal importance on community use, educational opportunities and hands-on learning exist making the school site more humane and interesting. Everything we’re doing now is representative of our original vision,” stated Henry.

### **Evolution of Innovative Landscapes**

The firm has impacted thousands of outdoor environments with innovation in design in a variety of landscape settings. These include everything from learning landscapes, inclusive multi-generational

playgrounds, nature play, destination parks, and even shopping centers with kids and dogs in mind. “The sites we designed over the past 35 years replaced some irrigated sod with native grasses and flowers. Drainage problems that were previously piped and channeled were redesigned to run free, create wetlands and reform an environment that was self-sustaining,” commented Axel Bishop, founding partner and principal. “Park designs began to look like the nature that existed prior to heavy-handed uses. Athletic spaces became irrigated oases in the re-naturalized parkscape. Nature and play became intertwined, and the need for water was less. The drainages ran clearer water. Among the blend of native plantings, paths led to gathering places. These places were no longer catalogue shelters stuck in mowed flatlands. They became inviting places where children’s play, adult athletics and natural woodlands met,” shared Bishop.

## **Legacies**

Many of the firm’s earliest projects have stood the test of time by way of their success and longevity. Some are considered ‘legacy’ projects “ having iconic permanence, resilience, pioneering design and long-term impact and benefit to the community. Some of the firm’s legacy projects include these in Boulder, Colorado:

- The Habitat Outdoor Classroom at Crest View Elementary
- Boulder High School Creek Corridor
- Noble Park
- Norlin Quadrangle (the quad), on the University of Colorado Boulder campus

## **New Identity for the Future**

In honor of the 35-year milestone, the firm has rolled out a new brand identity and new logo. “This new vision represents today’s firm culture and the people who make us special—our staff, our projects and our clients,” concluded Henry.

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### *About Design Concepts*

Founded in 1981, Design Concepts is in its 35<sup>th</sup> year providing thoughtful, innovative and dynamic designs for public and private spaces. Design Concepts is nationally recognized as a leader creating and re-imagining spaces that combine community gathering, recreation and play, connections to nature, and a focus on the environment. They continue to innovate healthy communities, learning landscapes and entertaining outdoor community places. The firm’s current work includes a variety of learning landscapes, destination parks, projects plugging ‘nature into play,’ inclusive playgrounds, new recreation amenities, and planning for communities. To learn more about the firm visit: [www.dcla.net](http://www.dcla.net).

## *Legacy Projects*

**The Habitat Outdoor Classroom** at Crest View Elementary in Boulder. Completed in 1990, The Habitat continues to serve its purpose as an integral learning space for students and teachers. Serving a dual purpose as a water detention facility, its resiliency withstood the 2013 Boulder County floods by collecting as much runoff as it could, thereby minimizing the impact on the school building.

The **Boulder High School Creek Corridor** project also supports the dual importance between functional design and long-term aesthetics. Also completed in the early 1990s, the City of Boulder and Boulder Valley School District teamed up on this flood mitigation project to address pedestrian circulation and flooding concerns along the shared Boulder Creek Corridor, just behind Boulder High School. Both the athletic fields and the popular Boulder Creek Path needed significant upgrades to address pedestrian circulation and flooding concerns. Design Concepts worked with both entities to re-align sections of the path, remove structures along the creek to allow for the needed fields and elevating a pedestrian bridge over the creek. The bridge connects the school grounds to the football stadium. The entire project resulted in less congestion along the path, maximized views from the school grounds and provided a drainage corridor to guide floodwaters away from the high school. The floodwaters of 2013 put this area to the test, and while the fields flooded as well as some of the high school, this project served its purpose to mitigate as much of the floodwaters as it was designed.

**Noble Park** in Boulder was completed in 1982 when the first mixed-use, park-centered, pedestrian-oriented community in Colorado called Noble Park in Boulder was created. Since then, our communities employ every form of housing density, housing type, alleys, roundabouts, regional trail crossings, center parks, and commercial space, in addition to employing everything from market rate, high-end housing, to highly dense European style affordable housing.

**Norlin Quadrangle**, “the quad”, on the University of Colorado Boulder campus continues to serve as a social center on the CU Boulder Campus. Design Concepts prepared a micro-master plan for Norlin Quadrangle back in 1990. The Quadrangle is the oldest part of the campus, and is outlined by the earliest buildings on campus, which actually inscribe a large open space in the shape of a cross. This space is the heart of a part of the campus that is officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Norlin Quadrangle Historic District. The long-term significance of this plan has proven its usefulness and also shows how the preservation of a historic cultural landscape can give form, meaning, and continuity to new features. Because change is one of the elemental qualities of any landscape, the historic landscape can be used to allow preservation and progress to occur simultaneously. The new plan had to bring the old one into compliance with new standards, but it also went beyond that to show how preservation could also give form and meaning to new features in the landscape. New features, in turn, can reinforce historic patterns, and thereby form a solid “legacy” foundation.

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