

History in the Making: Civitas-designed Downtown Golden Plaza Breaks Ground *Calvary Church leads effort to create community-centric space in historic Colorado city*



The Civitas-designed Arapahoe Steps at Celebration Plaza has broken ground. The project will provide gathering space with native planting gardens in historic downtown Golden (image courtesy of Civitas).

Denver, Colorado – Oct. 12, 2018 – The much-anticipated new Calvary Episcopal Church Arapahoe Steps at Celebration Plaza in historic downtown Golden, Colorado, is now underway. Breaking ground recently with a projected opening date in Spring 2019, the plaza project, designed by award-winning Denver urban design and landscape architecture firm [Civitas](#), will welcome travelers, visitors and neighbors into a lively, lushly-landscaped public space that will accommodate festivals, art and farmers markets, chili cook-offs and community celebrations while providing additional connectivity and parking for the busy city center.

When completed, the project will energize the downtown area, creating much needed pedestrian connection between the Colorado School of Mines, downtown Golden and the abundant recreation opportunities along Clear Creek. It also will serve to connect a small campus of buildings owned by the 150-year-old Calvary Episcopal Church, offering expanded outdoor space for events, including outdoor services, concerts and receptions.

“What do you do with an inaccessible street that is too steep to function as a gathering space?” asked the church leadership who had long considered closing the street to build a new sanctuary. Instead, they engaged Civitas to explore alternatives. The design firm is known for its imaginative community-based placemaking strategies that connect

and engage neighborhoods while promoting an active outdoor experience of nature in the city, including projects that have won honors from International Making Cities Livable, Fast Company's Innovation by Design Awards and as Canada's national "[Great Public Space](#)."



Golden's 150-year-old Calgary Episcopal Church hired Civitas to find community-friendly purpose for a steep hillside right of way with foothills views (image courtesy of Civitas).

For the Golden project, perched on a steep hillside with vistas of the Rocky Mountain foothills and adjacent to the Colorado School of Mines campus, Civitas found inspiration in such iconic steeped-in-history public spaces as Rome's Spanish Steps and Barcelona's Parc Güell, explains Civitas Principal and Project Lead Craig Vickers. Conceived as an outdoor, community-centric living room, the plan will transform vacant land adjacent to the Calvary Church between 13th and 14th Streets along Arapahoe Street near Miner's Alley (so named for its Gold Rush-era activity).

"We realized the church wanted a space to serve the community, build a stronger downtown and be a part of the energy and vibe of the growing city," explains Vickers who saw the site's steep topography as an opportunity to physically adapt the space to enhance relationships between neighbors and communities that have felt disconnected.

To achieve the vision, the former right-of-way will be transformed into a large central plaza nestled between terraces and grand steps, intertwined with the historic tree canopy along with new foliage and colorful plantings of native grasses and seasonal flowers. Integrated ramps will make all levels of the terraced park accessible, while

custom benches, seating areas, lighting and lively brick and stone patterns – recalling Golden’s mining camp history – will serve to animate the space.



New “Miner’s Alley” design improves shared car and pedestrian corridor (image courtesy of Civitas).

The amenities will also provide a convenient route for visitors and the necessary link between Golden’s renowned School of Mines’ Campus and the city’s downtown where none has existed before. Vickers envisions the stairway park as becoming a natural part of the rich fabric of the historic city, a destination for both quiet enjoyment and community celebration.

Included in the Arapahoe Steps plan is a new public parking facility that will alleviate some of Golden’s parking challenges with an upper deck that can transform into event space, accommodating up to 80 10-by-10-foot tents. Convenient access to the garage from Miner’s Alley and 14th street allows for a pure pedestrian experience along Arapahoe street. Improvements to Miner’s Alley will include new paving, lighting and landscaping to help establish an activated retail corridor to draw in visitors to shop, eat and celebrate. Himself a Golden resident, Civitas’ Vickers is excited for the project to take shape and to experience firsthand “the public realm in the city becoming more beautiful, friendly and connected.”

About Civitas:

Founded in 1984 with the core purpose of “creating healthier cities,” Denver-based Civitas, Inc., is an idea-based practice of urban designers, architects and landscape architects engaged in strategic planning for urban change and project design for built works. Recent honors received include both the 2017 International Architecture Award

and 2018 American Architecture Award from the Chicago Athenaeum/European Centre; the Canadian Institute of Planners “Great Public Space”; a 2017 IMCL Merit Award; and an Excellence on the Waterfront Award from the nonprofit Waterfront Center. A consultancy and a design studio, Civitas advises on a wide range of strategies for re-imagining urban life and places, working in U.S. cities coast to coast and around the world. For additional information visit civitasinc.com.

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