

Water Street Plaza

by City of Henderson



Left: In 2019, the City of Henderson, Nevada realized their current events plaza was inadequate for the needs of their city – now the second most populated in the state. These needs resulted in Water Street Plaza, an urban, multi-use outdoor venue designed for cultural festivals, watch parties, concerts, and other programming. The 125,000-square-foot venue was budgeted for \$16 million and made its debut in May 2021.

Right: City staff teamed with Southwick Landscape Architects and neighboring businesses to create the plans. The final strategy aimed to attract visitors to downtown Henderson and provide a resource for cultural programming and public art. This area features 28,000 square feet of colored, stamped, and exposed aggregate concrete paving with recessed, in-ground, LED lighting and decorative post pylon lighting.

Water Street Plaza is an urban multi-use outdoor venue located in Henderson, Nevada. It was unveiled in May 2021 and designed for community events such as cultural festivals, watch parties, concerts, and other recreation programming. The 125,000-square-foot venue is situated in the heart of Nevada's second-largest city. Since its opening, Water Street Plaza has quickly become the premier arts, entertainment, and cultural destination in Southern Nevada while also playing a vital role in redeveloping Henderson's historic downtown.

Background

In 2019, the City of Henderson was faced with a decision regarding the future of its Events Plaza, as it wasn't able to function for current event needs. City leaders made a wise and strategic decision to invest in a new project that would complement their long-term plan for downtown Henderson. To ensure that the community's desires were being addressed, committees were assembled comprised of city staff, neighboring business owners, and Landscape Architects. Three needs emerged: a large-scale event and festival space

within the community, an economic driver to attract visitors to downtown Henderson to also patronage businesses, and a hub for cultural programming and public art that is on par with other cities.

Implementation

The city had a budget of \$16 million for streetscape concepts inspired by festivals held in other major U.S. cities. As part of the design, a section of the street adjacent to the venue was transformed. This involved removing the curbs, narrowing the drive lanes, and installing artistically designed gates that can be closed to block vehicle traffic on Water Street for large-scale events. These enhancements have made the street more accessible for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

The creation of a stepped-concrete amphitheater facing the Plaza's 42-foot-wide jumbotron provides a flexible venue for sporting event watch parties, symphonic concerts, and festival entertainment. Southwick Landscape Architects was also brought in to construct a playground that can be used daily and during plaza events.



Top: Streetscape concepts from event venues in other U.S. cities were studied to help with the area's design. This included refiguring part of a street next to the venue. Curbs were removed and driving lanes were reduced in width. The upgrade also included the installation of gates that can be closed when needed to prevent vehicle traffic on Water Street and better ensure the safety of pedestrians during large events. The pedestrian bridge has a distinctive hockey theme, including oversized hockey sticks and puck-shaped concrete seating elements. A stepped-concrete amphitheater facing a 42-foot-wide jumbotron features a band of a blue and green glass aggregate lining the area behind the seats.

Bottom: To offset the effects of drought, water conservation practices were emphasized. These included trees such as the Desert Willow (*Chilopsis linearis*), Fruitless Olive (*Olea europaea* 'Fruitless'), and Shrubby Yew Pine (*Podocarpus macrophyllus*). Shrubs such as the Century Plant (*Agave americana*), Toothless Desert Spoon (*Dasyllirion longissimum*), and Grey Desert Spoon (*Dasyllirion wheeleri*) were also installed. The plaza's turf area also features water-efficient Bermuda grass.

Continuing with the neighboring ice arena theme, several artistic elements were added to the plaza to infuse a thematic touch and provide visitors with photo opportunities. Blaque Art & EvoArt led the fabrication of these elements, including an oversized hockey stick and custom puck-shaped concrete seating featuring the Henderson Silver Knight team logo, hockey stick bollards along the street, paintings on sculptural benches, and decorative vehicular gates to close off the street.

Collectively, the City of Henderson and Southern Nevada have made great efforts in recent decades to combat drought with water conservation practices. Water Street Plaza was designed with this in mind, featuring water-smart landscaping. Colorful, circular shade structures were strategically placed around the plaza's concrete areas to allow guests to escape direct sunlight during hotter months.

Challenges

Groundbreaking occurred during the initial COVID-19 outbreak, resulting in a labor shortage due to illness and changes in work practices to accommodate social

distancing. Project meetings and submittal practices evolved to teleconferencing for social distancing and field verifications, slowing operations down.

Toward the end of the project, the city started experiencing supply chain delivery issues, as several material shipments were quarantined offshore and others were overburdened by overland shipping methods. Despite the delays, the project was delivered within 90 days of the original schedule.

End Results

Water Street Plaza has quickly established itself as a leading venue known for its many events, festivals, and community gathering places, which have greatly contributed to the revitalization of historic downtown Henderson.

The redesign of Water Street Plaza has been a successful endeavor that balanced the city's priorities of being good stewards of taxpayers' money while also providing an amenity that enhances the area's appeal and aesthetics. The streetscape allows for limitless opportunities with its versatile and completely original design. 