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Raton Revamp

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RATON REVAMP

Design Planning Assistance Center
Spring 2007
The University of New Mexico - School of Architecture and Planning

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Howard Woodworth, President
Shelly Woods, Project Coordinator

**The City Of Raton**
Jennifer Sparaco, MainStreet Liaison

Our generous hosts and all the residents of the City of Raton
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UNM DPAC STUDIO 2007
Introduction

DPAC Spring 2007
Raton, NM

Nestled amongst the soaring Sangre de Cristo Mountains of Northern New Mexico, astride the Santa Fe Trail, Raton lies in close proximity to a number of recreational and historic opportunities. Raton, founded in 1880, originally served as a bustling rail depot and headquarters for Colfax County’s mining industries. While much of this history still resonates, Raton finds itself in the fortunate position to embrace and build upon its legacy as a crossroads and become the next great Rocky Mountain trailhead.

Among the attractions in Raton is turn of the century architecture in the historic downtown district, such as the Schuler and El Raton theaters. In addition, Sugarite Canyon State Park, Philmont Scout Ranch, and Goat Hill provide Raton with a plethora of year round outdoor attractions. Capitalizing on these attractions is crucial to Raton’s development.

As of late, however, Raton has experienced a significant economic malaise that can be seen in the vacant buildings, bare streetscapes, and the lack of pedestrian presence within the downtown core. Fortunately, Raton, unlike many similarly sized towns, has the facilities and geographic context to become a vibrant community once again.

In conjunction with MainStreet USA, The University of New Mexico Design Planning and Assistance Center (DPAC) focused its collective and individual design efforts on Raton’s historic main streets for the spring 2007 semester. Key among the studio’s design objectives were attracting visitors off of Interstate 25 and State Highway 64, promoting walkability and vitality within the downtown core, connecting the east and west side of the railroad tracks, and highlighting the recreational opportunities that abound in the area.
Phase 1 emerged after the UNM DPAC Studio met with the community on our initial visit to Raton. We worked in small groups to develop initial projects based on our site analysis, and the community input. We envisioned these projects as short term projects that could excite the citizens of Raton, and act as a catalyst for larger, long-term projects. We also hoped the projects would elicit interest in the Main Street program for Raton. The projects are grouped according to the following concepts:
- Master Plan
- Structure
- Urban Forest
- Activity Nodes
Phase I Raton Master Plan

Through a site visit and other research, students in the UNM DPAC studio determined the following guiding principles for Raton design and development. Design decisions and strategies for the remainder of the semester were to be based on the principles. The principles and strategies on this page provided the basis for the projects that follow. In this way, the individual projects fit into a larger scheme, all strive to support the same goals, and each project should compliment the others. While changes in Raton will be implemented in stages, this type of foundation should provide for a cohesive master plan, creating more than the sum of the parts.

Regional Assets:
Raton can expand and capitalize on its numerous assets:
• Performing Arts Tradition
• Hiking and mountain biking
• NRA Whittington Center
• Transportation Node for Amtrack
• Natural rest area for Interstate 25
• Clayton highway
• Historic Architecture
• Old West tradition
• Rail tradition

Principles for Raton’s Future
Working with a unique location and culture, DPAC found solutions that work with and help expand Raton’s assets:
• Railrunner will be in Santa Fe next year, then on to Raton
• Plan now to take advantage when the Railrunner arrives
• Enhance pedestrian and event assets for residents in this livable, walkable town
• Create catalysts to economic development
• Market Raton’s great assets to outsiders
• Create identity, e.g., Raton as Regional Trailhead
• Connect east and west Raton
• Preserve & capitalize on history of Santa Fe Trail, railroad, mining, historic architecture & regional outdoor assets
• Implement short-term designs & reserve areas for long term
• Begin to locate key features at the Depot & Roundhouse Park areas with the future in mind
• Park Avenue connects existing hubs of activity with proposed areas for development, making this a primary axis
• Park Avenue between Third & First, Second Street & First Street are key axes & connections to develop for residents & visitors
Design Strategies

- invest in the future now with urban forest & furniture in the downtown area
- enhance pedestrian environment on Second Street
- create a pedestrian promenade along the east side of First Street
- create a shady tree arcade for a farmer’s market east of First Street
- create plaza as a locus of activity at the depot for residents and visitors
- create visitor kiosk or center, public rest rooms & regional compass at depot plaza
- create a public drop-off, parking, rest & picnic area for buses, RVs, cars
- create east/west track crossing access at depot
- place temporary, movable furnishings, lights, games, events in vacant lots
- define existing axis and connections with design features
- create attractive in-town amenities for outdoor performance & recreation
- define gateway areas at north and south ends of historic district
- develop event facilities at Roundhouse Park
- address erosion & wildlife corridor along the drainages at Roundhouse Park
- market history, architecture, geology, create special events, etc.
- create a vertical feature at First Street to be visible from Park Avenue & Roundhouse Park
- create visible elements on First Street to be seen from Second Street

Project Management

DPAC divided into two groups to develop initial improvements:

- 1st Street Group
- 2nd Street Group

Within these groups, each individual worked both on team projects and individual assignments.

