

NAMES in the news

• GH Phipps Construction Cos. has promoted two employees to key positions in the company's operational leadership.

Roger Treichler has been promoted to vice president of operations-Denver. Treichler has 20 years of experience with GH Phipps and for the past nine years has led the firm's special projects division. In his new role, he will oversee project management and field supervision. His other responsibilities include oversight of scheduling and MEP coordination. Treichler is a member of the GH Phipps board of directors.



Roger Treichler

Todd Ruff has been promoted to vice president of preconstruction. Ruff has 19 years of experience in preconstruction and has established himself as a leader in his field along the Front Range. He was named one of ENR Mountain States magazine's Top 20 Under 40 winners in 2014.



Todd Ruff

Among the many notable projects on his resume are The Children's Hospital East Tower addition, Platte Valley Medical Center Replacement Hospital and Boulder Community Hospital - New Foothills Campus. Ruff has served as the director of preconstruction for the past five years and has also served on the GH Phipps board of directors.

FIRMS breaking new ground

Greeley Firm Receives International Award for Peaks to Plains Trail Project

Redi-Rock International recently awarded Signature Stone with the Rocky Award for Innovative Project of the Year for the firm's work on the Peaks to Plains Trail project in Jefferson and Clear Creek counties. The annual Rocky Awards honor the best Redi-Rock projects in five different categories. More than 130 Redi-Rock manufacturers around the world competed for the award.

Two Colorado counties needed more than three miles of retaining walls to help build a 10-ft-wide trail through a narrow canyon. Steep slopes meant limited space for working, and installers had to minimize excavation to protect the environment.

"One of the main objectives of this project was to create a trail and retaining walls that would blend so seamlessly with the canyon that users would think it had always been there," said Matt Andrews, project engineer from Muller Engineering.

"The Redi-Rock gravity system was the perfect solution for the constricted space because it doesn't require reinforcements," said Seth Clark, business development partner with Signature Stone. "In addition, the LedgeStone texture perfectly matched the natural rock in the area."

The Clear Creek segment of the trail opened on July 29, 2016, allowing people to better enjoy the picturesque canyon. To date, Signature Stone has provided 42,000 sq ft of Redi-Rock blocks. The trail and walls were built with very little disturbance to the natural surroundings.

Project: Peaks to Plains

Engineer: Muller Engineering Co.

Installer: Concrete Express

Manufacturer: Signature Stone

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Davis Partnership Parks Its Designer's Ego at the Door

Denver firm focuses on clients' needs rather than its own design preferences

By Scott Dailey, ENR

Editor's Note: Our former sister publication, ENR Mountain States magazine, recently selected Denver's Davis Partnership Architects, as its 2017 Design Firm of the Year for Colorado and Wyoming. This is a profile of the winning firm.

The work of Davis Partnership Architects is spread throughout greater Denver, from The Art, a futuristic hotel in the museum district, to Littleton-based Shiloh House, a shelter, educational center and mental-health resource for youth and families overcoming neglect and abuse. Even so, in the dozens of notable buildings the firm has designed across the region, there's no distinctive DPA "look."

Its design range also includes the undeniably edgy Frederic C. Hamilton Building at the Denver Art Museum, where DPA collaborated with Studio Daniel Libeskind. Conversely, the recently opened Union Denver Apartments, a cluster of three mixed-use towers across from Union Station, is clearly modern but a bit more traditional.

Still, these buildings all have something subtler in common: a deep commitment to understanding the client's needs and meeting them within the context of the site and its surroundings.

Joseph Lear, one of the firm's 12 principals, says he is "personally very, very proud" of the absence of a Davis Partnership signature.

"We live in a diverse climate and a diverse community," Lear explains. "And we always talk about how we are dedicated to working together with our clients to deliver their vision. It's not our vision; it's their vision. I think our clients deserve that. They have innate characteristics and values that are surely going to shape their building and inform their design and look."

"They don't have a design style that every time you drive by one of their projects you say, 'That's a Davis project,'" observes George L. Thorn, of Denver's Mile High Development, who has worked with DPA for almost 30 years. "But you can bet it will be well executed, with attention to detail and a lot of attention on the business side to making sure that the developer gets what he needs."

"I don't want to say we're egoless," says DPA principal Lynn Moore, who leads the firm's landscape architecture studio. "We obviously care deeply about design and the work that we do. And we're very proud of the work that we do. But it's really all about creating the best possible places indoors and outdoors, for our clients and for the people they're trying to serve."

