

THE GREENWAY FOUNDATION

Preserving Metro Denver's Urban Waterways Since 1974

2001 RUDY BRUNER AWARD ABSTRACT

1. Give a brief overview of the project, including major project goals:

PLEASE REFER TO **ATTACHMENT A**

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Brunner Award for Urban Excellence*?:

THE GREENWAY FOUNDATION'S EFFORTS TO RECLAIM DENVER'S BIRTHRIGHT HAS RESULTED IN MORE THAN THE \$60 MILLION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND RECREATIONAL ENHANCEMENTS DESCRIBED IN THE ENCLOSED SUMMARY (please refer to **Attachment B**).

THE REVITALIZATION OF THE RIVER HAS RESULTED IN OVER \$1 BILLION OF MIXED DEVELOPMENT ALONG THE BANKS OF THE RIVER, INCLUDING THREE SPORT ARENAS, TWO MUSEUMS, AN AMUSEMENT PARK, AN REI FLAGSHIP STORE AND NUMEROUS NEW AND RENOVATED RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL PROJECTS (please refer to **Attachment B**).

2001 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. What local issues did this project address? How has it affected the local community?

IN 1974, WHEN THE GREENWAY FOUNDATION WAS CREATED TO RECLAIM THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER IN DENVER IT WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A FLOWING SEWER. OVER 250 MAN MADE DRAINAGE SOURCES WERE DUMPING RAW POLLUTANTS INTO THE RIVER. THE RIVER HAD REACHED THE POINT WHERE CONSUMPTION OF THE "WATER" BY HUMANS WAS POTENTIALLY LETHAL AND EVEN BODY CONTACT RESULTED IN SEVERE SKIN IRRITATIONS.

DENVER'S BIRTHPLACE, THE CONFLUENCE OF THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER AND CHERRY CREEK WAS ONE OF THE MOST POLLUTED SECTIONS ALONG THE 10.5 CORRIDOR IN DENVER. THE GREENWAY FOUNDATION, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER, SET OUT TO RECLAIM THE RIVER, ENVIRONMENTALLY AND RECREATIONALLY, WITH A LONG RANGE GOAL OF BRINGING THE RIVER TO POINT OF BEAUTY AND CIVIC PRIDE TO WHERE RESIDENTIAL, RETIAL AND COMMERICAL DEVELOPMENT ALONG ITS BANKS WAS A POSSIBILITY.

PLEASE REFER TO **ATTACHMENT A** AND **ATTACHMENT B** FOR A SUMMARY OF THE EFFORTS OF THE GREENWAY FOUNDATION OVER THE LAST 26 YEARS AS WELL AS THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO OUR COMMUNITY AS A RESULT OF THOSE EFFORTS. ALSO ENCLOSED IS A COPY OF **RETURNING THE PLATTE TO THE PEOPLE** WRITTEN BY THE FOUNDATION'S ORIGINAL AND ONGOING CHAIRMAN, JOE SHOEMAKER. THE BOOK, WRITTEN IN 1981, PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW OF THE INITIAL EFFORTS OF THE FOUNDATION TO RECLAIM DENVER'S "ONLY RIVER IN TOWN".

2a. Describe the underlying values of the project.

DENVER'S ORIGIONS ARE ALONG THE BANKS OF THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER AND CHERRY CREEK. LESS THAN 125 YEARS AFTER THE BIRTH OF THE " MILE HIGH CITY", THE CITIZENS HAD TURNED THEIR BACK, IN TERMS OF DEVELOPMENT AND PRESERVATION, ON THE RIVER. THE EFFORTS OF THE GREENWAY FOUNDATION, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER HAVE COMPLETELY REVERSED THIS TRAGIC SITUATION. DENVER IS KNOWN INTERNATIONALLY FOR ITS REVITILIZED CORE CITY AND ITS INVESTMENT INTO PARKS AND OPEN SPACE. THE CORNERSTONE FOR THIS URBAN RESURGANCE IS THE RETURN OF THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER TO A PLACE OF BEAUTY AND PRIDE.