The Master Plan map represents the locations of Phase I projects, important nodes of activity in Raton, and significant connecting corridors.
Simple structural changes to First and Second Streets and to the train yard along First Street are suggested to improve the functionality, safety and the aesthetic experience of Raton’s downtown core. Downtown Raton consists of a civic Third Street, a commercial Second Street, and a historic First Street. Structural improvements aim to strengthen the spaces of the Commercial and Historic districts and through improvements in the rail yard, create additional social space and connection to Roundhouse Park. Improvements are concentrated between Savage and Galisteo Avenues creating a downtown core.

Improvements along Second Street include the addition of sidewalk bump-outs at intersections. Bump-outs slow traffic, make pedestrians more visible to vehicles and shorten the crosswalk distance across the street. A mid-block crossing in the theater district responds to heavier pedestrian activity in this block and the mid-block location of the Schuler Theater. The addition of a light canopy over four blocks of Second Street helps to provide a pedestrian scale to the street, create a unique and festive environment and slow traffic by making the street space feel smaller.

Textured crosswalks along both Second and First Streets create material continuity, and visual and tactile indication of a pedestrian zone. Simple street furniture including benches and trash receptacles should be consistent between First and Second Streets and built of simple materials such as wood and steel. Raised tree planters on the east side of First Street mark the terminus of each lateral street. These structures create a visual indication of activity and space to help draw traffic to historic First Street.

Improvements along the rail yard help to connect Raton’s civic, commercial and historic districts to the social and recreational uses of Roundhouse Park. Development of a pedestrian promenade along the east edge of First Streets between Ripley Park and Galisteo Avenue creates an important edge to the First Street historic district. The development of a plaza and parking around the train depot establishes the depot as an important landmark, destination and social space. The proposed underpass/overpass creates an important connection between downtown, the plaza and Roundhouse Park.

Locations for gateways have been identified at the two Railroad underpasses at either end of downtown, emphasized by a second set of gateways at Galisteo and Savage Avenues that announce the core of downtown. Gateways along I-25 help to draw travelers off the interstate and through the downtown core.
PARK AVE.

walk pads

20’

light strands

10’

bump-out

12’
crosswalk

2ND STREET

light posts

20’

tree trenches

20’
promenade

First Street Detail

Second Street Detail

These benches are reminiscent of the benches that were at railroad depots at the turn of the century.

This bench is constructed of a mining car that has been sawed in half and is now used as a bench.

These street planters are constructed of old mining elements with a modern steel finish.

Street Furniture

Sidewalk Bump-out Detail

Billboard Gateways

This bench is constructed of a train axle and recognizes the importance of the railroad to Raton’s past and future.

These street planters are reminiscent of the benches that were at railroad depots at the turn of the century.

These benches are constructed of a mining car that has been sawed in half and is now used as a bench.
Urban Forest

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY FORESTRY AND “GREENSPACE” IN RATON

- Increased property values
- Pollution reduction (decreased health care costs)
- Storm water runoff reduction (reduced management costs)
- Electricity and natural gas savings
- Reduction of greenhouse gas CO2
- Increased pavement longevity
- Sense of community
- Improved appearance
- Stress and driving aggression reduction
- Greater sense of safety and reduced crime rates

DESIGN STRATEGIES

Street trees planted in continuous-trench enables quicker growth. Oxygen and moisture reaches tree roots over an increased area. Irrigation lines are installed in the same space that was excavated for trench.
Greenspace: health, social and economic benefits

Plazas, paths, walls and roofs benefit from increased vegetation. Micro-climatic changes lessen impacts of weather extremes. Historic artifacts may be fashioned into functional planters.

Permeable paving creates vegetated areas that can also function as walkways, alleys or parking areas.
Looking at the nodes of activity in Raton reveals areas of community investment. Places like the local post office, where people meet friends and keep in touch with the community are the life of a place. Projects in this section attempt to work with existing hubs of activity, determine places for currently unmet needs, and link the two. Specifically, the Park Avenue corridor links the existing area of activity near the library, post office and civic buildings with the envisioned center for visitor and residents along First Street.

The designs for a depot plaza, amphitheater, pedestrian promenade and vacant lots, create amenities for residents and visitors, the sorts of places people like to visit, sit, walk, meet people, and attend events. The depot plaza makes a place for residents and a focal place for future Railrunner passengers. The notion of Raton as the regional trailhead is emphasized in the compass in the plaza paving and visitor center at the depot area.
Depot Plaza, Trailhead, and Farmers Market

Depot Plaza was designed to create a public space that would encourage residents and visitors to visit 1st Street, as well as welcoming people arriving by train.

Existing View to Depot

Possible View to Depot

Farmer’s Market

Trees with vegetated swale create division between RR tracks & parking area. Permeable paving.

Regional Compass & Visitor Kiosk

Sections of railroad track set in brick paver.

Destinations & message carved in granite blocks.