Embracing the Not-New

For evidence, look no further than DPA's "new" headquarters building: an old bindery on Blake Street, six blocks from Coors Field in Denver's emerging River North (RiNo) district, amid a trendy collection of restaurants, brewpubs and galleries.

The move, which came in January 2016 from a building nearer the ballpark, represented some "in-depth soul-searching," Moore says. The firm could have saved money by relocating farther from downtown. Instead, Moore says, "We decided that with our culture and the kind of people that we wanted to attract and recruit and retain, the physical location was going to be important, (along with) what sort of attributes the neighborhood had to make it a great place to be."

At the new location, DPA has been able to fit its entire 150-person staff onto one renovated floor. The open office encourages collaboration, even to the point of finding inspiration through overheard phone calls, says principal Brit Probst. No one in the firm has private quarters, and the layout, Probst says, promotes DPA's institutional belief that "good ideas come from anywhere."

Broad-based architectural ideas have been flowing from DPA for more than a century. The firm was the brainchild of late 19th- and early 20th-Century architect William E. Fisher, who opened his office in downtown Denver in 1892. His brother, Arthur, joined the practice in 1905. Over the next five decades, Fisher & Fisher thrived, and in 1947 hired a promising young architect named Rodney S. Davis. In 1959, the firm became Fisher and Davis, and, in 1967, Rodney S. Davis & Associates. The most recent name change, to Davis Partnership, came in 1980, nearly 17 years before Davis' death in 1997.

The firm's principals consider the company's modern incarnation to have begun 50 years ago, and DPA is currently celebrating the milestone anniversary. In addition to buildings across Denver and the Rocky Mountain region, DPA's legacy includes the Rodney S. Davis Scholarship, administered by the Denver branch of the American Institute of Architects. It enables young architects to travel and explore design styles worldwide.



Image courtesy of DPA

The Glendale mixed-use project designed by DPA combines office, residential, retail and entertainment uses to redefine a largely underutilized area of the city near Colorado Boulevard. The development consists of a 30-story apartment tower, two condominium buildings of nine and 12 stories, an eight-story office building and retail spaces that include a large specialty grocer and several restaurants.

Working from the Core

One of those recipients was now-DPA principal David Daniel, who used his stipend 14 years ago to study memorial spaces in Japan. He says the entire staff takes the firm's traditions seriously. To that end, about four years ago, DPA decided to define its values based on historical company documents and the combined memories of people who had worked at the firm for 30 or 40 years.

"We came back with some core principles that I'd say are certainly things we live in today but are also certainly wrought from (our) legacy," Daniel says. Those doctrines embody commitment to design, to the greater Denver community, to stewardship of the firm's history — expressed through customer service — to the staff and to clientele, he adds.

The principles appear to have served the company well throughout the decades. DPA is known for strong staff retention. It tends to hire young people directly out of school and promotes them from within. It also benefits from impressive customer loyalty. Various principals estimate that 90% of the company's projects come from repeat business.

Ron McDaniel, senior vice president of construction and development for Shea Properties in Denver, has worked with DPA on numerous projects over the past 10 years. Shea recently topped out the 28-story, DPA-designed 1776 Curtis Street residential project. It is expected to be ready by year's end and will be known as The Quincy.

"They probably are my favorite architect in the city right now," McDaniel says. "They're easy to get along with, and they're skilled visualizers."

Like Thorn, McDaniel appreciates DPA's consideration of the business aspects of architecture. "We don't have the ability to just cut an architect loose and let them go spend what they want to spend," he says. "They're receptive to economic pressures while still trying to push the envelope for a good product."

And then there's the personal aspect. Mike Callahan of Holland Partner Group has worked with DPA on three projects, most recently the Union Denver development. "They're really a collaborative group and just plain fun to work with," he says.

DPA principal Ann Adams is a former client and a leader of the company's health care practice, one of many markets the firm serves. She encapsulates DPA's approach to working with clients through the current realities of expanding Vail Valley Medical Center in Vail, Colo. On one side, there are restrictions such as height limitations; on another, the opportunities presented by Vail's mountain scenery; and on yet another, the high expectations of wealthy skier-patients from around the world.

Adams says, "We're trying to provide them with a fabulous view, a fabulous building and also [allow them to] provide state-of-the-art care."

The ability to execute that sort of balancing act goes a long way toward explaining the loyalty of DPA's clients. Says Thorn, "I've always thought they were the firm of the year, every year."



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