2b. What, if any, significant tradeoffs were required to implement the project?

THE "TRADEOFF" TO RECLAIM DENVER'S BIRTHRIGHT WAS TO EDUCATE ALL ASPECTS OF THE CITY REGARDING THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY WERE TREATING THE RIVER. IT COULD NO LONGER BE THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF POLLUTANT DUMPING. IT COULD NO LONGER BE THE LOCATION FOR DUMPING OF CONCRETE RUBBLE, TIRES, RUSTED AUTOMOBILES AND DAILY TRASH. THE RECLAMATION OF THE RIVER REQUIRED THAT ITS "OWNERS", THE CITIZENS OF DENVER, RECOGNIZE THAT THEY HAD CAUSED THE RIVER'S DEMISE AND IT WAS THEIR REponsibility TO CORRECT THAT ERROR.

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate.

VITAL TO THE REVITILIZATION OF THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER, WAS THE WILLINGNESS OF CITY AND CIVIC LEADERS TO INVESTMENT POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL TOWARDS THE RIVER. AS CAN BE CONFIRMED BY REVIEWING THE ENCLOSED **ATTACHMENT A**, THERE HAS BEEN A BROAD BASED SUPPORTIVE MECHANISM TO ALLOW THIS RECLAMATION TO OCCUR. FUNDING FROM NUMEROUS LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL ENTITIES HAS OCCURRED. PRIVATE SUPPORT, BE IT INDIVIDUAL, CORPORATE, OR PHILANTHROPIC HAS ALSO PLAYED A KEY ROLE.

A COMPLETE REVERSAL OF HOW THE RIVER WAS VIEWED, ONLY 25 YEARS AGO, HAS TAKEN PLACE. OVER 250 POLLUTING DRAINAGE PIPES HAVE BEEN CLOSED OR RE-ROUTED. NUMEROUS LANDFILL DUMPSITES, MAINATENANCE YARDS OR "HARD" INDUSTRIAL COMPLEXES HAVE BEEN REPLACED WITH ACRES UPON ACRES OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACE. THE LOCAL FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT HAS RECONGIZED THAT FLOOD CONTROL PROJECTS CAN BE DESIGNED WITH RECREATIONAL BOATING INTERESTS IN MIND SO THAT THE RIVER NOW FLOWS MORE FREELY, WHILE BEING HOME TO OVER A DOZEN WHITE-WATER BOATCHUTES. ACCESS TO THE RIVER AND ITS BANKS FOR MAINTENANCE NEEDS HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE WITH BOTH HARD AND SOFT SURFACE TRAILS WHICH SERVE PRIMARLY AS HIKE-BIKE PATHS FOR THE THOUSANDS OF DAILY USERS.

THE CITY OF DENVER REALIZED AT THE ONSET OF THE RIVER RECLAMATION THAT ADDITIONAL MAINTENANCE COSTS WOULD OCCUR ON AN ONGOING BASIS. A COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE THE NEEDED FUNDS TO UPKEEP AND PROTECT THESE NEW OPEN SPACE AMENITIES WAS MADE AND HAS CONTINUED. THE LATEST CONFIRMATION OF THIS COMMITMENT HAS BEEN THE CREATION OF A SEPARATE PARK DISTRICT FOR THE RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES DUE TO THE UNIQUE MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO THE RIVER AS WELL AS ITS ADJOINING PARKS, TRAILS AND NATURAL AREAS.

THE GREENWAY FOUNDATION HAS CREATED AN AWARD WINNING OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAM KNOWN AS S.P.R.E.E (South Platte River Environmental Education) WHICH HAS BROUGHT THOUSANDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE DOWN TO THE RIVER, TAUGHT BY HIGH SCHOOL AGED TEENS, IN AN ATTEMPT TO CREATE GENERATIONS OF "RIVER STEWARDS" AS VERSUS RIVER POLLUTERS. THE FOUNDATION OVERSEES INNER CITY YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS WHICH HELP THE PARKS DEPARTMENT WITH THE UPKEEP OF THE RIVER AND ITS ADJACENT AMENITIES WHILE PROVIDING NEEDED JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEEN AGED MEN AND WOMEN. THE FOUNDATION ALSO SPONSORS AND PRODUCES SEVERAL FREE CULTURAL EVENTS EACH SUMMER TO BRING PEOPLE "BACK TO THE RIVER" INCLUDING AN END-OF-SUMMER VOLUNTEER-BASED MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL RIVER CLEANUP KNOWN AS "NIMBY" (not-in-my-back-yard) FEST.

