Trinidad

Trinidad, Colorado, located midway between Denver and Santa Fe, is looking to leverage its brick-built past to create a present day cultural destination. The small Colorado city of approximately 9,100 people is home to block after block of ornate brick buildings heavily influenced by the Italian roots of earlier settlers. The level of attention to detail and craftsmanship of the buildings adds unique value to the community. Many of the buildings are still standing after almost 100 years with very little maintenance, a testament to the durability of the brick construction. The history of brick in Trinidad is not limited to building facades; it also boasts 6.5 miles of brick streets.

During the early 1900’s, Trinidad began manufacturing its own bricks made of local clay to pave previously dirt city streets. Though several variations of the bricks exist, most are imprinted with the word “Trinidad” helping to create an experience that reinforces pride in the community. In the 1960’s local officials decided to overlay the brick pavers with asphalt. In an effort to honor their history and add vitality to their historic district, the Corazon de Trinidad National Historic District, the city has lead the preservation of their brick streets. In order to restore the brick to their original charm, the asphalt and bricks are removed and underground utilities are upgraded. After each brick is cleaned, it is replaced in its original pattern which serves both functional and decorative purposes. Even after years of being covered in asphalt and withstanding over 100 years of traffic, the clay brick pavers still retain their warm, vibrant color. Beyond the aesthetic value, the modular paving serves a natural traffic calming function keeping the downtown pedestrian friendly.

Throughout the process, the City has experimented with alternative types of pavers and pavement treatments where there was a shortage of historic clay bricks including colored concrete, stamped concrete and concrete pavers. However, no product has come close to matching the performance of the genuine clay pavers. In fact, the alternative products aren’t performing at the level of the clay pavers. The City is already starting to see deterioration after less than 10 years, whereas the clay pavers are over 100 years old.

Ornate brick detailing adorns most buildings in downtown Trinidad showcasing the pride in Italianate architecture.