

EVANSTON'S FOUNTAIN SQUARE



CHALLENGE:

Evanston's Fountain Square Plaza dates back to the late 1800's and has a long-lasting history as a cultural center and an integral piece of the city's urban fabric. However, the pre-existing fountain and surrounding plaza areas were in poor condition and in need of repair. When funds were allocated to address the infrastructure improvements and a plaza redesign, the city turned to the community for inspiration. As stakeholders and community members gathered to reimagine this outdoor space, importance was placed on the pedestrian experience.

The goals of the project included:

- Create an open and accessible space that is welcoming to all and focused on pedestrian comfort
- Accommodate gatherings for small and large special events
- Provide a new fountain and war memorial in the north plaza
- Promote creative placemaking, an identity of place and a multi-seasonal space that expresses a variety of appearances and moods

LOCATION:

Evanston, Illinois

DESIGNER:

Teska Associates, Inc.

INSTALLER:

Copenhaver Construction

PRODUCT:

Eco-Promenade®



Unigranite®



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In addition to enhancing the pedestrian experience, stormwater management also needed to be addressed. The increased frequency and intensity of storms, flooding and snowmelt events, combined with commonly used impervious surfaces in urban environments has increased the amount of stormwater runoff. Therefore, it was important for the site to be carefully engineered with a permeable surface to ensure positive drainage away from the plaza's surrounding buildings and residences.

SOLUTION:

Designed by Teska Associates, Inc, the revitalized Fountain Square Plaza brings life to downtown Evanston with a flexible outdoor space, reflecting the vision of the city and the community. The design extends the plaza and repurposes the underutilized vehicle lanes, narrowing the surrounding streets and creating a more pedestrian focus. The elevation of the roadways was also brought up to the same level as the plaza, thereby creating a curbsless or 'shared' street. This allows for flexibility in street closures so that the city and community can host a range of festivals or other programmable events.

Permeable pavers were selected for the north and south plaza areas to create a sustainable and effective solution for this high-traffic urban space. These pavers are manufactured with spacer bars, resulting in joint gaps that allow for rapid penetration of water into the subbase, easing the negative effects of stormwater runoff. The joints are filled with decomposed granite, which allow water to flow through while filtering contaminants. The permeable pavers at Evanston Fountain square are installed on a concrete base with weep holes for added durability and vehicular loading. This ensures that the runoff captured by the permeable pavers can drain into the sandy soils below without overloading the underground storm sewers while being capable of withstanding the many uses of the space.

Unilock worked with the Teska Associates, Inc. team to develop the construction details and to visualize the color blend of the pavers through multiple site mock-up reviews. The resulting grid-like design utilizes Eco-Promenade® permeable plank pavers with Umbriano™ finish in Grenada White, Winter Marvel and French Grey.



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The built-in technologies of Umbriano™ feature **EnduraColor™** for a unique and beautiful finish with increased durability and wear-resistance, and **EasyClean™** for integral surface protection from stains, ideal for this high traffic urban plaza. To ensure pedestrian safety it was important to incorporate tactile cues into the paving design. **Unigranite®** was used as a rumble strip between the plaza and the roadways to define the transition from vehicular to pedestrian realms.

Today, the Fountain Square Plaza is decorated with young trees, colorful bistro-style tables and chairs, bike racks and lighting fixtures. It features the signature fountain with 20 choreographed jets, flush with the pavement and a custom glass veteran memorial wall. The vibrant shared streetscape serves as a community event space

and connects multiple streets, accommodating the thousands of people who pass through this plaza every day. Jodi from Teska Associates, Inc. notes that “the paving is one of those special elements that provides a unique backdrop to the constant flow of bikers, walkers, dancers, music-makers, exercisers, shoppers, diners, and people watchers.”

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- Jodi Mariano, PLA
Teska Associates, Inc.



Photo Credit: Rich Edlington