THE EFFORTS DESCRIBED ABOVE AS WELL AS ADDITIONAL EFFORTS OF THE GREENWAY FOUNDATION ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN THE ENCLOSED COPY OF "**THE GREENWAY CURRENT**", THE FOUNDATION'S ANNUAL NEWSLETTER.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE FUNDING SOURCES FOR THE CREATION OF THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER GREENWAY CAN BE FOUND WITHIN **ATTACHMENT B** THAT IS ENCLOSED WITH THIS APPLICATION.

5a. Is the project unique?

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE RECLAMATION OF THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER IN DENVER BEGINS WITH THE DATE OF ITS ORIGIN. THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER GREENWAY IS KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE NATION AS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF URBAN RIVER RECLAMATION. THIS UNIQUENESS EXTENDS INTO MANY OTHER AVENUES INCLUDING THE INITIAL AND ONGOING PRIVATE-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS, THE INTERACTION WITH THE CITY & COUNTY OF DENVER AND ITS OUTLYING SUBURBAN COLLEAGUES, AND THE COOPERATION OF THE MANY INTERESTS CONNECTED WITH AN URBAN WATERWAY INCLUDING FLOOD CONTROL, WATER RIGHTS, DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, OWNERSHIP, MAINTENANCE, ETC. ADDITIONALLY, THE REMARKABLE COMBINATION OF RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, RETAIL, TOURISM, ENTERTAINMENT, CULTURAL AND ATHLETIC FACILITIES UP AND DOWN THE RIVER, ALL WITHIN A MILE OF THE RIVER'S CONFLUENCE PARK, DENVER'S BIRTHPLACE EMPHASIZE THAT THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER GREENWAY IS MODEL FOR URBAN RIVER RECLAMATION.

5b. If so, how is the model adaptable to other settings?

EVERY ASPECT OF THE HOW THE CITIZENS OF DENVER TOOK BACK THEIR RIVER CAN BE ADAPTED TO ALLOW OTHER COMMUNITIES TO RECLAIM THEIR WATERWAYS. THE ONE MANDATORY ASPECT IS THAT A COMMUNITY'S CITIZENS AND ITS LEADERS REALIZE THAT THIS RECLAMATION MUST BE A PRIORITY TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE A STAKEHOLD IN THAT WATERWAY. OVER THE YEARS, THE GREENWAY FOUNDATION HAS COUNSELED AND ADVISED NUMEROUS COMMUNITIES THAT ARE ATTEMPTING TO INITIATE A RIVER RECLAMATION OR ARE TRYING TO OVERCOME A PREVIOUS FAILURE TO DO SO. IN EVERY CASE, FAILURE CAN BE PREVENTED BY NOT ALLOWING THE VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS TO WORK IN A "VACUUM". FLOOD CONTROL ENHANCEMENTS CAN BE DESIGNED IN A MANNER THAT ADD ASTHETIC BEAUTY TO A WATERWAY. DEVELOPMENT ALONG A RIVER CORRIDOR CAN, WITH PROPER SETBACKS AND ENVIRONEMENTAL TREATMENT, BE A MARVELOUS ADDITION TO AN URBAN

WATERWAY. BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS MUST BE WILLING TO SHARE IN THE COST AND RECOGNITION ASPECTS OF REVITALIZING A COMMUNITY'S RIVER. THE TYPE OF INTERACTION, COOPERATION AND FLEXIBILITY THAT HAS MADE THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER A MODEL FOR URBAN RIVER RESTORATION CAN BE USED AS A BLUEPRINT IN VIRTUALLY ANY COMMUNITY. IF THE WILL EXISTS, THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER GREENWAY HAS SHOWN THE WAY.