Visitor information & public restrooms of Depot Plaza.
The Roundhouse Park and Amphitheater

The Roundhouse Fountain

The Roundhouse fountain is located in the Roundhouse site. It is designed to provide summer activity in the park for children and adults alike. Locals and visitors can enjoy the cool spray of the fountain in the summer. During the winter months the fountain transforms into a skating rink. The dual activities provided in one location could revitalize the park. The design of the fountain flows off of the existing roundhouse footprint. The walls follow their lines, with the existing footprints revealed to show their beauty.

The Roundhouse Amphitheater

The amphitheater located in the Roundhouse park is a tensile structure which spans the stage and seating area. The amphitheater could be used for music and theater festivals. Raton would benefit from the structure through the sale of tickets, and providing a place for visitors and locals to enjoy.

Both the fountain and the amphitheater serve the park as sources of activity throughout the year for all to enjoy.
Vacant Lots

Concept: creating attractive, flexible spaces in existing vacant lots by using inexpensive items that can be relocated as the lots get developed.

Addition of pavers, planters and lighting immediately turns vacant lots into usable spaces.

From this point, lots can be “adopted” by local groups such as:

- church groups
- high school organizations
- Raton Recreation & Education Council
- Raton Main Street Inc.
- Boy Scouts of America
- Colfax County Senior Citizens, Inc.
- Colfax County Society of Art, History & Archaeology
- Optimist Club of Raton

Potential uses include:

- Outdoor seating for adjacent cafe
- Performance area for local musicians or theatre groups
- Public art exhibits
- Gardening workshops
- Crafts markets
- Internet cafe

Public/Private Design

Potential uses include:

- Outdoor studio space for artists
- Community yard for residents of surrounding apartments
- Outdoor restaurant
- Private courtyard for adjacent businesses
- Playground

Multi-Level Design

Potential uses include:

- Outdoor seating for adjacent cafe
- Performance area for local musicians or theatre groups
- Public art exhibits
- Gardening workshops
- Crafts markets
- Internet cafe

Precedents

DOWNTOWN POCKET PARK
118 N. Beaton St., Corsicana, TX
• Restroom facility & water fountain
• Picnic Tables & Benches
• Stage Area
• Landscaped & seating

DOWNTOWN POCKET PARK
Raymondville, TX
Phase 2 projects grew from feedback students received during a mid-point presentation in Albuquerque. The projects in Phase 2 address Phase 1 community concerns with more detail. Students worked on projects individually and in small groups, continuing to ensure projects worked together while providing a range of options for community members. The projects are grouped according to concept as follows:

- Places
- Paths
- Systems
Successfully designed places act as markers on the landscape allowing people to readily identify with their town while enhancing their civic experience. While individual designs varied, several commonalities exist: creating engaging streetscapes and plazas, enhancing connectivity to existing civic infrastructure, promoting active lifestyles, and encouraging economic patronage downtown. Each of these places will serve as a catalyst for downtown revitalization.
Downtown Civic District

The Colfax County Courthouse building is an integral part of downtown Raton. This project explores the possibility of using this historic building and landscape as an anchor in a new downtown civic district.

The following elements will be used to create this district:

- Two future civic buildings
- Street trees and paving designed to distinguish space
- Wide, pedestrian-friendly streets

Colfax County Courthouse

Raton Municipal Building

Vacant lot, corner of Savage & 3rd
Boulder Plaza

Design Objective: To take full advantage of Raton’s stunning geographic context by incorporating the surrounding terrain into the design narrative.

Raton is ideally situated close to world class skiing, mountain climbing, biking, fishing, hiking, and a number of other outdoor attractions. Borrowing from these activities as an inspiration for design, Boulder Plaza will serve as a tangible reminder of the beauty of Northern New Mexico’s terrain and facilitate trips to the nearby mountains with access to trail information and mountain bike repair facilities located on site. In addition to these amenities, the plaza will house a climbing wall, bouldering course, fire pit, all while fulfilling the purpose of a plaza: creating a dynamic public gathering place.

Context Map

Located at the confluence of Second Street (State Highway 64) and Savage Street, Boulder Plaza will greet visitors and delight residents by celebrating the nearby mountains and offering an engaging civic space.

Master Plan

Raton’s relationship with the Rocky Mountains provides a palpable impetus for design.

Upon closer inspection the surrounding mountains envelop the city. This geographical relationship served as the template for the plaza’s design.
**Program**

25’ setbacks on Savage Street allow for the creation of bike paths to Goat Hill, Climax Canyon and beyond.

Amphitheater style fire pit will create sense of intimacy and intrigue.

Bouldering is a fast growing sport that requires its participants to traverse the perimeter of the boulder using their strength and dexterity.

Portable climbing walls can be brought in for tournaments and special events.

Located at the intersection of Savage and Second Street, Boulder Plaza will announce the arrival of downtown Raton.
Existing Conditions

West facing panoramic on 2nd Street between Clark and Savage Boulevards.

Current conditions within the prospective Plaza are bleak leading to an under utilized space. These vacant lots typify the problem of ‘dead’ space within Raton. Creating viable and well connected civic spaces will enable a pedestrian friendly downtown and stimulate nearby businesses.

