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K-M Concessions plays a key role in Denver Zoo’s award-winning experience for guests

The **Denver Zoo** recently won the prestigious Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) “Exhibit of the Year Award” for its Predator Ridge exhibit and entrance complex. One judge on the AZA Honors & Awards Committee commented that the entry sequence is one of the best that he has seen.



The eight-acre project creates an African safari experience for guests. Twenty-two stainless steel animal sculptures decorate the path to the 11,000 square-foot entry plaza.



The plaza features the Janus Gateway Center, a 15,000 square-foot building containing the 5,000 square-foot **Kibongi Market gift shop**, executive offices and public restrooms. After passing through the entry gates, guests encounter Predator Ridge, which offers a series of animal habitats housing 15 African species. Three of the habitats allow staff to rotate lions, hyenas and wild dogs on and off exhibit. The project was completed in June of 2004 after



three years of planning, 18 months of construction, and \$27 million.

Craig Piper, then Vice President of Planning, and now Chief Operating Officer for the zoo, said the design team tried to create a sense of adventure by creating a transparent, seamless entry sequence that starts at the street. Piper added that **K-M Concessions** staff were critical members of the design team. Like the entrance, the goal was to make the gift shop transparent and inviting to zoo guests.



“Also, the land available for the building’s footprint would not accommodate the full shop on one floor, which would have been preferred by the entire team. As a result, the Denver Zoo and K-M Concessions team had to develop creative ways to make it easy and inviting for guests to explore a shop with a main floor and an open second floor mezzanine,” he said.

K-M Concessions Regional Vice President **Kevin Jones** said the gift shop design represents a new trend where customers don’t have to

enter the zoo to shop. This flexibility has also increased sales at the holidays. “We also needed to develop an appropriately sized and themed retail shop,” he added. The shop also includes a coffee counter, specializing in hand-crafted fudge, coffee drinks, and gourmet snack foods.

The planning and execution efforts have been successful, as during the first two years, gift shop revenue increased over 62%

“We are honored to receive this award. Predator Ridge provides up-close views of animals found at the Samburu National Reserve in Kenya,” said Denver Zoological Foundation President and CEO **Clayton Freiheit**.



Kevin McNicholas, President of K-M Concessions and Service Systems Associates, with Clayton Freiheit at the grand opening of Predator Ridge

In 2005, the Denver Zoo was the most visited area cultural attraction in the city and county with more than 1.7 million visitors.

Headquartered in Denver, K-M Concessions, and its sister company **Service Systems Associates** provides visitor service operations and master-planning support for zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens, and museums, serving over 17 million visitors annually. The company provides a variety of managed services at numerous entities, such as the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Denver Zoo, Colorado History Museum, San Francisco Zoo, L.A. Zoo, Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium, and the Miami MetroZoo.