ATTACHMENT A

OVERVIEW OF GREENWAY FOUNDATION

1974

- Mayor Bill McNichols asks Joe Shoemaker to serve as Chairman of the Platte River Development Committee (P.R.D.C.)
- Mayor provides one time funding source of \$2 Million
- Mayor and Chairman co-appoint 8 other committee members:
 - . Ted Bendelow
 - . Marjorie Hornbein
 - . Potts Berglund
 - . Philip Milstein
 - . Dana Crawford
 - . Dan Trujillo
 - . Hiawatha Davis
 - . John Zapien
- P.R.D.C. sets four primary goals:
 - . Reclaim South Platte in Denver (10.5 miles) environmentally and establish River as a recreationally boatable amenity
 - . Create open space parks, and natural areas throughout River in Denver
 - . Create concrete hike-bike-maintenance path along the River in Denver
 - . Connect River improvements to existing park/recreational amenities

1975

- Confluence Park is completed and dedicated (one of four original projects)

1976 – 1983

- P.R.D.C. becomes the Greenway Foundation, a private 501c3 non-profit to allow solicitation and acceptance of private contributions
- The Greenway Foundation receives contributions from:
 - . Gates Foundation
 - . Piton Foundation
 - . Boettcher Foundation
 - . Denver Foundation
 - . Johnson Foundation
 - . El Pomar Foundation
 - . Anschutz Foundation
- Additional funds from Federal, State and Local Agencies are pursued and obtained
- Numerous corporate/individual contributions are received
- Over 250 sources of pollution dumping into South Platte eliminated
- Concrete bike path constructed along 10.5 mile stretch of South Platte in Denver
- Remaining three original park/trail projects completed in North/Central/South Denver
- Additional 10 parks constructed on former landfill dumpsites
- 10 boating obstructions replaced with boatchutes/notches
- Initial section of Cherry Creek bike path constructed (between Market St. and Confluence Park – birthplace of Denver)
- River Ranger program initiated (youth employment program) to assist with maintenance of various parks and trails.

1984 - 1986

- Constructed Bear Creek Greenway (tributary through Jefferson/Arapahoe/Denver Counties)
- Constructed expansion of Sanderson Gulch Greenway (tributary through Jefferson/Denver Counties)
- Outdoor Education program (Greenway Experience) established (Elementary School tours led by High School Guides)

1986

- Initiated construction of Cherry Creek South Greenway (Cherry Creek State Park to Castlewood Canyon State Park (tributary through Douglas/Arapahoe & Denver Counties)

1986 – 1989

- Constructed section of Cherry Creek South Greenway within Town of Parker (8 miles)

1987

- Initial discussions of making Cherry Creek in Lower Downtown a boatable tourism attraction begin

1990 – 1994

- Constructed stretches of Cherry Creek in unincorporated Douglas County and Castlewood Canyon State Park

1993

- Initiated design and funding of "Punt the Creek", the tourism boating attraction along LoDo's Cherry Creek in Denver
- Initiated design of Aurora and Arapahoe County sections of Cherry Creek South Greenway

1995

- Constructed Phase I (Blake St. – Delgany St.) of "Punt the Creek" (4 City blocks)

1996

- Phase I of "Punt the Creek" opened to the public
- Partnership with South Platte River Commission begins
- River Ranger program returns after six year hiatus
- Outdoor Education program expanded into Middle School

1998

- Phase II of "Punt the Creek" constructed/opened to the public (Lawrence St. – Blake St.) (3 City blocks)
- Free special events initiated to encourage public awareness and usage of the Greenway
 - . River Rendezvous – two day Frontier Day celebration
 - . Confluence Concerts – four free evening concerts at Confluence Park
 - . NIMBY (not-in-my-back-yard) Fest – volunteer based cleanup of River (metro wide – 30 miles)
- Initiated design of improvements to 7 block section of River adjacent to Overland Golf Course in Denver
- Served as "host" Foundation for landscaping/playfield improvements at D.P.S. elementary school