Seating Perspective: Benches and performance areas will be anchored into the rocks beneath a canopy of aspens allowing for shade in the summer, a colorful display in the fall, and sunlight in winter.

Section Cut

- West facing panoramic on 2nd Street between Clark and Savage Boulevards.
- Current conditions within the prospective Plaza are bleak leading to an under utilized space. These vacant lots typify the problem of ‘dead’ space within Raton. Creating viable and well connected civic spaces will enable a pedestrian friendly downtown and stimulate nearby businesses.
- Benches and performance areas will be anchored into the rocks beneath a canopy of aspens allowing for shade in the summer, a colorful display in the fall, and sunlight in winter.
A day in the plaza:

Like any successfully designed place Boulder Plaza will be a dynamic space offering a variety of uses. The climbing wall, bouldering course, fire pit, and sand pit will allow for activity while the nooks and crannies within the rocks offer ample seating and privacy. In addition to these functions the plaza will serve as a meeting place, and a trail head into the mountains of Colfax County with trail information and mountain bike repair and maintenance facilities on site. These perspectives trace a day’s events within the plaza.
HISTORY EMBEDDED IN THE LAYERS OF COAL

The coal found in the region surrounding Raton has singly had more influence on the history and development of Raton than any other single factor. With the closing of the region’s many coal camps, America moving to a post-industrial economy increasingly dependent on natural gas, and a shift to diesel powered trains, much of what characterized Raton at the beginning of the 20th century is becoming forgotten. The region’s coal seams, a metamorphosis of ancient lagoons, signify a larger story geologically.

There are many important moments in Raton’s history that suggest a museum dedicated to coal. Geologically, the coal seams frame the Cretaceous - Tertiary mass extinction. Moving forward to the early days of extraction we see how coal was a big motivating factor for domination of Raton Pass by competing railroads. In 1913, the struggle for unionized labor resulted in a series of violent events in Ludlow Colorado. During the same year, our nation experienced its second worst mining accident in Dawson, NM. Above all, the perseverance of the miner and his family is a phenomenal story and cause for celebration. This signifies a fascinating chapter in people’s settlement of the region.

“Coal Chronicle” demonstrates how a piece of the abandoned pedestrian underpass located south of the historic Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe depot on Historic Railroad Avenue can be transformed into a coal museum. As a piece of architecture, the museum celebrates the perseverance of immigrants who worked and lived in company owned coal camps, as well as the railroad and geologic chapters in the story of coal.
The subterranean journey starts in the cafe as a ramp slowly takes the visitor through a passage with varying degrees of darkness. Concrete is cast in such a way that overhead light strikes it only on certain surfaces. At a point where the tunnel is completely beneath grade, rectangular skylights illuminate a slightly larger space that serves as a pause along the journey.

As the light in the tunnel transitions to an artificial source, the visitor is clued that he or she reached a portion of tunnel directly under the BNSF tracks. The experience of hearing rumbling trains overhead gives the visitor an opportunity to sense the power of a railroad that once linked all the area’s coal camps to their respective markets.

At the end of the tunnel is the coal mining portion of the museum. Again, natural light is introduced to make the experience of being in a small underground space pleasant. Skylights and solar tubes cast light on exhibits as visitors consider life in coal camps. Upon reaching the end of the journey through the tunnel, one’s experience transcend place and time.

By creating a cafe on First street, the underground museum is connected to the larger activity of downtown. The cafe’s floor plan functionally and symbolically creates linkage; much like the role of the railroad that inspires the art and artifacts displayed in the cafe space.
Transition of floor- to wall- to ceiling mimics entrance such as mine no.2 at Sugarite (above). A glimpse of this same rock formation can be seen through a window above the cafe entrance of the tunnel.

Creating a structure that becomes more than just a museum insures its role as a functional civic space used by different groups. Diversity creates opportunities for interaction and reinforcement. In addition, museum staff roles overlap when either cafe or museum experiences slow time.
The roof of the coal museum serves as a plaza space for the park. Skylights define plaza edge and solar tubes become seating elements. A welded monocular narrates the geologic strata visible below a basalt flow capping Johnson, Bartlet and Barela mesas. The basalt preserved coal seams from the erosive forces characteristic of area canyons.

Structural supports in coal museum serve as wall space and recollection of mine structure. Electrical and ventilation systems were also conspicuous elements on coal mine ceilings.
Preserving Raton’s History

The ruins of Raton’s historic rail yard dot Roundhouse Park. Preserving the rail yard ruins will create an enjoyable park for pedestrians and allow people to better see and understand Raton’s history.

