

Downtown Golden Holiday Lights

GURA was asked to research holiday light installations in other cities to gather information and ideas for enhancing the holiday lights in Golden to create a unique destination experience. Research included internet exploration and phone contacts with staff and consultants involved with holiday lighting projects in the Denver area and across the country. Research included gathering information on design, implementation, installation, goals, budget, funding, volunteer and staff hours, equipment options, and resources.

Observations:

Schedules:

Most of the cities contacted generally kick off the holiday lighting celebrations around Thanksgiving Day weekend and keep the lights on through various times in January. To increase attendance, lighting celebrations often kicked off a winter season festival with a host of special events such as parades, races, fireworks, a visit by Santa and Mrs. Claus, etc.

Scope:

The holiday lighting projects covered in this research range from large thematic displays designed by professionals and held in parks or gardens with entrance and/or parking fees to traditional street decorations funded and installed by volunteers. All types of lights were used in the projects including flood lights, inexpensive mini-lights, custom-made light strings, traditional bulbs, and LED lights. Everyone contacted, except for Kansas City's Country Club Plaza, said that they are beginning to replace existing lights with LEDs and are phasing them in as new features and displays are added.

Installation:

Kansas City's Country Club Plaza installation includes about 287,000 incandescent lights and 100 miles of wire; the light strings are custom-made from wire and sockets by a staff of 4-6 people working 9 months of the year on this project. It takes 6 weeks to install and requires rappelling and the use of lifts.

Denver Botanic Garden's includes 1 million plus colored and white lights installed on trees, plants and structures; lights include mini lights, bulbs and LED lights. A professional contractor designs and installs the larger tree lights and volunteers and staff install lights on bushes and smaller structures. New lights are purchased each year for the large trees, and the older lights are used to decorate more easily accessible shrubs and plants. Boom lifts are rented for installation and take-down. Installation begins on Nov 1 and requires 12-14 hours per day, 7 days a week, that includes 3 guys working 4 8-hour days and 100 staff and volunteers.

Denver's City and County building includes 20,000 lights and 5 miles of wire with flood lights, traditional lights, rope lights and free-standing displays. It takes a crew of 4 electricians 2 months to install (about 1200 hrs.) and 1 month to remove (640 hrs.).

Austin Trail of Lights is over 1 million lights. It is a pedestrian event of walk through displays that include tunnels and canopies of lights, free-standing displays, and lighting on trees and smaller park structures. Many of the displays are built on trailers. Installation of most of the displays is done by Parks crews of 20 people and 1 full-time paid staff person and the tree lights are installed by 14 paid seasonal artists. It takes over 2500 volunteers to run the event.

Georgetown Colorado installs 3,000 feet of lights, and the City's installation is supplemented by business owners who light store windows and volunteers who decorate evergreens and planter boxes.

Funding:

Austin Trail of Lights budgets \$350,000 with \$250,000 raised through sponsorships and parking fees (\$7 per car) and bus rides (\$2). New custom-designed displays (by local artists) are added when they get interested sponsors. The sponsorships on larger displays, including tunnels, generally cost \$15,000 to \$30,000 for 3 years. The largest sponsor was Dell for \$50,000.

Kansas City's Country Club Plaza costs \$280,000 per year and is funded through a marketing fund which all retail and restaurant tenants on the Plaza pay into every month.

Denver City and County Building purchases very little in the way of equipment and lighting because they have more on hand than they can install. They did purchase a few LED lights to test, and are planning to tap into the 9News Lights the Lights in-kind funding, typically \$5,000, to purchase LED lights. They haven't had to request this funding for some time. Their staff labor costs for 1840 hours at an average benefited rate of \$45/hr. are estimated at \$82,800.

Denver Botanic Gardens budgets \$60,000 (\$6,000-\$10,000 for equipment which includes rental of boom lifts, \$50,000 to hire a contractor). Figures do not include staff hours. These costs are offset by sponsorships of approx. \$15,000 per year and admission fees – 38,000 visitors \$8 adults/\$6 children (\$6/\$4 members).

Greeley spends \$10,000 per year all of which is raised through fundraising and in-kind donations, no operating funds are spent. Public works installs the lights over 2 weeks as part of staff hours.

