

Rocky Mountain News

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Eye-catching creativity

By John Rebchook, Rocky Mountain News

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An auto repair shop, a former junkyard, a long-vacant office building turned into a luxury apartment community and a blog are among the diverse group honored today in the second annual Mayor's Design Awards.



2050 N. Race St.

Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper chose 16 different winners, and different they are.

They range from the high-profile Tattered Cover Book Store anchoring the former Lowenstein Theatre on East Colfax Avenue to the Tacotlan taco stand at 1130 S. Federal Blvd.

"The choices seem like a nice, diverse group," said one of the winners, Ken Schroepfel, an urban designer at Matrix Design Group, who won in the "Wild card" category for his urban blog, denverinfill.com.

DENVER INFILL.COM

Owner:: Ken Schroepfel

Category:: Wild card

Why it's cool:: Web site provides a plethora of facts on current and future growth: maps, tables, site plans, photos (existing structures, historic buildings, and construction and demolition photos) and renderings. The site also provides a block-by-block virtual tour of downtown, highlighting infill projects, existing buildings and potential development sites.

1600 BUILDING

1600 Glenarm St.

Owner:: Red Peak Properties

Category:: Buildings that beckon

Why it's cool:: Constructed in 1964 at 31 stories tall, the Security Life Building was Denver's first high-rise office. The building declined in the late 1980s. Today, a new skin, updated storefronts, clearly defined entries, ground floor uses, residential units on upper floors, architectural lighting design and prominent upper-story details make it a highlight of the downtown skyline.

2050 N. RACE ST.

Owner:s: Tim Pickard and Vicki Moore

Category:: Home is where the art is

Why it's cool:: The **Owner:s** created their dream home on an empty lot between a Denver Square duplex and a 1950s ranch. The modern design and details of the house bridge the gap between the neighboring structures, both spatially and temporally, with an innovative design that utilizes green, natural and recycled materials.

3528 TEJON ST.

Owner:s: Andy Schlauch and Nick Murray

Category:: Wicked little details

Why it's cool:: 3528 Tejon is a richly detailed studio/office infill project in eclectic Highlands that brings the workplace back to the neighborhood.

The design focuses on aesthetic and sustainable details such as the interplay of materials (masonry, metal and wood), orientation of windows and provision of insulated glazed panels on the north side of the building to capture light and heat.

881 S. GILPIN ST.

Owner:s: Amy Graziano and Dick O'Connell

Category: Home is where the art is

Why it's cool: Originally a 400-square-foot brick barn built in 1910, 881 S. Gilpin St. has undergone a total redo. From interior to exterior, the house illustrates the meaning of context sensitive design.

NINE10ARTS

910 Santa Fe Drive

Owner: Cheryl Spector

Category: It ain't easy being green

Why it's cool: The structure integrates a colorful open-air courtyard that invites community interaction. Nine10Arts brings art back into the everyday lives of the community and provides an affordable live/work space for artists near downtown.

CRY BABY RANCH

1421 Larimer St.

Owner: Roxanne Thurman

Category: Reclaimed splendor

Why it's cool: Lively and fresh, Cry Baby Ranch conveys a funky, fun "Colorado" image. The vaulted stained glass ceiling of this Larimer Square boutique makes the space particularly interesting. The **Owner:** plays to this one-of-a-kind feature, using it as the palette for the explosion of color that makes her store glow with life and energy.

THE DISTRICT

6300 E. Hampden Ave.

Owner: John Osborne

Category: Density by design

Why it's cool: This New Urban project also is a catalyst for the redevelopment of properties adjacent to Southmoor Station. The District is a creation of strong urban streets flanked by three- and four-story structures of 270 residences and 20,000 square feet of retail on seven acres.

JURASSIC LEAVES

Louisiana and I-25 light-rail station

Owner: Area residents

Category: Wild card

Why it's cool: The leaves create a focal point for the community and highlight, rather than hide, the station area within the expanse of T-REX. The canopy is constructed of a painted steel frame, the tops of the leaves are patina-painted copper, and the undersides are stainless steel.

MERCHANT'S ROW

26th and Champa streets

Owner:: Curtis Park Investors Group

Category:: Density by design

Why it's cool:: When residents learned of a plan to build an apartment complex on a small lot, they formed the Curtis Park Investors Group to buy the land. The group of more than 40 residents set out to design and construct an infill project it felt would be more congruent with the scale and character of the neighborhood.

STEUBEN'S

523 E. 17th Ave.

Owner:s: Josh and Jen Wolkon

Category:: Wicked little details

Why it's cool:: Steuben's design team and **Owner:s** Josh and Jen Wolkon converted a 1930s auto garage to a classic neighborhood cafe that feels like a community icon rather than a new addition. Interior elements exude a mod vibe.

STREAMLINE AUTO REPAIR

800 Kalamath St.

Owner:: CEO Todd Gold

Category:: Wicked little details

Why it's cool:: Streamline began in 1999 at Eighth Avenue and Kalamath Street in a former Phillips 66 gas station. When the **Owner:s** decided to expand, they enclosed the original gas station within a new 17,000-square-foot building featuring Streamline Moderne details. This art deco style emphasizes curving forms, long horizontal lines and sometimes nautical elements such as porthole windows.

TABLES

2267 Kearney St.

Owner:: Amy Vitale and Josh Barrett

Category:: Wicked little details

Why it's cool:: Attention to all the small things - mismatched, salvaged tables and chairs; a charming picket fence that encloses a patio; appropriate signage; a screen door at the entry that could have been swiped from a Southern bungalow's back porch - give the place an aura of comfort and charm.

TACOTLAN

1130 S. Federal Blvd.

Owner:: Francisco Martinez

Category:: Buildings that beckon

Why it's cool::The bright paint, corrugated metal details, original mural work and simple, comfortable tables and benches give this restaurant an authentic, Mexican West Coast taco stand feel.

TATTERED COVER BOOK STORE

2526 E. Colfax Ave.

Owner:: Joyce Meskis

Category:: Reclaimed splendor

Why it's cool:: As the new home of the Tattered Cover Book Store, the revitalized space reflects the historic elements of the theater - the stage, the fly space, auditorium, lobby and lower cabaret level. This adaptive reuse transforms the long-vacant theater into a community gathering place.

WEILWORKS

3611 Chestnut Place

Owner:: Tracy Weil

Category:: Home is where the art is

Why it's cool:: The **Owner:** literally turned trash to treasure in 2000 when he bought a junkyard and transformed it into Weilworks, an art gallery, home and studio. The space teaches people how to live with art.

Categories

- **Buildings that beckon:** Extraordinary curb appeal
- **Reclaimed splendor:** Projects that adaptively reuse space or materials
- **Wicked little details:** Uncommon design details and the creative use of materials
- **Density by design:** Context sensitive infill and redevelopment projects that strategically increase housing and employment densities
- **Home is where the art is:** Extraordinary contributions to the residential environment
- **It isn't easy being green:** Buildings and/or sites that incorporate sustainable or green building principles
- **Wild card:** Any gesture that makes our city interesting, provocative and memorable

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