1999

- Phase III of "Punt the Creek" constructed/opened to the public (Delgany St. to Conf. Park)(3 City blocks)
- Greenway Preservation Trust initiated – permanent trust to preserve, protect and enhance the South Platte River and its tributaries in Denver

2000

- Greenway Preservation Trust Campaign receives \$1.5 Million in commitments. Goal of \$5 Million by 2003 is established.
- Recreational and Riparian Improvements are constructed along the River, enhancing the corridor for wildlife habitat.
- Enhancements and Renovations to Confluence Park are initiated.
- Greenway Foundation serves as local project coordinator for \$1.5 Million improvement to the River corridor between the City and County of Denver and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

GREENWAY FOUNDATION RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OVER \$20 MILLION OF OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENTS TO SOUTH PLATTE RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES

ATTACHMENT B

INVESTMENT SUMMARY

SOUTH PLATTE RIVER AND SURROUNDING AREA

SOUTH PLATTE RIVER GREENWAY

<u>GREENWAY FOUNDATION</u> (\$20 MILLION)		
FEDERAL GOVT. REVENUES		- \$ 2.5 MILLION
STATE GOVT. REVENUES		- \$ 2.5 MILLION
LOCAL GOVT. REVENUES		- \$ 5.0 MILLION
PRIVATE REVENUES		- \$10.0 MILLION
. FOUNDATIONS	- \$7 MILLION	
. CORP./IND.	- \$3 MILLION	
<u>SOUTH PLATTE RIVER COMMISSION</u> (\$47 MILLION)		
DENVER REVENUES		- \$ 23 MILLION
. WINTER PARK FUNDS	- \$15 MILLION	
. OTHER CAPITAL FUNDS	- \$ 8 MILLION	
STATE REVENUES		- \$ 1 MILLION
FEDERAL REVENUES		- \$ 4 MILLION
GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO		- \$ 7 MILLION
URBAN DRAINAGE & FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT		- \$ 5 MILLION
TRILLIUM CORPORATION		- \$ 2 MILLION

SURROUNDING AREA DEVELOPMENTS

<u>CENTRAL PLATTE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT</u> (\$ 1,021,000,000)		
COORS FIELD		- \$ 215 MILLION
PEPSI CENTER		- \$ 170 MILLION
FOOTBALL ARENA		- \$ 350 MILLION
R.E.I.		- \$ 32 MILLION
SIX FLAGS ELITCH GARDENS		- \$ 105 MILLION
COLORADO'S OCEAN JOURNEY		- \$ 100 MILLION
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT		- \$ 35 MILLION
. 15 TH & PLATTE ST.		
CHILDREN'S MUSEUM		- \$ 10 MILLION
PUNT THE CREEK		- \$ 4 MILLION
<u>TRILLIUM/EAST-WEST PARTNERS</u> (\$ 1 BILLION ESTIMATED VALUE)		
. BASED ON 1999 DOLLARS		

PROJECT DATA

83-01

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided.

Project Name SOUTH PLATTE RIVER GREENWAY Location DENVER, COLO.

Owner CITY & CO. OF DENVER / PUBLIC

Project Use(s) OPEN SPACE + COMMUNITY PARKS, BIKING, JOGGING, BOATING

Project Size 10.5 MILE RIVERFRONT + WILDLIFE HABITAT
Total Development Cost \$67MM

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) \$250,000
(SEE ATTACHMT. B)

Date Initiated 1974 Percent Completed, December 1, 2001 85%

Project Completion Date (if appropriate) 2003 (PROGRAMS ARE ONGOING)

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates

Application submitted by:

Name DOUGLAS ELLIS Title ASST. DIR.

