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EDI designs stunning use of color in new community



Flexibility and persistence needed to meet stakeholder goals



By Lyn Dean



Photos courtesy Environmental Designs, Inc.

Hilltop Club at Inspiration is a new community in Aurora—still under development—serving adults who are age 55 and over. After a referral of its maintenance and seasonal color operations in Loveland, with which the Hilltop community association manager was familiar, Environmental Designs, Inc. (EDI) was selected for the project. Chason Geister, Northern Colorado branch manager and business development for EDI, Loveland was the lead designer.

EDI's design featured lots of color using flowers and other plants within hardscape areas around the club house and pool.

Wow-power was the goal

The association management team wanted to “wow” the current homeowners while simultaneously providing “curb appeal” to prospective homeowners. EDI coordinated with the association manager on design of the beds and EDI staff carefully chose the plant material. The color program included creating fall and winter interest by replacing plants in the seasonal containers with plants such as dwarf conifers and flowering kale.

Bold color and the placement of beds and planters accentuated the pool and lounge areas. Small plant beds were designed to provide a courtyard-like atmosphere for conversation. Beyond the pool area, the design included placement of seasonal color near the clubhouse to make the clubhouse feel more inviting. The goal of the association management team was to “establish the clubhouse as a true center of activity,” Geister says.

Miscommunication happens

“A community still under development has multiple stakeholders,” Geister reminds us. “There were four stakeholder groups on the project that included the developer, the irrigation and maintenance team subcontracted by the developer, Hilltop Community Association and EDI. We learned a lot about the importance of clear communication.”

“Our first communication surprise happened after receiving approval from association management to move forward, so we started planting. Our team was not aware of other behind-the-scenes communications or miscommunications among other stakeholders.”

Plant material in the first installation failed due to poor irrigation management, at which

point Geister received approval to take over management of the irrigation zones that control the floral beds.

“Amazingly, we started planting a second time, replacing damaged and stunted plant material, and had to stop once again,” Geister says. “It was brought to my attention that the developer’s management team was not enthusiastic about the design and plant choices. I then talked to the management team about how the plant material will grow in and fill out. I also revamped some of the beds and containers, introducing different varieties of flowers and ornamentals.”

“The third planting was a winner. Even so, one stakeholder group was still not completely satisfied. I learned that vision cannot always be communicated.” He admits that even though people agree on a spoken vision, how it translates to other people can be different.

Optimizing irrigation

Geister also learned to cautiously establish boundaries that had not been specifically defined and to be careful when making assumptions. Unclear boundaries regarding irrigation design and management of the plants installed by EDI led to Geister “taking over” irrigation for the plants around the pool and clubhouse. “I reset the irrigation to run ‘smart’ in all the zones for the floral and color,” he says. “We constantly monitored and adjusted as needed during the season.”

Persistence made the project successful

Inviting EDI back the following year as the floral and color maintenance contractor speaks to the client’s satisfaction. Lessons learned will be carried forward with the EDI team. “In communication, we have to be consistent and clear, *and* be flexible and willing to change,” Geister says. “Also, a big part of the success of this project was the persistence of our team in caring for the plants. EDI makes site visits 2-3 times a week checking plant health and irrigation, as well as replacing plants that are failing and changing out plants with the seasons.”

“When I look at photos of this project, it feels good to know that the client can have beautiful healthy floral while saving water.”

For this project, EDI received the 2020 ALCC ELITE Award for Use of Color – People’s Choice. | **CG**