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A BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE BOULDER'S TWENTY NINTH STREET DEVELOPMENT

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Twenty Ninth Street, Boulder's new retail district, is the shopping center that will replace the old Crossroads Mall. This much-anticipated shopping destination gets its name from the fact that Twenty Ninth Street runs down the center of the project, with one- and two-story retail and office buildings on each side of the street.

What makes this center unique is that the street and the buildings are constructed on a 900-ft by 600-ft precast concrete parking structure that becomes a long, winding bridge across the site supporting street traffic, including cars, buses, bicycles, pedestrians and fire trucks.

The parking structure, designed by Monroe & Newell Engineers Inc., will also support 5 one- and two-story steel frame buildings. The design by Communication Arts and SEM Architects includes full-window openings for the retail that will require rigid steel frames in both directions. The steel columns are supported by the precast concrete columns in the parking level.

"The shopping experience is dependent on many elements, not the least of which is architectural and spatial variety," said Bruce McLennan, principal of SEM Architects. "This puts a lot of demands on the structural deck. The word 'typical' doesn't show up much."

The Weitz Co. LLC is the general contractor on the project. Bill Hornaday, president of Weitz, said, "Weitz is very excited about this project. The plaza deck over the garage will become a city streetscape. The structural loadings imposed by the fire trucks and trees make the construction unique. Additionally, we have a number of transfer beams, necessitated by the retail use above, making the precast structural deck a challenge. This will be a fun structure to build as well as a wonderful addition for the residents of Boulder."

The plaza and streetscape constructed between the retail buildings will make the area appear as if it is built on the ground. The street and walking surfaces built using masonry pavers will wind across the site through the planters and open spaces. Some of the planters are 10 ft square and 5 ft deep to allow for large trees, providing shade and visual variety for the shoppers.

The retail district also includes numerous other buildings constructed on grade that will provide a total of 820,000 sq ft of retail and office space and serve as a catalyst to revitalize shopping in Boulder.

