

Main Street at FlatIron

BY NINA NEILSON

The design and fabrication of a themed retail sign system.

AS THE STATE OF COLORADO continues to grow by leaps and bounds, the borders between Denver, the capital city and Boulder, one of the state's main college towns, have faded. Miles of open space between the two cities has been filled with quickie-marts, fast food chains, business parks and mega department stores.

Broomfield, a formerly small, rural town located directly between Denver and Boulder, has become an upscale commercial/residential area. This dramatic makeover is due in part to the new FlatIrons Crossing development, which includes the largest mall in the Rocky Mountain region. New development reaches beyond the mega-mall to include stores, restaurants and offices, such as The Great Indoors, Best Buy, Nordstrom Rack, CB & Potts and Bahama Breeze, plus the Main Street at FlatIron retail/office village.

WELCOME TO MAIN STREET

Main Street project owner and developer, MidCities of Castle Rock, Colo., contracted with Gordon Sign of Denver

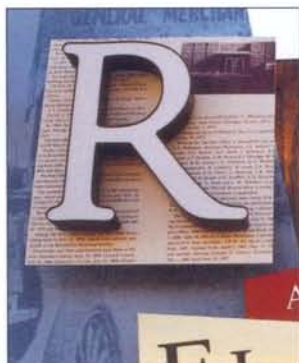
to design and fabricate the streetscape signage throughout the area as well as informative signage within the mall. The development consists of cottage-style stone and stucco store and office fronts with corrugated metal awnings along a tree-lined street with European traffic circles at each end.

"MidCities is trying to get away from the notion of a traditional shopping center," Harry Grass, director of sales and marketing for Gordon Sign says. "They want to create a little village, including restaurants and a hotel."

Gordon Sign designed, fabricated and installed a series of streetscape signs, including project identification signs, vehicle and pedestrian directional signs and area history signs. The various signs share common colors, materials and themes, thereby creating a streetscape that is connected and consistent.

The first signs to be completed were two horizontal identification signs, one measuring 40' x 10' and the other measuring 7'-6" x 30'. Each sign began with a concrete slab footing, followed by a

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The first signs to be completed were two horizontal monument signs. One measures 40' x 10' and the other measures 7'6" x 30'.



The monument signs began with a concrete slab footing, followed by a colored (San Diego Buff) concrete decorative pour in a variety of shapes and levels on which were placed several layers of linked aluminum cabinets. Forms were cut using a CAD CAM router so that the aluminum cabinets precisely fit the template of the concrete pour.



The acids used to create an aged patina effect on copper can be formulated in any color, such as the golden rust, moss green and sky blue used at Main Street. A Lord engineered adhesive was used to glue the copper to the aluminum. The thin copper coating posed a real challenge because once it has adhered it cannot be removed, making fine tuning impossible.



Individual illuminated channel letters in a Trajan letter style spell out "Main Street" across the aluminum cabinets. Digital images of historical newspaper pages serve as a background behind some of the letters. Various sized brackets were used to keep the letters lined up.



This landmark tower is 45' tall, made of fabricated steel tubes (2" square and 4" square), covered with steel mesh, used to resist area winds. The base is a combination of a patina copper coated aluminum cabinet and sandstone.



Powder coating the tower at Gordon Sign.



Channel letters float away from the face of the tower structure on 6" spacers, spelling out "Main Street".

colored concrete decorative pour in a variety of shapes and levels, then several layers of triangular, linked aluminum cabinets of various sizes and colors.

Some of the cabinets have a patina copper coating for a natural look, ranging in color from golden rust to moss green, while others are covered with pale blue digital photographic images from Broomfield's history. Individual illuminated channel letters in a Trajan letter style spell out Main Street. A digital image of newspaper pages from Broomfield's history serves as a background in places. The total effect is a neutral tone, multi-layered, historical sign that blends into its Rocky Mountain surroundings.

TOWER OF TROUBLE

Another landmark sign at Main Street is a 45' tall tower, made of fabricated 2" and 4" steel tubes covered with steel mesh. According to Grass, mesh was chosen because it is a porous, wind-resistant material.

The tower was sandblasted and painted inside Gordon Sign's plant. The giant metal structure was held off the ground by a large center pole and secured with pulleys.

"With a metal structure that large and heavy, we didn't want to take any chances and therefore took a lot of extra safety precautions," production manager Bob Abeyta says.

The tower was powder-coated in sage green with a light green trim on the uprights and cross members. According to Abeyta, powder coating, an electrostatic technique, magnetizes the paint so that it is spread evenly and completely. It works great on metal because the paint is sprayed in a fine mist that swirls around the metal, filling all the cracks and corners, thereby inhibiting rust.

The finished tower sits on a split-level decorative concrete base in the center of a roundabout. A 40' pole, bolted into the concrete base, runs through the center of the tower sign and keeps it stable.

