

## Pikes Peak Summit Complex, Design Description

*Find 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.*

### Design Description

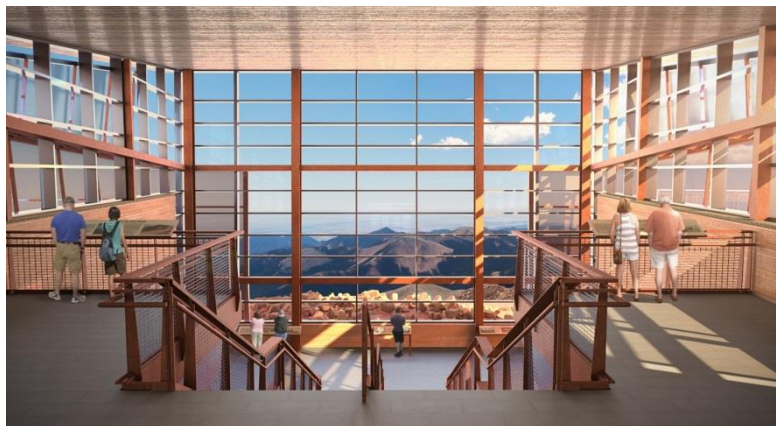
One of the many things that make Pikes Peak so special is that it is America's Mountain—the only “fourteener” (mountain over 14,000 feet in elevation) that everyone, regardless of age or fitness level, can experience. As such, the design offers visitors a similar dramatic experience as that of other fourteeners while providing modern amenities, improved accessibility, and extensive interpretive opportunities.

Approaching the summit, visitors take in the expansive views just as scientist Edwin James, poet Katherine Lee Bates, and Native Americans first experienced. A predominately one-story form seemingly carved from the southeast side of the peak, the new Summit Complex offers unobstructed views from the east to the southwest. Reminiscent of the crags and rock formations found above tree line, the design uses materials harmonious with Pikes Peak granite, shade, shadows, and fragmentation to integrate into the peak. Yet as one arrives at the peak, the modest glass-enclosed entry pavilion capped with weathering steel emerges as a clear destination.

Sited to frame the view of Mt. Rosa, the location from where Zebulon Pike viewed the peak in 1806, the pavilion's grand space provides a sheltered area to view the surrounding landscape while affording access to the main level below.

Accentuating the relationship between the two landforms, the 3.5-degree angle from Pikes Peak to the perfectly-framed view of Mt. Rosa is reflected in the downward tilt of the lobby walls. That same angle is mirrored in the upward slope of the roof

encompassing the expansive views to the southeast with the Arkansas River, which Pike followed, westward on the distant horizon. To the left and right, rooftop terraces become an extension of the Summit, blending with the tundra and bringing visitors closer to experiencing 180 degrees of the same unobstructed and undisturbed views that Pike and James saw and that inspired Bates to pen the lyrics to *America the Beautiful*. An extended platform to the north provides optimal views of the ruins of the original 1873 Summit House.



Inside, stairs to the main level appear to fold down out of the mountain as visitors descend to the main floor to access exhibits, dining, the gift shop, and restrooms. Warm rustic colors and stone walls, contrasting with the ceiling's beetle kill pine, uniquely tie the interior to the region.

Outdoors, the goal of the landscape plan is to enhance the visitor experience by accommodating moments of reflection and interpretation and optimizing the 360-degree views. Upon arrival, visitors are given the choice to explore the perimeter of the peak or visit the Summit Complex. Providing access to these multiple destinations naturally disperses the crowds from the parking area, resulting in a more enjoyable visitor experience. The perimeter and interior interpretive loop provide elevated accessible walkways protect the fragile alpine tundra, while the variety of clearly defined paths provide opportunities for individual exploration. Restoration areas will be nurtured in key locations around the Summit, interior elevated walkways, and roof terrace. Boulder placement throughout the site is arranged to create a variety of habitats and living conditions necessary for high alpine plant communities to establish and thrive. Not only will these habitats support ecological restoration throughout the site, but they will also educate visitors to the unique alpine tundra ecosystem present at 14,000 foot Colorado mountain peaks. Interpretive exhibits will identify key elements of the panoramic views and provide an overview of the site's natural and cultural resources.



