



## **Pikes Peak Summit Complex – Preferred Design Concept**

### **Background**

*Finding the perfect balance between a dynamic building that presents a clear destination to visitors and a minimalist structure deferential to the Peak and its majestic views was critical to the design of the new Pikes Peak Summit House.*

After presenting four options for the new Summit House Complex in October, public input resulted in a plethora of comments and suggestions. A commonality among them was evident. There was a distinct desire for something modern and unique for Pikes Peak, but also an appeal for the building to be as unobtrusive as possible. Merging the two, the direction for the building became clear.

One of the many things that makes Pikes Peak so special is that it is America's Mountain—the only fourteener that everyone, no matter age or fitness level, can experience. As such, the design offers visitors the same pristine and untouched experience as those ascending other fourteeners while providing modern amenities and expanded interpretive opportunities, ultimately leaving visitors in awe and overwhelmingly satisfied with their experience.

**Preferred Design - What was it Based Upon?** The intent of the four original concepts was to illustrate unique and different ways to meet the same overall goals related to the functional spaces, sizes, adjacency requirements, and analysis of the site. The drawing and images generated showed, conceptually, how the interior spaces and exterior elements could be arranged and various building locations and shapes, but did not show exterior or interior materials. The City of Colorado Spring, after careful review (including input from the other major stakeholders, verbal and written comments received at the public open house, and comments made on-line) selected Option 1, essentially a mostly one-level building nested into the southeast rim of the summit, with a raised, upper level entry from the parking area and a main level entry from the cog railroad platform. They have proposed this option to the U.S. Forest Service for approval. This option is highly climate responsive and minimizes the facility's visual impact, allowing the mountain itself to be the primary visual feature.

## **Pikes Peak Preferred Design Description**

Predominately a one-story form seemingly carved from the southeast side of the Peak, the new Summit House offers unobstructed views to the east. Reminiscent of the crags and rock formations found above the tree line, the design uses shade, shadows and fragmentation to coalesce into the Peak. Clad in material similar to Pikes Peak granite, the modern hue seamlessly blends into the mountainside. Viewed from below, it is one with the mountain, yet as one arrives at the Peak, the modest entry pavilion is a clear destination.

Upon approach to the summit, visitors take in the expansive and pristine views, just as Zebulon Pike saw and Edwin James, the first man to reach the summit, experienced over 200 years ago. The only indication that man has touched this peak is the glass-enclosed pavilion capped with weathering steel emerging from grade. Sited to frame the view of Mt. Rosa, the location from where Pike viewed the Peak in 1806, the pavilion's lobby provides a sheltered area to view the surrounding landscape, while affording access to the main level of the Summit House below. Accentuating the relationship between the two landforms, the 4-degree angle from Pikes Peak to Mt. Rosa is reflected in the downward tip of the lobby walls. That same angle is mirrored in the upward slope of the roof acknowledging the expansive views to the east. To the left and right, rooftop terraces become an extension of the summit, blending with the tundra and bringing visitors closer to the edge to experience 180 degrees of the same unobstructed and undisturbed views that James saw and Katharine Lee Bates beheld as she penned the lyrics to *America the Beautiful*. An extended platform to the north provides optimal views of the ruins of the original 1873 Summit House and embraces the relationship with the cog.

## **Building Interior**

Like the exterior views, the inside representations of the four original concepts were highly conceptual and illustrative of functional relationships, special volume, and potential views to the outside. The design team has only now begun thinking about finish materials. The materials and colors ultimately selected will be ones that are highly durable and reflective of both the location on the summit and importance of the building. The intent is that they serve as a backdrop to the interpretive displays and the views to the outside.

Inside, visitors are taken aback by the boundless sky and perfectly framed views of Mt. Rosa. Stairs to the main level appear to fold down out of the mountain as visitors descend to the main floor to access exhibits, dining, a gift shop and restrooms. Warm, rustic colors fortified by the ceiling's beetle kill pine uniquely tie the interior to the region. Those arriving via cog are given the choice to explore the Peak, interpret the ruins, or enter the Summit House via the main level. Providing access to these multiple destinations naturally disperses the crowds, resulting in a more enjoyable individual experience.

## Building Exterior

Like the interior finishes, the exterior materials will primarily be selected for durability and contextual appropriateness. It is critical that this building does not become a maintenance burden for Pikes Peak - America's Mountain. One of the advantages to the selected option is that much of the building abuts the earth itself, with less exterior façade than a completely above-ground building, limiting the amount of exterior enclosure. The selected orientation also limits the amount of glass exposed to the grit that blows across the summit, as well as providing for maximum solar gain. Rock excavated from the building site will be used to help define the vehicular and pedestrian circulation around the summit. The parking will be designed to minimize the impact of cars on the summit, and accessible pedestrian paths will ring the summit and reach overlooks with great views in all directions, including the dramatic north face. The paths will also connect to, and celebrate, the Barr and Crags trails. Durable exterior interpretive displays about history and geography will both celebrate and educate.

## Building Site /Landscaping

Captivating, but also functional, the building is sited to take advantage of the unique environmental conditions present on the top of Pikes Peak. Nestled into the mountain, exposure to the harsh winds is minimized, while the mass of the building provides sheltered outdoor areas from which to enjoy the views. The orientation of the building to the south takes full advantage of the enhanced solar gain at altitude, including daylight harvesting and the incorporation of photovoltaics to generate electricity. In addition, the thermal mass of the building's stone cladding helps capture and radiate heat generated by the sun to the interior of the building. Other sustainable features include composting toilets and low flow fixtures to conserve water. Areas of intact tundra will be preserved, and a long-term plan developed to restore additional alpine plantings.