Goals:

The goal for all of the lighting projects is to draw visitor attendance. Although some of the contacts did not have specific counts, all of them confirmed that retail and restaurants experience increased business during the times that the holiday lights are lit.

Kansas City tracks their initial lighting ceremony at 250,000 people plus the extensive national and local press coverage they receive. Denver estimates that 500,000 view their City and County building lights. Georgetown didn't have measurable results for the lights alone, but their Christmas Market held the first two weekends in December draws several thousand people and they do feel that it impacts downtown retail purchases. Denver Botanic Gardens gets about 38,000 visitors. Austin Trail of Lights draws more than 376,000 visitors.

Display Ideas:

As a result of the project and resource research and after seeing photos and videos of actual displays, following are ideas that could be considered to enhance Golden's light installation (see photo samples attached):

- (1) expanding the lighting of existing City landmarks and features that could include outlining buildings and detailed features along Washington Ave. with lights;
- (2) adding a canopy of lights over Washington running parallel with the Avenue;
- (3) adding over-the-street lighted arches that mimic the Welcome to Golden Arch along Washington Avenue (with or without embellishments such as snowflakes, etc.);
- (4) add animated lights to the reindeer and sleigh above the arch;
- (5) add enhanced "gateway" arches at the beginning and end of Washington Avenue;
- (6) use lights (gobos) to project images on the buildings, sidewalk or river, e.g. snowflakes, stars, etc.;
- (7) create a tunnel of lights between the visitor center and the park to create a gateway into downtown;
- (8) enhance the bridge lights with color changing LED lights that move through the light spectrum from red to green;
- (9) add light "curtain" banners to the light poles;
- (10) add a unique light element to the river or river walk sculptures; or
- (11) add synchronized music to animated lighting effects (Scott Helker of EDComm suggested this and suggested contacting CSM EPICS program to see if they would be interested in doing it as a project. This could be a possibility but note that standard stock controllers are available at various costs).

Overall, it might be a good idea to decide on a theme to ensure a uniform design concept.

Recommendations:

Because of the technical, structural and electrical requirements of lighting designs, it may be beneficial for the City to work with a professional lighting consultant/contractor, especially for any over-the-street and/or custom displays. Many of the project contacts said that working with a designer was cost effective in the long run unless services and technical knowledge was available in-house. Consultant fees vary based on whether the project uses existing or custom light designs and can range from \$2,000 to \$50,000 depending on whether they are simply making recommendations, designing, ordering and/or installing the lights and displays. Some projects worked with artists or architects to create the designs.

Project Planning, Design and Fabrication Considerations:

The process typically involves: (1) Step One – developing preliminary lighting ideas and options and, if necessary, hiring a lighting design consultant and/or other experts to determine which architectural features will be used, how the features will be lit, how the lights will be installed, how electric will be provided, and if any structures need to be built. (2) Step Two – narrowing the options for decorations and type of lights. (3) Step Three – preparing a master plan including final design, costs of purchasing lights and any custom fabrication, installation, operation (lighting schedule), and volunteer assistance. (4) Step Four – developing a funding plan including sponsorships (this step could begin earlier in the process depending on if sponsorships are offered for specific designs). And (5) Step Five – implementing the plan.

DETAILS, CONTACTS AND PHOTO LINKS:

Following are the cities that were contacted and highlights about the projects:

