

Category 8 – Best Building Project – Specialty Contractor Non-MEP (Under \$2 Million)

Connecting People in a Time of Disconnect

Denver's Five Points and River North Arts district buzzes with new life and growth. Development is blossoming all along Brighton Boulevard, from Downtown Denver all the way to the National Western Complex. It is an exciting time to be building in Denver. Part of the great transformation of that corridor is the land along the South Platte River. For far too long it has been a blighted part of town. Luckily, Denver has great visionaries than, and they saw the potential of breathing life into all aspects of that corridor. RiNo Park emerged in 3.5 acres of land that historically occupied rail, warehouse and manufacturing industries. The City of Denver and Wenk saw the space as a great opportunity for growth for Denver. With a couple of old buildings sitting on the land and desolate land, it was time for a facelift. That's when Iron Woman Construction and The Art of Concrete came on the scene to make the vision a reality.

Solutions of Special Projects

Because the land was neglected for some time prior, it was a refuge for some homeless as well as a haven for drug users to gather. Unfortunately, with that, came a less than secure job site. The team was warned early on during a Preconstruction meeting that things will get stolen, and the thieves will use bolt cutters. After construction fences were cut, trailers were broken into and locks were busted, the team got wise to placing some heavy-duty shipping containers with anti-theft locks on them. Once the security of job supplies, equipment and materials was resolved, the team made great headway... and then CoVid19 hit. No one could have predicted the impact that this virus would make. Meetings suddenly went virtual, crews were spaced more apart, cleanliness became an even higher priority than before, and the support staff for all parties was reduced to working remotely – many while juggling the new realities of home-schooling and/or working from home. Some supplies got delayed, some crews got put on hold, COVid19 tried its best to slow this and many other projects down. However, the team at RiNo Park was very persistent, they communicated regularly and pushed through each challenge the virus threw at them one at a time.

Excellence in Project Execution and Management/Team Approach

What made this project successful and what helped it overcome the challenges that came with the virus and the less than ideal locations was the excellence in project execution and the team approach. The entire team met weekly. Before CoVid hit, it was mostly in-person meetings with everyone involved. When

CoVid hit, those calls turned to Zoom, but still happened regularly and aided in the success of the project. Even to the very end, The Art of Concrete met on-site well after punch list items were complete to meet with Iron Woman and Denver one more time to walk the project and verify everything that was installed and to ensure all parties were taken care of properly and can all walk away from the job content that it was executed fairly and accurately.

Construction Innovations/State-of-the-Art Advancement

The Art of Concrete is a newer small company and they were brought on the because they are a MWBE, DBE and SBE Company, which helped fill the City's goals for the project of small disadvantaged firm participation. But, because of their infancy, they needed to get creative on how to handle a sizable project with limited resources. They entering their third year of business, and they have a great team of people, however, they don't have a full army of people. One thing they have learned this year is the power of flexibility with manpower. They had large three projects going simultaneously but have adopted a team mindset when it comes to manpower. Instead of splitting all of the manpower between the three projects, they have their main few people that remain steady at each job, but then shift the flow of the remainder of the manpower based on the needs of each job. This allows for more efficiency as well as cross training. For example, in a given week, one job may be forming on Monday which takes 3 people, while another job is pouring on that same day – which may require 10 people. So on Monday, one job has the 3 core people on that project working steadily to form and prepare the site for Tuesday's concrete pour, while 10 people pour the concrete on the other project. Then, on Tuesday, 7 people that helped with Monday's pour are back at the other job for Tuesday's pour, while the project that poured Monday is back down to its 3 core people cleaning and sealing the previous day's pour and prepping for the next day. This flexibility allows the smaller company to be able to handle larger projects while staying on schedule and having a large amount of its employees familiar with all of the projects the company has going on in case more or less people are needed at any given one. It provides great flexibility and effectiveness. This allowed The Art of Concrete to stay productive on RiNo Park and its other projects at the same time.

Another area of innovation was the reuse of the concrete slab used in the new Maker's Plaza. The existing building was partially exposed to open up into the park and create a welcoming plaza. Because the building foundation, walls and floors were in decent shape, the team recognized early on it would be wasteful to tear it all out only to replace it with new material. So, when it came to time address the concrete slab that had been interior for so long and it is now intended to be part of the exterior part of the park, the design team leaned on The Art of Concrete's expertise on how to maintain the history and integrity of the slab but ensuring it was a safe surface for an exterior surface here in Colorado. Any sort of

overlay or coating was instantly out because it would hide the beautifully aged slab that helps tell the story of the space. So it came down to texturizing the slab in a way that would provide enough traction in Colorado's changing weather scenarios, while not altering the appearance dramatically or require much additional maintenance. With a series of grinders and different techniques, the Art of Concrete's team created enough of a profile on the concrete slab while maintaining the same general appearance of the slab. Anyone who walked the project today wouldn't think twice about the slab being any different than the one that was there through the entire history of the rest of the building. It was executed perfectly.

Environmental/Safety

The buildings add to the charm of the space but were not part of the original plans. Initially they were going to tear the buildings down, but the community asked to keep them, so the City listened and integrated them into the design of the park. The buildings will house local artist studios, a library, a restaurant and a makers space. One of the buildings was opened up as part of the park. The Art of Concrete exposed the concrete floor, made it suitable for an exterior surface, and now the interior building is now exterior complete with porch swing style benches, seating and recycled art pieces. Rather than tearing out the old and replacing it with new, the team redesigned the old to be incorporated with the new. The park cuts right through what once was an old police building and now connects the spaces beautifully. The park also encourages green building by creating connectivity and converting old warehouse land into green space.

Excellence in Client Service and/or Contribution to Community

The park itself is a contribution to the community. Mayor Michael Hancock stated, "Part of the whole 5 points concept and whole RiNo Vision, that we are creating a new destination for Denver and all people and that is a phenomenal opportunity." The park is helping Denver to fulfill its goal to have a park within walking distance of every Denver resident. The park breathes life into an area that desperately needed a green space. It is the first green space of its kind in an area that historically has been occupied by warehouses, rail and manufacturing industries. The playground and park feature reused scraps from industrial neighbors and transformed them into art pieces. One of the goals of this park was to be a community hub and connect people to the outdoors and open spaces, and it does that and makes the City of Denver more beautiful. Happy Haynes, the Executive Director of Denver Parks and Rec said, "This whole corridor along I-70 and in this industrial area was a forgotten place, and with this park it is going to be a destination", and as Mayor Michael Hancock recognized in the park's ribbon cutting ceremony: "This is a project for the people".