Historic Raton Rail Yard, circa 1912. Raton History Museum:

Although the historic rail yard has long been demolished, families look down from Goat Hill imagine the old rail yard.
Conservation Techniques:

Weather, ‘wear and tear’ and vandalism can rapidly destroy exposed ruins.*

Burying ruins increases lifespan and can inform observers of the original object’s form.*

Example: Conservation techniques reveal the form of a British Fort.*

Reading Raton’s History From the Rail Park

Keyed Rail Yard View

1. MACHINE SHOP
2. ROUNDHOUSE
3. COAL CONVEYOR
4. WATER SERVICE
5. STORE HOUSE
6. LUMBER SHED
7. FOREMAN’S OFFICE
8. SIGNAL STATION
9. RAILS
10. PLATFORM

Rail Yard, circa 1924. Raton History Museum
Reading Raton’s Rail History From Goat Hill

Keyed Rail Yard View

1. MACHINE SHOP
2. ROUNDHOUSE
3. COAL CONVEYOR
4. WATER SERVICE
5. STORE HOUSE
6. LUMBER SHED
7. FOREMAN’S OFFICE
8. COAL OFFICE
9. STABLE
10. RAILS
11. PLATFORM

View from Goat Hill, April 2007
Fountain Complex for Roundhouse Park

Design Features

- central fountain with ramps, steps, seating, water features
- interactive water play features for children
- earthen berms & retaining walls around fountain
- paths connecting from parking to arroyo bridge
- picnic & shade structure
- double row of trees along south path
- pump & filter housing

Design Functions & Assets

- social gathering place for whole town
- adjacent play & shade areas for kids & parents
- water feature for summer play
- option for winter skating around fountain
- year-round sculptural feature
- flexible range of construction options
  - flagstone surfacing, tile inset, rubber play surface,
    skating surface around fountain, lighting at night
  - water jets in basin, various materials for paths & walls
- provides vertical elements in flat park
- provides small-scale areas in wide open park
- adjacent to existing parking & recreation
- reflects local landscape & history

Fountain Costs & Maintenance

- requires electricity, water, staff time
- regular inspection in summer to ensure normal operation
- weekly cleaning of filters during summer
- fall & spring water draining & shut down, filling & startup
- replacement of rubber play surfaces every 5-10 years
- replacement of lights if nighttime lighting is included
- approx. equipment cost of $12,000. Total project cost
  would be 4-6 times equipment cost.
Plan view of fountain

Water play for children: interacative water gates

Water flows to lower basins through channels when open or over lip of basin when gates are closed. This offers children the fun of manipulating the water flow.

Shade & picnic structure

located 15’ from fountain

Tree-lined path to arroyo bridge

potential tree species:

- lanceleaf cottonwood
  *Populus acuminata*
- green or white ash
  *Fraxinus pennsylvanica*
  *Fraxinus americana*
- quaking aspen
  *Populus tremuloides*

Plan view of fountain
In search of a way to bring the east and west sides of Raton together, I heard that residents come together through their children. Thus, the fountain complex began as a children’s play feature with various social spaces for adults. The play and social components are therefore as critical to the design as the delight of water, the reflection of the local landscape, and the location.
The Roundhouse Park Amphitheater

The Amphitheater is a tensile structure which spans the stage and has 500 capacity fixed seating.

The fixed seating and lawn seating accommodate large music and theater festivals.

The lawn seating area has entrances and exits for ticket holder passage.

Ticket sales are located at the main North entrance.

Pedestrian paths surround the structure for flow up to and around the amphitheater.

The backstage and storage areas have a separate vehicular and pedestrian entrance.

The amphitheater is designed to be built in phases as budget allows for expansion.

The most important feature of the amphitheater is the increase in revenue and tourism for Raton.
The Roundhouse Park Amphitheater
The following projects find their basis in the creation of paths. These ideas grew out of interest in connections between districts, areas, and activities. The site analysis provided a visualization of the main north-south streets creating districts; First Street as the historic district, Second Street as Main Street and the primary commercial district, and Third Street as the civic district. The districts are connected by the lateral east-west streets. These projects illustrate the need to define important paths in Raton, Raton’s connection to outlying areas, and the need to connect across the barrier of the railroad yard. There are options for a pedestrian underpass, a vehicular underpass, a pedestrian overpass, as well as a trail up the face of Goat Hill.
Goat Hill Upclimb

Goat Hill is an icon for the town of Raton. From anywhere in town Goat Hill marks the stunning mountain backdrop, a high point sporting the RATON sign. This project proposes a trail to be built up the front side of Raton, enhances Goat Hill as a memorable icon and develops Goat Hill as a civic place.

The trail marks an important east-west pedestrian connection along Park Avenue. Crossing First, Second, and Third streets, Park Avenue creates a direct connection between Roundhouse Park, the underpass or overpass across the railroad tracks and terminates, with the addition of the trail, at the top of Goat Hill. Attracting residents and visitors alike, the Goat Hill Upclimb is a civic trail rather than a recreational trail as it visually and physically connects with the heart of downtown Raton. The trail itself is always visible from town, and town is always visible from the trail.