Captivating, but also functional, the building is sited to withstand the extreme 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 southeast takes full advantage of the enhanced solar thermal gain at altitude as well as daylight harvesting. In addition, the thermal mass of the building's stone cladding and deep concrete floor captures and radiates heat generated by the sun to the interior of the building. Other sustainable features include:

	<p><b>Energy</b>        Numerous computer simulations have been performed to optimize the design and achieve "net-positive energy." This means the building will generate more energy annually than it consumes. This will improve the facility operational costs and reduces the ecological impact of the building.</p>
	<p><b>Resilience</b>        Many of the same features and materials that make the building energy efficient will also help the building better endure the extreme climates on the summit. Resilient materials will ensure that the building holds up to extreme winds, temperatures, and freeze thaw cycles for many years to come.</p>
	<p><b>Site Water</b>        The mountain forms an apex, with precipitation runoff contributing to four watersheds. The site is being designed in harmony with the natural hydrological flows of the peak.</p>

<p><b>Materials</b>        Over 600,000 visitors reach the summit each year, and many struggle with the effects of the altitude. Eliminating red list materials improves indoor air quality by eliminating products containing chemicals known to harm human health. With 40% less oxygen on the summit than at sea level, improved air quality benefits the health and well-being of both visitors and employees.</p>	
<p><b>Site Ecology</b>        A fundamental aspect of the project includes restoration of the alpine tundra in areas where decades of human impact has taken its toll. Site exhibits and better wayfinding will help educate visitors about the unique environment and keep them along appropriate paths while visiting the peak.</p>	
<p><b>Water and Wastewater</b>        The current summit house requires 300+ trips to and from the summit annually. Water conservation greatly reduces traffic, emissions, and saves operational costs.</p>	

About GWWO, Design Architect: GWWO, Inc./Architects is a full service architectural firm that specializes in the planning and design of cultural and educational facilities, with an emphasis on responsible design that is inspirational, evocative and progressive. Firm projects include the Exploration Tower at Port Canaveral in Cape Canaveral, FL; The Donald W. Reynolds Museum & Education Center and Ford Orientation Center at George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate & Gardens in Mount Vernon, VA; the Fort McHenry Visitor Center in Baltimore, MD; the Cade Museum for Creativity + Invention in Gainesville, FL; and the Homestead National Monument of American Heritage Center in Beatrice, NE. GWWO's website is located at [www.gwwoinc.com](http://www.gwwoinc.com).

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About RTA Architects, Architect of Record: RTA Architects has created award winning architectural and interior designs for the Colorado built environment since 1975. RTA specializes in community, education, healthcare, retail, and commercial properties, delivering beautiful buildings that serve the unique needs of their owners and occupants. In addition to our core strength of architecture and design for new construction, renovation, and adaptive re-use projects, RTA provides technical expertise in a broad range of related services including: feasibility studies; site selection and comparative analysis; master planning; site planning; facility programming; interior design; and environmental graphics, signage and way-finding. RTA's website is located at [www.rtaarchitects.com](http://www.rtaarchitects.com).

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About DHM Design, Landscape Architect: DHM Design brings a wealth of experience to successfully complete sustainable designs for visitor facilities within our parks, open spaces and interpretive spaces throughout the country. Their philosophy balances a project's built entities or features with its natural and cultural setting in the belief that Landscape Architecture can establish a connection between the natural resources and emphasize a respect for historical relationships to the context and character of each individual site. From National Parks and Forest Service land to open space and urban parks, we understand how to develop and sustain the visitor experience throughout park planning and development. DHM's website is located at [www.dhmdesign.com](http://www.dhmdesign.com).

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