KANSAS CITY – COUNTRY CLUB PLAZA

- Contacts:** Gayle Terry, Highwoods Properties Inc., 816-960-6232. Joe Buffa, Capital Electric (Union Contractor), 816-719-5636 (willing to act as consultant to other projects).
- Schedule:** Thanksgiving evening through mid-January
- Scope:** The project is in its 77th year. The electrician in charge has been involved on this project for 13 years. The lights are installed on buildings throughout the plaza which features Spanish architecture. The installation includes approximately 100 miles of lights including 287,000 traditional incandescent lights of various sizes (no LED). All of the light strings are custom made; they buy wire and sockets and solder them in to customize lights for each building. The project is added to every year.
- Installation:** 4 to 6 people work for 9 months of the year with 2 people working 40 hours per week during the season to maintain the lights. Annual installation includes removing equipment from storage, fitting all of the upper strings with new bulbs to cut down on replacements throughout the season. The older good bulbs are installed into the lower strings which are more easily accessible. Actual installation takes 6 weeks and requires rappelling and the use of lifts. They created an elaborate coding system for storage and retrieval which includes bundling by zip code and the application of custom coded aluminum tags.
- Costs and Funding:** The overall project cost is approximately \$280,000. Lighting costs are funded through a marketing fund which all retail and restaurant tenants on the Plaza pay into every month.
- Photos:** A VHS/DVD is available from GURA with videography of the Plaza lights. Random photos can be seen on their website at www.countryclubplaza.com.
- Results:** The lighting ceremony attracts 250,000 people. They have received extensive national and local press coverage including CNN.

AUSTIN TRAIL OF LIGHTS 2005

Zilker Metropolitan Park, 2100 Barton Springs Road

- Contact:** Maria Ciccirelli 512-397-1472;
- Schedule:** December 11-23 7-10 PM
- Scope:** Begin in 1965 with the Yule Fest and has grown every year. Warren Struss, Director Parks & Recreation referred me to Maria. 376,634 visitors, in 1992, the mile-long festival was renamed the Trail of Lights, and has been a pedestrian event since 1998. 1 million lights, 2500 volunteers; Tech director is Bill Wise (he can provide more info on building of displays) – he's the 1 FTE on the project. 42 sponsored displays`
- Installation:** Parks crews install (20 people). They've had local sponsors build the displays (houses from Palm Harbor donated the buildings and then they paid artists to add facades. Artists/installations – luckily

they have warehouse space available for the artists to build. All the displays are mounted on trailers for easy set/up and dismantling. They have 1 FTE and hire 14 seasonal artists to do installation in trees. They used LED in trees this year. They have an annual 5K run that opens the event and goes through the tunnel of lights. Company Blue Genie contracted to do building - built Santa House. They are local 512-444-6655; they use GKI lights. Some architects have donated design and building (luminaries – life-size). Parks crews are not budgeted, they do installation/take-down as part of their salary. They have several tunnels/canopies of lights – Peppermint Hot Chocolate Tunnel (5000 lights) Rainbow Tunnel (22,000 lights), Shooting star exit gate

Cost: They budget \$350,000 and with \$250,000 raised through sponsorships they go into the hole approx. \$100,000 every year. These costs include renting scaffolding, stages, fences, porta-johns. They charge for parking \$7 and the bus ride \$2. New exhibits are introduced when they get funding; generally the new exhibits are \$30,000. An artist does sketches and designs, then they find a sponsor to pay for it, and the artists build it. Sponsorships of the larger displays are \$30,000 for 3 years. The large displays run \$15,000 to \$30,000 and they get that from sponsors; their largest sponsor was Dell for \$50,000.

Photos: Great photos at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/tol/displays.htm> (you may have to right click and then click on “open image in another window”). See a virtual tour at <http://www.virtually-anywhere.com/holidaylights/midfr.html> (from the drop down menu select Zilker Trail of Lights, then select the individual displays, especially the tunnels).

DENVER CITY AND COUNTY BUILDING

1437 Bannock Street

Contact: Stephen Sholler, Facilities Superintendent for the City and County Building, 720-865-7527; stephen.sholler@ci.denver.co.us

Schedule: Friday after Thanksgiving through January 2 then re-lit for the Stock Show from January 7-22.

Scope: Considered one of the largest such outdoor displays in the nation. The event dates back to 1935 when floodlights lighted the City and County Building for the first time. There are more than 20,000 lights and 5 miles of electrical wire (floodlights, traditional Christmas bulbs, rope lights and displays).

Installation: It takes a crew of 4 city electricians 2 months to install the lights beginning in early October and working full-time (about 1200 hrs.) plus one month to remove them (640 hrs.).

Photos: A virtual photo tour is available at <http://www.denvergov.org/panoramas/ccbweb.asp>

Cost: Labor which is provided by staff employees is estimated to be 1840 hrs. at an average benefited rate of \$45/hr. for a total of \$82,800. The value of their inventory is unknown since it had been purchased over time. They generally do not have to purchase new equipment and supplies because they have more on hand than they typically

use. This year they did purchase a few LED lights to test. Next year they are planning to tap into the 9News Lights the Lights in-kind funding (typically up to \$5,000) to purchase LED lights.
Results: An estimated 500,000 view the lights each season.

DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS – BLOSSOMS OF LIGHT

Contact: Kellyn Smith, event coordinator, 720-865-3500
Schedule: December 3 through January 22.
Scope: One million-plus colored and white lights adorn the hardscapes, plants and trees of the Garden's 23 acres, creating a natural spectacle. Lights include mini lights, bulbs and, starting next year, will include LED lights.
Installation: Volunteers handle installation on bushes and some of the rails, platforms and arches; no free-standing displays are used. They begin installation on November 1 and work every day, 12-14 hours per day for 7 days – includes 3 guys 4 days 8 hours plus 100 staff and volunteers.
Costs: Budget for equipment is \$6,000 to \$10,000 which includes rental of 2 boom lifts for installation and take-down. Another \$50,000 is spent to hire a contractor, A Cut Above, who plans, designs and installs lights on the larger trees. They purchase all new lights for these large trees so they do not to be replaced during the season. Older lights are used on the smaller accessible areas. They get about \$15,000 from sponsorships and also charge admission: \$8 adults/\$6 children and \$6/\$4 for members – that's roughly \$38,000 x avg. of 5 = \$190,000 less \$60,000 spent (not including staff hours) \$130,000 income.
Results: They have about 38,000 visitors. Novelty Lights 303-671-0533 supplies their lights and works them as much as possible to give them as many lights as possible with costs within the budget.

GEORGETOWN, COLORADO

Contact: Chuck Stearns, Town Administrator, 303-569-2555, ext. 3; email gtownadmin@earthlink.net
Schedule: Thanksgiving through the end of Stock Show in January.
Scope: Downtown is lit with 3,000 feet of lights. They use 120 strings of 25 - C9 lights, not mini lights, with bulbs spaced 12"; approximately 250 bulbs. The City installation is supplemented by business owners who light store windows and other volunteers who decorate some of the evergreens and planter boxes.
Cost: They budget \$1,500-2,000 annually plus \$2,500 for staff hours (100 hours at avg. \$25/hr with benefits). The project is in the Parks and Recreation budget. They reuse the lights each year and purchase replacement bulbs as needed; the budget covers new bulbs, wire repairs, and renting of the boom truck for installation. They spend two full days replacing bulbs and fixing wire and 50 hours for installation and about 30 for removal.
Results: Measurable results are not available for the lights alone, but their Christmas Market which is held the first two weekends in December

draws several thousand people to town for the celebrations, events and purchases. They feature the holiday lighting in many of the marketing pieces for the Christmas Market (see sample postcard). Many merchants say they make enough money during Christmas Market to get them through an otherwise slow winter retail season. For 2006, they are looking into LED lights due to the cost of replacing broken bulbs and for the energy savings.

GREELEY LIGHTS THE NIGHT

Contact: 970-356-6775

Scope: Events began 19 years ago. All of the holiday events were pulled together under the umbrella of Greeley Lights the Night. Previously it was not a coordinated effort activities were held here and there. The events include Festival Trees, Memory tree to benefit the Hospice, judging of decorated trees, Union Colony decorations/events, Santa, Parade of Lights sponsored by the Jaycees and a bus tour of the lights. Mark Olson took over for Bev Abell who started Lights the Night decorating of Lincoln Park; includes trees, bushes, snowflakes in trees, 33% of the trees are decorated. . They put together fund raising otherwise it would not be possible. Takes about 2 weeks to install – Public Works coordinates. They advertise through in-kind radio spots and Greeley Tribune. Their intent was to use the event to attract business, but they get caught up in coordinating the events and it's tough to remain efficient with time. They hope to add to and upgrade the lighting/decorations each year

Cost: They spend \$10,000 all of which is raised through fundraising and in-kind donations, no operating funds are spent; Public works does the installation.

ARKANSAS TRAIL OF LIGHTS

Contact: There are 100s of areas. This information relates to Ouachitas Region – Hot Springs, Arkansas: Jean Wallace 501-321-6870; Public Info contact is Terry Pane 501-321-6805.