The trail follows the contour of the hill. The experience is one of hiking along an intimate mountain trail, climbing up a steep face. In actuality, the trail is only 1/2 mile long and climbs at a comfortable, moderate rate. Along the trail, places of rest provide benches, shade, drinking fountains and exceptional views.
GOAT HILL PROFILE

- 240' VERTICAL GAIN
- 1/2 MILE TRAIL DISTANCE
- 9% SLOPE (ON AVERAGE)
- 45 MIN. RIGOROUS ROUND-TRIP
- 1.5 HOUR RELAXED STROLL

DETAIL LAYERS

- RAILING
- WALL
- LETTER
- BENCH
- SHADE STRUCTURE
- DRINKING FOUNTAIN
- LUMINARIA
LOOKING WEST TO GOAT HILL

LOOKING NORTH TO GOAT HILL

LETTERS AS: OBJECTS, SCULPTURE, IDENTITY, ICONS

A
T

TRAVERSE
CLIMB

PLACES/PATHS/SYSTEMS
UNM DPAC STUDIO 2007
Goat Hill does not just provide views; it also acts as an important icon and image of Raton. Deconstruction of the RATON sign into letters that fall along the trail creates a playful and memorable image. From the trail, the letters become sculptures sometimes framing distant views. The letters help to orient one’s place along the trail. Looking back at Goat Hill from town, the letters act as a reminder of being on the trail, a reminder of what it is like to be at the “A” lookout.

The trail also creates the opportunity for civic activities: a trail race that finishes with a scramble up Goat Hill, a winter Luminaria Procession where neighbors gather to light the trail with candles. Goat Hill is a prime place to celebrate the town during the 4th of July fireworks. It is also a destination for residents and visitors enthused to look at the surrounding geology of mountains and mesas to the east, to catch a view of the Santa Fe Trail ruts in Roundhouse Park and to see the traces of the train yard and the Roundhouse itself. The trail makes Goat Hill a prime destination to enjoy and appreciate the town of Raton and its thrilling landscape.
Connections

The goal of this project is to connect the east and west sides of Raton over the railroad tracks. At the Phase 1 review, the community representatives expressed an interest in exploring an overpass. This overpass is designed to serve as an identity marker for Raton, the Depot Plaza, First Street, and Roundhouse Park. It would be an investment in the future of Raton, as well as access to and from downtown.

Precedents: Pedestrian and bicycle bridges.
View of overpass landing on berm in Roundhouse Park (from east side of railroad tracks).

Existing conditions at the proposed site for the overpass at 1st Street and the railroad tracks, and at Roundhouse Park.

View to north from plaza area. The overpass can create visual identity for Raton in the form of a bridge to the future.
East-West Underpass + Courtyard Plaza

Design Goals

• Connect East and West Raton from Middle of Town
• Create Courtyard Plaza Area

Design Features:

Ceremonial Underpass with Plaza features offer an opportunity for Raton to make an East-West connection from the middle of town. This allows the community to link itself together and connect the special districts. The natural and built environment of Raton, a town replete with rich historical and cultural significance as well as a setting of great organic beauty, allow for ample opportunities to define a path of great importance.
“Where History, Culture and the Arts Meet”

Beautiful Arts
Awesome Scenery
Captivating History
Underpass

Design Goals
- Connect historic Downtown with East side
- Create a series of social spaces
- Bring park atmosphere into Downtown

Design Features
- activating space between Depot and Reading Room
- information kiosk
- small plaza in front of the Reading Room
- scene for important announcements or informal shows
- movable chairs around the scene, can also be used for games and relaxation
- additional scene and chairs on the second 6ft lower platform
- Gallery Walk- additional promenade that connects Gallery and Reading Plaza, with exhibition display, sculptures, posters etc
GALLERY WALK

PLANTER

BENCH
These projects seek to strengthen connections within and between the major economic, environmental and social systems in Raton. They stem from findings during site analysis that showed a need for a more cohesive and distinctive Main Street experience. Systems of downtown infrastructure such as transportation, lighting, vegetation, and water use provide an essential foundation for creating a unified and pleasant downtown atmosphere. Strengthening these systems and their interconnections also produces a cost-effective downtown structure which can support a healthy, engaged, and economically secure community.
Greening Downtown

Having an enjoyable downtown means having a successful streetscape. Given its wide sidewalks and generous rainfall, Raton has great potential for a thriving Main Street experience. This project presents a plan for tree placement, irrigation, and other street amenities.

As shown by the aerial photo below, Raton has an excellent opportunity to reforest its downtown area. The streetscape could be installed in five years, following a phasing plan that works from the center of downtown outward.

Rooftop water harvesting and storage in cisterns along the sidewalk provide a large portion of irrigation needs as well as a place for public art display. Using recycled copper pipes for watering and street amenities reveals the irrigation system in a fun and interesting way.

Straw Bale benches located on the outer edge of the sidewalk create social spaces in front of stores. This construction method saves money, creates comfortable street furniture, and provides an opportunity for businesses to advertise in tile mosaic on the bench itself.

Existing Greenspace
Imagine a green downtown in just 5 years...

Phase 1

Phase 2

Phase 3

Phase 4

Phase 5

Street trees create a green canopy on 2nd St.

Spring flowering trees create a different identity and serve as an eye catcher to draw people from 2nd St. to 1st St. and the Promenade.
Integrated Irrigation System

Harvesting water from downtown building rooftops saves the city water and provides a place for mural art. Recycled copper pipe sculptures function as the irrigation system and other street amenities like bike racks, tree guards, and informational signage.

