

January 10, 2017

They don't build 'em like they used to



The bridge that took 6th Street in Ames, IA across Squaw Creek was really quite lovely in an old-timey kind of way. Not too imposing, delicate iron handrails, trees from the adjacent park arcing overhead...

But good looks was pretty much all it had going for it. Dating from the middle of the last century, its structural design was outdated. It was narrow and dangerous for pedestrians and bikes. But mostly, it was well past its 'best-before' date and was showing severe signs of deterioration.



As a major connector between downtown Ames and the Iowa State University campus, the bridge is an important city facility. To ensure that a replacement would serve everyone, WHKS designers sought input from as many stakeholders as possible. The city, the university, local neighborhood groups, and the bicycle coalition were asked for their input.

Ames wanted a true multi-modal design that would accommodate cars, buses, cyclists, walkers, joggers and stroller-pushing parents. Because it's located adjacent to Brookside Park, everyone wanted to incorporate some of the aesthetics of its facilities, particularly the warm limestone finishes that are such a landmark in this area, into the bridge design.



With involvement from City staff, City Council, the Iowa DOT, the US Army Corps of Engineers, Iowa State University and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the bridge could have been a case of too many cooks in the kitchen. But the result has incorporated every request and was completed on-time and within budget.

With concrete that is surfaced to resemble the local limestone, ornamental handrails that recall those of the original bridge, energy-efficient and aesthetically-pleasing lighting and separated road, bike and walkways that safely accommodate everyone, the new bridge is a model of success.

No, they don't build 'em like they used to. They make them much, much better now.