Organization GREENWAY FOUNDATION

Address 1752 PLATTE ST. City/State/Zip DENVER, CO 80202

Telephone (303) 455-7109 Fax (303) 455-7234

E-mail d_events@ecentral.com Weekend Contact Number (for notification): (303) 880-7714


Key Participants (Attach an additional sheet if needed)

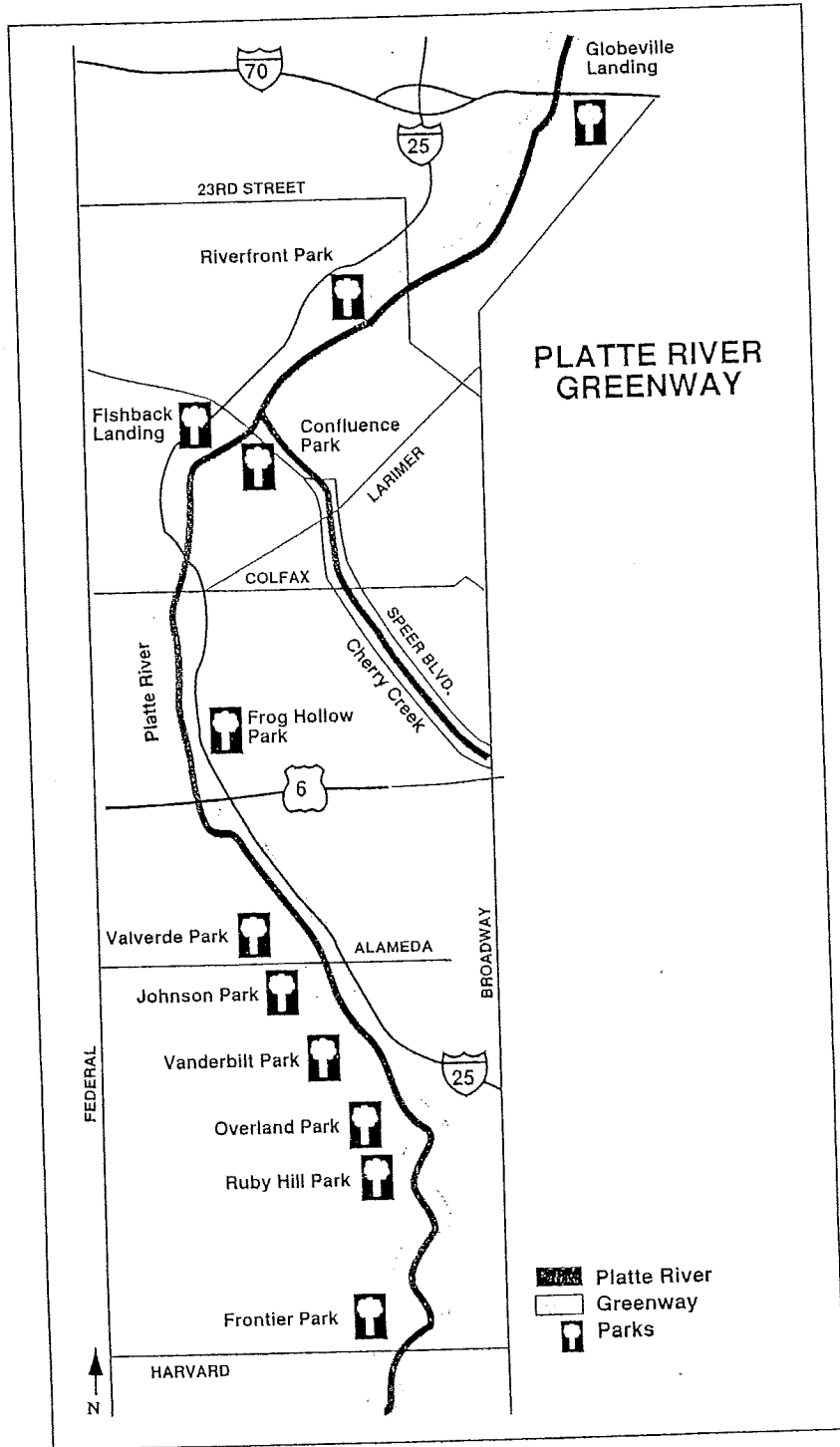
Organization	Key Participant	Telephone/e-mail
Public Agencies	<u>BAR CHADWICK, DENVER PARKS</u>	<u>303/964-2497</u>
Architect/Designer	<u>MERLE BRINES, MD6, INC.</u>	<u>303/571-5787</u>
Developer		
Professional Consultant	<u>TRACY BOUVETTE, CDM, INC.</u>	<u>303/298-1311</u>
Community Group	<u>DANA CRAWFORD, URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS, INC.</u>	<u>303/892-1888</u>
Other	<u>BOB VOLTZ, REI</u>	<u>303/756-3100</u>

Please indicate how you learned of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. (Check all that apply).