One 200 gallon cistern will water 4 trees

18 cisterns will water 1/4 of the total proposed trees, saving the city over 51,000 gallons of water annually.

Example of copper pipe sculpture, by Fool's Errant
Elements of a Social Sidewalk

Straw bale benches with tile mosaics at the Davis Train Depot, CA. By Skillful

Tile mosaic at Park Guell, Barcelona. By Gaudi

Streetscape scene on 2nd St.

Bench Construction Sequence

1. Straw bale

2. Stucco layer

3. Businesses decorate their bench as they choose, with tile mosaic or other materials

Streetscape scene on 2nd St.

Promenade planter benches on 1st
Gateway Greenhouse & Field

The Gateway Greenhouse and Field is a public space designed to provide Raton’s urban forestry program a place to begin. The greenhouse and field will provide a safe haven for street trees and plants to mature to a stage where they are more likely to be able to survive in the public realm.

Benefits of Gateway Greenhouse and Field:
* Increases the vitality of street greenery
* Holds the corner at the intersection of Clark and First Street
* Provides many educational opportunities.
* Provides public space in an otherwise vacant lot
* Sustainable features incorporated into design
* Increases street and pedestrian activity
* Assures that the investment the city of Raton is making in urban forestry will be achieved in a shorter amount of time

Currently, the corner lot on Clark and First Street is a vacancy in an otherwise strong street facade. Trash and other objects fill the lot, making an unsightly void in the historic facade lines. The Gateway Greenhouse and Field will anchor this corner and the facade sitting wall will be a welcome addition to life on First Street.
Educational opportunities available within the Gateway Greenhouse and Field:
*Multi-generational community involvement
*Plaques provide knowledge about plant types and requirements
*School children are able to learn about photosynthesis, plant cycles, etc.
*Small children are able to be outside planting
*Cisterns provide education about water conservation, drought, and climate conditions
*Facade wall provides a location for public performances, people watching, skateboarding, etc.
*Composting and other sustainable features are being utilized, providing hands-on experience with sustainable living
*Allows the public to get involved

Concrete Facade Wall:
*Provides residents and visitors a place to sit and observe the street activity
*Overhead trellis provides shading and a sense of enclosure
*Holds the corner, making the intersection of Clark and First Street a stronger part of the First Street facade
*Excellent views of Roundhouse park are available while sitting on the wall
The joy of making enjoyable places

Design goal for this project is linking the need for public art and gardening while creating small enclosed social spaces.

Talking to people from Raton I understood there was a desire for both, public art and gardening. While discussing this, term “social interaction” was frequently used, people were expressing a need to spend as much time as possible outside and wishing to have nice places to get together. Thinking of how to incorporate all these “elements” into one design solution and offer the town of Raton something that can be used in several different ways, I came up with a set of movable modular pieces - planters.

Planters I am proposing vary in sizes (from 2 to 6 feet in height) and shapes (variety of mostly geometric shapes). These are meant to be used for creating different kinds of spatial enclosures. They are as well meant to be painted on, there should be a certain days when people from Raton can go out and decorate these, paint on them - public art. Along with painting, people can participate in planting which will satisfy the public gardening needs. Plant species can vary from bulbs in spring, all different kinds of annuals and perennials throughout the summer, mums in the fall, all the way to Christmas decoration going towards the end of the year.
Visual enclosure - Focal points

Park Avenue

Four large planters with ivy coming out of them, growing on metal arch vine plant support, frames two focal points of Raton, Raton Depot on east side and Goat Hill on west side

1. Framed view of Raton Depot

2. Planter detail. All the planter design that are shown have my paintings. These are primarily history of Raton, Raton Depot and Goat Hill view inspired paintings. Different series of paintings can be on the planters and citizens of Raton should propose the theme couple of times a year. This way “always new exhibit under the blue sky” can enhance and enrich public space and public life of Raton.

3. Park Avenue schematic sections.

4. Framed view of Goat Hill
The joy of making enjoyable places

The Event enclosure - Shuler theatre and Ripley park

1. Slowing the traffic down, blocking off street side parking and creating more of a festive atmosphere in front of the Shuler theatre.

2. Planter detail, history theme.


4. Ripley’s park. Public art enclosure. Picture shows kids and parents participating in kid’s series of planter paintings. On the other side senior citizens are putting the plants in. Both of these activities would make social interaction much stronger and intensive,
The Social spaces enclosure - Empty lots on 2nd street between Rio Grande and Cook Avenue

1. Plan view. Block on 2nd street between Rio Grande and Cook avenue with two empty lots in it. Schematic sections.

2. Temporary use of empty lot and planters as elements for enclosing the space. Until the block gets a permanent use, it can be used as an open air movie theatre.

