

Movement in Building and Hardscape



Left: Victoria Square is located on a busy corner within the commercial core of Aspen, Colorado. The redesigned building embodies the concept of layering through a 'folding' of the facade. This language is carried into the streetscape by landscape architects, Connect One Design, through paving geometries and material changes that draw the pedestrian to the commercial storefronts.

Right: Two different finishes were used on the black granite – one was bush-hammered and the other one was a thermal finish to create some texture and variances.

by Mike Dahl, LASN

A 40-year-old building in the heart of Aspen, Colorado, Victoria Square was completely redeveloped into a four-story, mixed-use structure, beginning with tearing the old building down. What emerged was a modern building with a one-of-a-kind façade designed by Rowland+Broughton.

"You can see the building has significant movement on its façade and those shapes vertically in three dimensions created these polygonal shapes (horizontally)," states Gyles Thornley of Connect One Design, the landscape architects on the project.

His firm presented a concept package to the clients and the owner of the building, who were smitten by it.

"Instead of being another boring, homogeneous concrete sidewalk with a few

trees, they came to us because we always push the boundaries," Thornley says. "This is just such an exquisite building we put an enormous amount of thought into the detailing and the enrichment of the streetscape. It was incredibly complementary what we did."

The Issue with Concrete

"Concrete has a pretty bad rep and until someone can figure out how it can be less of a contributor the CO2 gasses, we are always looking for alternatives," remarks Thornley. "So granite is a wonderful alternative. And wherever we can use it, we are going to try and do that. And we are even testing snow-melting granite fines for a residential project in Aspen that may go in in a few years."

And indeed, granite pavers were used in



Above: Elements such as bench islands and bike racks from Streetlife, and shade trees with grates activate the corner and provide a plaza-like space for the public to enjoy. The benches followed the project's themes of movement.

Inset: The 4"x4" cobblestone area between the curb and the polygonal granite flagstone has a snowmelt system and is permeable pavement. To achieve snowmelt capabilities and permeability, an innovative solution was used, which according to the landscape architecture firm, has only been tried a few times prior. This involved 4"-thick insulation boards with holes drilled in them placed between the pavers and the snowmelt tubes. To separate the porous pavers and the granite flagstones, a stainless-steel band was used to give a clean delineation between the two materials.

this project in most artful ways. The company sourced two types of pavers – 4"x4" pavers and the previously mentioned, beautifully abstract, custom-cut granite flagstones.

Connect One Design gave its designs to the stone company, which then did shot drawings of every piece.

"They hit it out of the park," Thornley exclaims.

Snow Melt Capabilities

Being in Aspen, sidewalks where the snow would automatically melt was important. To solve that, and make a portion of the sidewalk porous, the firm proposed an innovative solution – using two 2" pieces of insulation board on the concrete slab, with the snowmelt tubes in between. Only for these boards, they have holes drilled in them to allow the water to pass through them.

"So, it still maintains its thermal qualities but

keeps it as a porous pavement system," marvels Thornley. "We put the granite set on top of that and then backfilled around the granite set with the fines. The water lands on the pavers and goes straight through the system. And in the winter, when the system is turned on, the snow melts and goes straight through the system."

Summing Up

Thornley recalls the main challenge as getting the client's confidence for using a product for the porous paving/snowmelting that was proven only once before. And the client had to have faith in the granite pavers that could be custom cut as designed. Also, the city expressed concern that they were pushing the boundaries for Aspen.

But in the end, "They all said it was good to do this. And it all ended up as a very good product that everyone is proud of and pleased with."