

## **Downtown Summerlin** Summerlin, Nevada

**Purpose of Project:** What happens in Vegas doesn't necessarily always stay there- Las Vegas residents looking to escape its neon jungle for a more natural encounter have the option of trekking westward, to the outlying village of Summerlin.

At the heart of this village, Downtown Summerlin was meant to reflect the village's core value: nature. However, the inherent character of a 109-acre, high-density mixed-use project was in conflict with the community's ability to connect to nature.

The challenge was to remedy this conflict while providing a cost-effective, mixed-use environment that still appeals to traditional ground-floor retailers. Nature seemed to hold the solution; but unlike the rest of the city, which thrives on artifice, trying to recreate it would be insulting to its complexities. So instead of mimicry, the design seeks to abstract the sculptural qualities of the desert landscape to create a highly stylized landscape that evokes, at a subliminal level, the surrounding nature—all while trying to avoid mundane desert clichés. The design draws upon the desert as a visual source for form, material, color, and texture. It distills the adjacent Red Rock Canyon into its simplest attributes – desert floor, canyon wall, and open sky—to create a landscape framework for the project's horizontal, vertical, and overhead surface.

**Role of Landscape Architect:** Working with the core team of developers and architects, the team sought to elevate the inherited infrastructure of the previously failed development into a project *of* the place and *for* its residents. Starting with the urban design and building massing through the landscape design, creating the sculptural elements, and overseeing their fabrication, every aspect of the project was designed to reflect the project's natural surroundings while remaining autonomous from them.

**Significance:** This LEED Gold project sought to elevate the traditional mixed use public realm into something greater by blending art and nature to provide an aesthetic wow factor, but also, a deeper more meaningful landscape full of thought provoking details and abstractions.

**Special Factors:** Las Vegas has its share of eye catching objects. Those living there have a pretty high threshold for it. One of the project's challenges was not succumbing to the Vegas Strip clichés, and our solution was art. By blending art with traditional landscape architecture and taking cues from the natural landscape, functional objects, such as, benches, fire features, and fences were elevated to functional sculpture. These sculptures are meant to capture the high-low concept in art, where an object is both aesthetically appealing and eye catching, but also, conveys meaning and message.