3. Planters with seating included. Shuler and train theme.

4. Another idea for temporary use of empty lots. Marking the space limits by planters use. Picture shows nice seating area with kids playground area included. People who work in downtown can take lunch breaks in here or it is a good place for people to take a break after strolling up and down 2nd street or for parents to take kids out and have a chat with a friend.
Celebration of Life and Lights To Honor John Lackey

Design Goals
• To honor the contributions John Lackey made to the City of Raton
• To use sustainable materials and energy
• To create a pedestrian friendly 2nd St.
• To create a traffic calming device
• To give 2nd St. a distinctive character

Design Features
• Light canopy down 2nd St. from Rio Grande to Savage
• Solar Pocket Plaza in the empty lot south of the International Bank
• Lights are LEDs which have a life of 200,000 hours and use a fraction of the energy of normal incandescent light bulbs
• Solar panels are used to create a pergola within the pocket plaza and also supply energy to the power grid which balances the use of the light canopy

Plan View of Solar Pocket Plaza
Lights connected to the solar panels create a distribution effect of the sustainable energy to the light canopy

View of Light Array
Horizontal lights with a decreased amount of strands play off the Neon theater signs

Section of Solar Pocket Plaza
Activity within the plaza
John Lackey was a significant participant in Raton’s development of its electricity resources through his founding work in the Raton Public Service Company franchise agreement and later helping establish the Arkansas River Power Authority. Honoring John Lackey can be the first step for Raton to explore alternative energy sources. Using solar electricity to power the light canopy will educate the town about alternative energy.

John Lackey dedicated his life and aspirations to Raton. His business plans were a direct benefit to the City of Raton. In return Raton can dedicate a light canopy and alternative energy research to him.
Arrival and Dispersal at the Raton Train Depot

Design Goals

- Visually and spatially enhance the first impression of Raton for visitors by train and motor vehicle.
- Create pedestrian space that attracts visitors.
- Use stormwater as the foundation for circulation and garden design.

Design Features

- Colorful plant materials in raised planters and sunken storm detention zones offer sitting places that surround the train depot.
- Parking area designed for multi-use of short-term, long-term, and oversized vehicles. Functions as rest area for travelers and visitors to Raton.
- Stormwater mitigated on site through detention gardens and sunken detention areas that double as shaded sitting areas for train visitors of the parking area.

Context

The Train Depot is located off 1st Street in the Historic Downtown area of Raton. The site is the eastern edge of the downtown district as there is currently no access to Roundhouse Park because of the rail lines.

The Site

The Train Depot is a highly visible and recognizable symbol of downtown Raton. The early 20th century was a bustling and prosperous time for Raton and the Depot was an important place for the town. Hotels and restaurants lined the streets and the Depot was surrounded by trees, gardens and grass. Unfortunately the town experienced a decline in the mining industry and many businesses closed or left town. The current condition of the Train Depot landscape is a gravel lot with no pedestrian amenities or spaces. Broken curbs and dust are the images that a visitor remembers.

Stormwater Issues

The historic flood plain of Raton passes through the current location of the Depot and adjacent parking areas. Stormwater rushes to this site and moves over and under the site into the Roundhouse Park. This concentrated impact leaves erosion in its wake and perpetuates the decline of the Depot landscape. Instead of removing the water as quickly as possible the site has the potential to use the water for a benefit. By dispersing the water though gardens and detention areas the site could become a focal point for visitors to Raton. Using the water to water plants and create pedestrian scale spaces that also function as stormwater detention gardens will make a more comfortable, beautiful and functional place.
A re-vamped landscape around the Train Depot will offer a longer lasting and more positive impression to train travellers. The through traveller will remember and possibly return to Raton for a longer stay if a positive first impression is their experience with their brief view of Raton. Boy Scouts coming for a stay at the Philmont Boy Scout Ranch will have nice pictures and good things to tell their relatives. Travellers with extra time might be inspired to explore the rest of the town after seeing the beauty of the Train Depot. With the possibility of the Rail Runner Commuter Train coming to Raton in the near future the time is now for an update and a rethinking of how Raton wants to market itself to visitors.
Dispersal Into Downtown

After arrival by train or vehicle it is important to transition visitors into the downtown district. By creating space with pedestrian amenities such as seating, shade, refreshment, and information the visitor will be more willing and ready to explore Raton. The dispersal of stormwater will create the spaces and circulation for the pedestrians and vehicular traffic.

Image of the new view from First Street of the Train Depot. Planters collect water from roof gutters and sunken planters collect drainage from the plaza. The raised planters function as seating. Space is available for vendors and information kiosks.
Sustainable Design Strategies

Being in the historic flood plain makes designing for stormwater a priority. Simple strategies can be employed to deal with the issue in a beautiful and sustainable manner. Permeable concrete paving in the parking area will stop the force of drainage water and lessen the impact on the arroyos in the adjacent park. Instead of piping water away from the site, water can be dispersed on site though detention gardens that will collect all the water. During large storm events the sunken detention areas will fill with water and become temporary water features that feed the plants and recharge ground water. During dry times the sunken areas will function as cool seating places for weary travellers. Abandoning the standard curb and gutter at paving edges for invisible curbs and curb inserts will allow water to freely into the planted areas and lessen the water surge created by standard curbs and gutters.

Water Detention Zones that double as shaded sitting areas for travelers are located in the parking area. Curbing made of local stone integrated with inserts will allow water into the detention area.