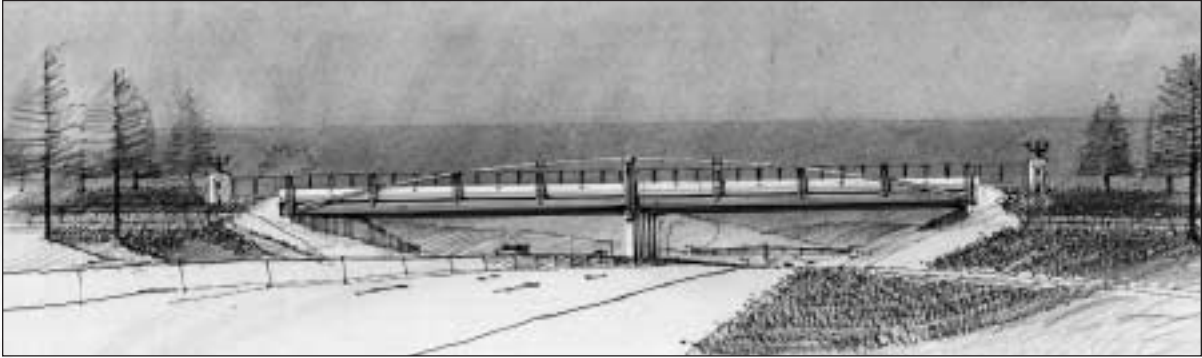


## BURNSVILLE I-35W GATEWAY BRIDGES

DAHLGREN, SHARDLOW AND UBAN, INC.



### Project Background

Interstate 35W crosses into Burnsville, MN, over the Minnesota River and, for tens of thousands of motorists per day, serves as the primary gateway to the City. Based on a previous framework plan (produced by Dahlgren, Shardlow and Uban, Inc. (DSU)), the City of Burnsville commissioned DSU to prepare detailed designs for the first phase of improvements: the redesign of the Burnsville Parkway and Highway 13 Bridges, along with associated landscaping.

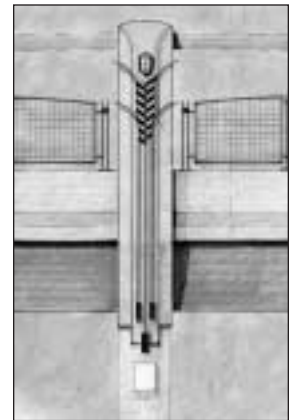
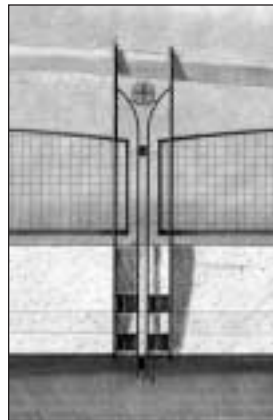
### Design Concept

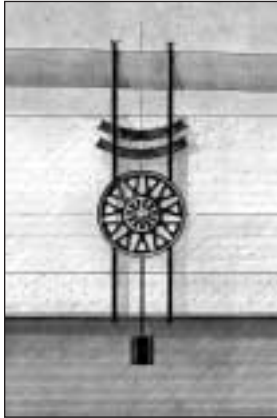
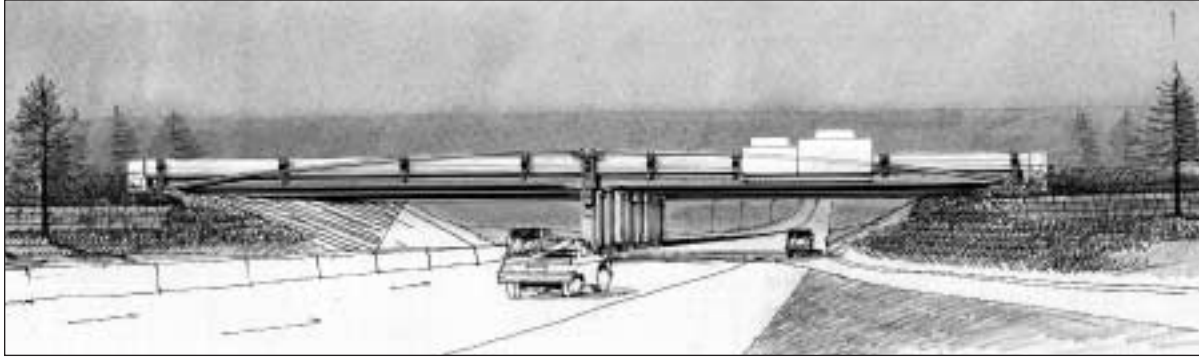
The landscape plan and bridge designs build on the natural plant communities and landforms found in the adjacent river valley. Bold earthforms and drifts of trees and shrubs along the highway reinforce existing forest stands and create broad strokes that respond both to the vast river valley below and to the high speed at which the landscape is experienced by motorists. Elements of river-edge and blufftop flora and fauna are abstracted in the bridge detailing, along with striking gestures reminiscent of recreational motoring and the automobile industry.

### Design Components

**Steel arches** span the entire length of both bridges, culminating at rustic **limestone wing walls**, which together create a strong architectural statement by integrating the horizontal form of the bridge into the prairie landscape of the interchange. Concrete **corner monuments**, complimentary in color and scale to the stone wing walls, provide visual anchors to the bridge structure.

The bridges are accented by **steel medallions and ornaments**: the result of a careful hybridization of motifs that simultaneously recalls the prairie landscape and automotive design. The circular accent elements, located rhythmically along the bridge face, can be seen as abstractions of prairie flowers or as hubcaps – depending on a motorist's perspective. The central element on the Highway 13 bridge, a combination of bison horns and hood ornament, is derived jointly from a locally discovered prehistoric bison skeleton and the





### Project Summary

The Burnsville bridges are unique in the region in that they announce their presence, and the presence of Burnsville, boldly and creatively. The bridges step away from the typical “aesthetic upgrades” applied to highway bridges (formlined concrete, faux stone, and vintage lighting), and instead bring a new design palette to auto-oriented infrastructure. By conjuring, simultaneously, the natural and cultural heritage of the community, the Burnsville bridges welcome motorists to the City, educate visitors and residents, provide an interesting bit of eye-candy for passing road warriors, and open a dialog about the increasingly standardized treatment of highway bridges that hope to serve as community gateways.

design of the cars that speed beneath the bridge. (The hood-ornaments-and-hub-caps interpretation provides a touch of humor in the midst of brewing road rage.) Unique lighting accentuates the steel arch and the medallions, making the bridge literally glow at night.

### Role and Impact of the Landscape Architect

This project and process emphasizes the vital roles landscape architects play as facilitators, educators, and designers. Throughout the process, DSU served as **facilitators**, by creating a community-centered process; as **educators**, by discovering and shaping an entry experience based on local heritage; and as **designers**, by creating innovative and fascinating designs for the bridges themselves.

DSU, Inc. was specifically responsible for:

- Development and facilitation of the community design process;
- Site and community research and analysis;
- Concept design and illustration;
- Design development and construction documents for ornamental steel, precast concrete, and landscaping;
- Assistance with MnDOT approvals;
- Presentations to stakeholders and public officials; and
- Construction observation.