Schedule: November 22 through January 1

Scope: Historic Spa City lights up storefronts, trees, lamp posts – but the overall effect is achieved by several independent efforts – Parks Dept does the city installations, large trees formed from a central pole with strings of lights were donated by Jennings Osborne*, the National Park, Arlington Hotel, the State Rehabilitation Center, then they added a skating rink and that has been an incredible draw. To boost attendance, they hold gallery walks. The Galleries decorate their gallery fronts independently. Their population is 36,000 but they have a horse racing track in the area that draws 70,000.

DENVER ZOO

Contact:

Patrick Phelan; pphelan@denverzoo.org

Scope:

ColorWave lights were installed on their entrance and tunnels that created a unique look (Mayor Baroch commented on these lights to Gary Wink). These LED lights fade gradually between colors, Green/Red, using a microcontroller. They build custom tunnels made from a series of arches that they build themselves. They purchased a \$7,000 aluminum pipe bender to make arches that come apart like tent poles – lighter and cheaper in the long run than building steel ones. The arches are 20 ft. wide x 15 ft. tall and 10-15 arches form the tunnel at a cost of \$10,000 using 12 strings of commercial LED lights per arch.

Their entry way was installed with ColorWave LED lights at a cost of \$14/set of 35 lights on a 12.5 ft. long wire.

RESOURCES

ANIMATED ARCHES

Product:

Plug and play product packages illuminated with LED light strings. The company can fabricate anything you want and they have stock displays as well. Standard displays include: Snowflake Arch including Christmas Kit with Music Synchronization \$4,995.00 plus \$499 shipping; FM Transmitter \$249.95. Reindeer Arch including Christmas Kit \$3,995.00 plus shipping
Arch Expansion Controller \$499

Photos:

See samples at

<http://www.animatedlighting.com/showcase/commercialshows.asp>

<http://www.animatedlighting.com/showcase/commercialshows.asp#>

DIOGEN LIGHTING

Product:

LED lights – manufacturer in Littleton.

Contact:

The sales representative is Lorenza Maksimow of Clear Creations, 1155 Odyssey Court, Lafayette, CO 80026; 303-665-5914 (office); 720-352-4838 (cell); 303-496-7090 (fax). She sells Diogen's retail and commercial LED and ColorWave lights and does design and installation. A recent project included Flat Irons mall, indoor and outdoor trees, and the ZIP bus bridges. GURA purchased 24 sets (8 ft. length) of commercial LED lights for 922 Washington at a cost of \$200.

BLACHERE ILLUMINATION

Product:

LED products (top of the line); includes across-the-street displays, light ceilings, banner wave lights. They offer standard and custom work (50% of business). Discounts are available up to 25% for orders by end of May to 0 discounts by August 15. Prices range from \$400 for a 6 strand 100 ft. light ceiling (usually used with several of same over streets) to \$8,000+ for lacross the street light displays. Their LEDs are the least blue of all available (more expensive). A warm white will be available for a limited number of new products coming soon. Lead time is 3-4 weeks.

Mfg. Contact:

James Espy; james@trogolo.com; 618-724-9900 ext. 10; office Christopher, Illinois. They do design consulting – at cost for travel and hotel (est. \$500) plus flat fee of \$750 for approx. 2-hours. Can drop designs into supplied photos.

Photos:

See samples at <http://www.blachere-usa.com>

Sales Contact:

George Livermore of **Dekra-Lite** is the western regional sales contact for Blachere. georgeel@dekra-lite.com, 714-436-0705, 3102 W. Alton Ave., Santa Ana, CA 92704. They sell product and offer design services.

Photos:

PDFs are available of some of their installations including gobos of snowflakes projected on building. <http://www.dekra-lite.com>

OTHER SOURCES RECOMMENDED BY BOTANIC GARDENS

Contractor: A Cut Above, 303-853-8550, 752 Bellaire St. Denver, CO 80220.
Did installation on large trees at botanic gardens. Photos at:
<http://www.acalandscape.com/pages/7/index.htm>

Light Supplier: Novelty Lights 303-671-0533