

Greek Orthodox Church Plaza

Photos by John O'Hagan



Amid the rosy dusk view, the brightly lit, low limestone wall that defines the redone plaza fronting 19th Street near UAB can be easily seen. A row of columnar evergreen trees will eventually soften the bulk of the activities building.

By Philip Morris



A need to improve accessibility has been turned into a fine new entrance plaza for the Holy Trinity Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church in Birmingham's city center. Designed by Giattina Aycock Architecture Studio of Birmingham, the 9,000-square-foot, \$435,000 project removed the existing limestone steps from the doorway and rebuilt them closer to the street. A new low limestone wall extending the width of the church accommodates the new handicap ramp and also creates a visual base for the building.

Beyond a line of trees in planting beds delineating the inner plaza, a broader set of steps serves to mediate the level plaza with its sloping street frontage. Materials are understated and durable with brushed stainless steel railings sensuously curved at key points. The low wall is washed with a continuous strip of light from below with other inset units illuminating steps. A row of columnar evergreen trees planted on the side of the plaza next to the activities building will eventually soften its bulk. Golden & Associates General Contractors and Masonry Arts were key builders.

The church is engaged in community life, notably with its wildly popular food festival each spring. This redesigned plaza gives fresh physical expression to that engagement.



The church front before and a close view of the redone entrance shows how the steps were brought forward to make way for an access ramp behind.



This view across the plaza shows the new main steps, the low wall that creates a new base for the building and the ramp leading off to the left.



The outer plaza has a broad asymmetrical set of steps that resolve the grade change to the sloping city sidewalk.