The landscape renovation re-conceives the previously disparate building plaza, parking lots, streetscape, planting areas and historic elements into a cohesive and accessible park-like landscape derived from the site's historic and cultural fabric. The diagonal arrangement of landscape features is derived from the chevron patterning within traditional Pueblo textile construction.

This landscape renovation project transformed a forlorn public plaza into a showpiece of sustainable urban design. Its creative re-use of materials, comprehensive water management program, and use of solar power earned Two Stars in 2013 from the Sustainable Sites Initiative.

The existing site used 3.5 million gallons of water annually to feed extensive lawns and exported tens of thousands of gallons of untreated stormwater runoff monthly into the city storm drain. By replacing lawn with native plantings and capturing and reusing roof water in a 16,000 gallon underground cistern, the project has cut the site's water use by 86 percent.

Fundamental to transforming the site was the careful demolition and repurposing of 21,000 sf of existing concrete into approximately 2,000 linear feet of recycled concrete walls. The walls provide seating, mitigate grade changes, and passively harvest and collect stormwater.

The site strategy implemented a series of terraced gardens to help collect, slow, and filter stormwater. The new planting design replaced lawn with native plants selected and located together by water-needs into sloped and terraced rain gardens reflecting the surrounding Rio Grande Floodplain Bosque ecology and providing a refuge for urban wildlife.
Selective demolition and concrete harvesting of the existing plaza.

Gone are the water-intensive lawns and leaky fountain. In their place are terraced gardens comprised of over 79% native plants uniquely suited to the hydrology of New Mexico’s Rio Grande Basin.

Recycled concrete block walls provide shaded, informal seating areas.

Demolishing excessively wide concrete sidewalks generated 10,000 8”×16” blocks for wall construction. The approach increased the site’s permeability while reducing contributions to landfills. The selective sidewalk demolition also enabled the construction of seating areas and shaded walkways that encourage people to interact with the site.

To encourage interaction with the plaza, the design team created a “Sustainability Walk Brochure,” with a fold-out map depicting the site’s history and key features like water conservation, solar energy, materials re-use, and habitat restoration.