

Bridge design details key to Glenwood aesthetic and vitality

Leslie Bethel | October 18, 2017



I have had the pleasure of serving as director of the Downtown Development Authority for more than seven years. The DDA is a tax-funded district in downtown Glenwood Springs. Revenues to the DDA are earmarked and used exclusively for the purposes of downtown vitalization. The board hopes to share our progress and projects in the works with you in this monthly article.

The DDA has several overarching goals: It seeks to enhance and broaden the downtown experience for residents and guests through infrastructure, beautification, pedestrian access and connections to open space, views and river corridors. Although our mission is the downtown, the DDA strives to create a strong community for all of the city of Glenwood Springs by building on shared assets.

BRIDGE BEGINNINGS

Public outreach for the Grand Avenue bridge design and alignment alternatives began six years ago in late 2011. Early in the design process for the project, the city and the DDA recognized the central role that the new bridge would play in the look and feel of Glenwood Springs — the new bridge would be the gateway to Glenwood.

CDOT, the city, the DDA and citywide stakeholders participated in the visioning process, analyzing many alignment alternatives for the new Grand Avenue bridges, including the alignments and designs that are being built today.

The DDA wanted to ensure that the designs of the GAB project would respect and embrace the context of Glenwood. Each element of the GAB project came to fruition through careful consideration of the existing architectural elements throughout the city, aligning with Glenwood Springs' history and authenticity.

CRAFTING THE BRIDGE

Key design elements of Glenwood Springs can be seen throughout the GAB project's architectural features.

Rose flagstone brings warmth to the concrete bridge piers and the walls of the new traffic bridge. The tumbled red brick on the elevator tower is the same as the brick on the Cooper Avenue parking structure and is repeated in the Bank of Colorado building, which received a façade grant from the DDA in 2017.

The clay tiles and roof shape of the pedestrian bridge canopies mimic those of the historic Amtrak station. Black metal details like the pedestrian bridge railing are replicated in the lettering of the elevator tower, in railings, benches, and trash receptacles found on Seventh Street and on Cooper Avenue, in elements of the pocket park on Seventh Street, and in the street light poles.

The new pedestrian underpass is both a critical element of multimodal connectivity and a welcoming space for residents and visitors. The lights of the tunnel mimic a starry night sky and offer a lighted pathway for pedestrians and cyclists at night.

The aesthetics of the concrete barrier wall design and higher traffic bridge deck create a more inviting feel in the downtown core. With the additional height, the area under the new GAB will be open for events and other improvements. This strengthened downtown space can help to contribute to a vibrant community and economic prosperity citywide.

Deliberate thought and study has gone into making these bridges authentic structures that have grown out of the form, materials and colors of Glenwood Springs. The details of design add to a true sense of place and help to strengthen downtown Glenwood as the hub of the city — a goal of the DDA.

INVESTMENT IN OUR CITY

Part of the DDA's mission is also to seed private investment with public improvements. The integrated approach to design and materials of the GAB project allow for incremental improvements and adaptability for future projects.

Key infrastructural improvements from the Grand Avenue bridge project attract new economic development throughout the city and open opportunities for revitalization and

investment. As new infrastructure projects and plans across the city move forward, you'll see the details that are unique to Glenwood Springs reiterated consistently in the designs.

We are also thrilled about new businesses opening in our downtown and the DDA has many plans on the horizon for beautification projects for downtown Glenwood Springs. Currently, we are working on the landscaping plans for the new Sixth and Laurel roundabout, a new restroom for downtown and designs for revitalization on Sixth and Seventh Streets.

The early visioning and design details of the bridge project plans encouraged a final product that would shape a connected and continuous space that uniquely looks and feels like Glenwood. The DDA will continue its mission to create vitality and support a balanced and vibrant downtown through infrastructural improvements that consider the details in the context of our city.

Leslie Bethel is executive director of the Downtown Development Authority. You can follow the DDA on Instagram (@downtownglenwoodsprings) and Facebook. Early design conceptual sketches are periodically posted on Facebook and Instagram.

<https://www.postindependent.com/opinion/columns/dda-column-bridge-design-details-key-to-glenwood-aesthetic-and-vitality/>