"The city of Broomfield required a footing (for the tower sign) that could withstand a nuclear hit," Grass says.

The tower is accented by a triangular, 10'-5" high, aluminum cabinet base, which has a combination of a patina copper coating and finished stone overlay. Individual channel letters, illuminated with neon and bolted 6" out from the face of the tower, spell out *Main Street*. Workers had to crawl inside the tower in order to bolt the letters to the giant, but narrow, structure.

CARE WITH COPPER

According to Abeyta, working with the huge amounts of aluminum necessary to complete the large project was not a problem, but that working with patina copper was a real challenge.

"We had to glue two different types of metal together (copper on top of aluminum), therefore we had to find a com-



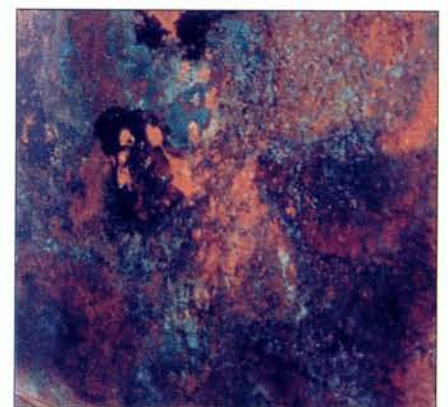
patible adhesive," Abeyta says. (Gordon Sign used an engineered Lord adhesive.) "We only had one shot, once the copper cover is on, it can't be taken off. Copper is very thin, so there's no room for error."

The acids used to create an aged patina effect on copper can be formulated in any color. The copper patina-coated aluminum cabinets found throughout the Main Street development range from a neutral brown shade and an earthy moss green tone to a brilliant blue shade. The bright blue shade was developed after MidCities decided the original earth tones don't show up well from a distance. In addition, Gordon Sign had to replace the original neon tubes inside the channel letters with various neon colors and add different color faces, so that the letters can be seen better from afar and at night.

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An 80' hydraulic crane lifted the tower sign up and slipped it over a 40' pole, bolted into the concrete base.



Interlocking aluminum tenant sign cabinets were decorated with blue patina copper and digital graphics from Broomfield's history.



Tenant signs are backlit through routed out letters in the panels.



cation. We had a hell of a time finding it.”

The history sign collection includes eight aluminum cabinet signs measuring 7'-6" x 6'-1" with a variety of designs and eight 1'-3" x 1'-6" aluminum with patina copper wall plaques. Both sign types were designed to resemble an open book with the history of Broomfield digitally scrawled across its pages.

GETTING STRAIGHT

According to Abeyta, getting the various layers and levels of the Main Street at FlatIron project signs to match up and lay flat was the ultimate challenge.

“None of the signs are on a level plain,” Abeyta says. “All of the cabinets are different shapes and the concrete has several levels. Keeping the cabinets flush with the concrete, the letters in a straight line and everything lined up was really tough.”

Gordon Sign made detailed templates for most of the signs. The concrete work was subcontracted, but everyone involved worked off of the same template. All of the forms were cut using a computerized router so that the aluminum cabinets precisely fit the template of the concrete pour. In order to keep the individual channel letters in an even line, Gordon Sign used a laser to strike a line across the signs. Once an even line was established, the company installed 6" to 2' brackets on the various sized cabinets, so that the letters could line up straight and flush.

“We had to coordinate the pipes, cabinets and concrete,” Abeyta says. “The only way to reach an exact line up was to use a Cad Cam and templates. One of the reasons why Gordon Sign provided all the templates is so that everyone remained on the same page, working off the same template.”

According to Grass, the project, which was delayed several months, moved slowly, constantly starting and stopping, due to new demands by the client and challenges with the installation.

“In my opinion, the best part about this project is that the signs are truly unusual,” Grass says. SB



The history sign collection includes several aluminum cabinets with a variety of designs and historical newspaper pages and several smaller wall plaques. Both types resemble an open Broomfield history book.



HISTORICAL MAZE

Five tenant signs help people in vehicles and on foot identify which stores are in the area and where to find them. The signs are consistent with the look of the horizontal and tower signs. Each tenant sign has a concrete footing, a colored concrete decorative pour, two large interlocked aluminum cabinets, one with blue patina copper, one with digital graphics, and several smaller reddish-brown cabinet panels with routed out letters.

Once the development is fully inhabited, the names of the surrounding stores

and offices will be backlit through the routed out letters. The pedestrian-friendly version of the tenant signs (located along the sidewalks of the mall development), include digitally printed mall-area maps.

The Broomfield area history signs were the last group of signs to be completed.

“The history signs were designed to look like an open book,” Grass says. “The digital images (covering the history signs) were taken from a book on the history of Broomfield, which is no longer in publi-



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