

Civic Center Parks wins national masonry award one week after being set on fire

 westword.com/arts/civic-center-parks-wins-national-masonry-award-one-week-after-being-set-on-fire-5806221

Kelsey Whipple

[Kelsey Whipple](#) | December 28, 2011 | 11:45am

AA

In the past three months, Civic Center Park has been lived in, spray-painted on, used as a venue for First Amendment freedoms and even set on fire during its tenure as the physical and ideological home to Occupy Denver. This month, the well-loved and well-used park earned national attention on a more positive scale: Thanks to a recent \$9.5 million restoration, Civic Center Park has been named Masonry Construction Project of the Year by *Masonry Construction Magazine*.

The honor is as meaningful as it is a mouthful. Given to one project on an annual basis, the award recognizes both the success of the construction firms behind the project and the overall results of their efforts – basically, the beauty of the park. The award is backed by 3,420 total votes. And with a significant amount of taxpayer funding and support behind the project, Civic Center Conservancy officials translate the recognition as a reminder of the park's potential.

"National recognition is only the icing on the cake of what has already been an amazing project," executive director Lindy Eichenbaum Lent says. "This confirms the success of its restoration and affirms the importance of the park in a national context while giving attention to the difficulty of restoring it. It's further proof that this is an asset worth protecting, on both the national and local levels."

Continue Reading

Because of its focus on the masonry work involved in the restoration process, the award also hails Building Restoration Specialties, Inc., the firm behind that aspect of the revamped park. Eichenbaum Lent, who refers to the restoration as both a science and an art, calls direct attention to the minutia required to complete the project.

One of the most difficult aspects of returning Civic Center Park to its original form was matching its original materials: BRS focused on the details of the site's earlier construction, attempting to reuse and resuscitate the same stone and searching for identical materials when this wasn't an option. The project encompassed ornate details in the park's balustrade wall, Greek Theater, Voorhies Memorial and Broadway Terrace, and BRS made efforts to preserve the original patterns, designs and construction techniques whenever possible.

Newsletters

"Civic Center's restoration was preceded by decades of deferred attention and neglect, and Denver voters said in 2007 that enough was enough," Eichenbaum Lent says. "The transformation was much more dramatic than a lot of people realized. Not only were the aesthetics and safety and usability improved through the restoration, but it increased civic pride in the place."

This is a trend she hopes will continue, though she says the park was not constructed to weather the urban habitation that comes with Occupy Denver's presence inside of it. Currently, the local chapter occupies only the front left corner of the park after being evicted from it last week. Through consistent efforts to maintain, support and activate the park, the Civic Center Conservancy hopes also to facilitate respect for its health.

"Areas that are allowed to decay and be vandalized invite additional illicit activity and safety problems, while areas that are cleaned and well-maintained become self-policing," Eichenbaum Lent says. "Given the size of the taxpayers' investment in the project, anything that would jeopardize it is a cause for concern."

More from our Occupy Denver archive: "Occupy Denver: Civic Center Conservancy says park can't sustain habitation (photos)."

- Contact:
- [Kelsey Whipple](#)
- Follow:
- Twitter: [@whipplekels](#)