- Direct Mailing
- Magazine Advertisement
- Previous RBA entrant
- Other (please specify) _____
- Professional Organization
- Newsletter
- Previous Selection Committee member
- Magazine Calendar

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Signature 



DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

Submitted by Merle Grimes
Principal, MDG, Inc.
820 Sante Fe Drive
Denver, CO 80211
Phone: 303-571-5787 Fax: 303-571-5788

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

Between the 1800's and early 1970's the Denver reach of the South Platte River became increasingly isolated from the Denver commercial and residential areas by large tracks of undeveloped land, abandoned industrial properties, junk yards, and rail yards. The South Platte River was an eyesore and the forgotten birthplace of Denver.

The main design concept for the South Platte River Greenway project as envisioned by the Foundation, was to establish a continuous recreation and wildlife corridor through this industrial reach of the river and to connect other wildlife, commercial, and residential areas to the river through a series of secondary greenway trail corridors.

Materials for the project had to be durable to withstand frequent flooding expected within the flood plain, needed to blend into the natural environment, and had to be responsive to both wildlife and recreation uses along the river. Earth tone tinted concrete was used for the multi-use trail, native riparian plants were utilized for the massive effort to restore the river edge and banks, and large river boulders were used to create fish habitat and white water boating.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

Connecting neighborhoods, commercial districts, and other wildlife habitat areas while restoring the South Platte River into one of Denver's most valued resources was the dominate vision for the South Platte River. In addition, since the South Platte River was the first of its kind project in the nation, it became an inspiration for an entire nation on how an abused and neglected waterfront can be reclaimed as a significant natural and social resource. No longer would waterfronts be thought of as a city back door, but would now demonstrate a community's pride in their natural resources.

3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design tradeoffs or compromises required to complete the project.

There were no existing projects attempted in the nation that were similar to the South Platte River Project in the early 1970's. Therefore, the design team of planners, landscape architects and engineers were required to devise design criteria that would blend into the natural environment but would also stand up the harsh flooding conditions that can be subjected by the river. A river is not static and by its nature is always changing. Mitigating flood damage and erosion control is critical to a successful project along any river. In the early years of the project, engineered designs for flood and erosion control were typically structural examples of our attempt to dominate our control over the river. In some cases this effort did not work, and like the river, we had to devise design solutions that were as dynamic as the river. Using native vegetation to control erosion (bioengineering) became the more preferred method to control the damaging affects of flooding. For extremely difficult erosion areas, a combination of bioengineering and engineered solutions were developed.

4. Describe the way in which the project relates to its urban context.

Due to the urbanization of Denver, the South Platte River had been completely channalized into one deep and narrow channel. Gone were the wide (up to one mile) flood plain terraces, braided river channel and native riparian vegetation. However, citizens began to change their view of what is an acceptable urban river. Rivers no longer were out-of-site, out-of-mind, and would play an important role in the cultural and ecological health of our urban areas. Urban areas require green spaces for its citizens and for wildlife refuge and migration. Rivers provide for this need, and much more. Because of their lineal character they can function as connections between urban centers as well as wildlife habitats. The South Platte River demonstrates through nearly 30 years of experience that people and wildlife can utilize the same corridor harmoniously within the context of a large urban city.

5. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the project's design and architecture.

Weaknesses:

The designers could not foresee how popular that the South Platte River would become by the public. Early designs accommodated for an eight-foot width, multi-use trail that was considered wide in the early seventies. Today, the eight-foot width trail can no longer accommodate demand and is replaced with a 12 foot width trail whenever possible. Early solutions to riverbank protection and erosion control was dominated by hard engineering solutions that were not always aesthetic nor were they compatible to the needs of wildlife. Today erosion control methods consist of engineered solutions that fit into the visual character of the river environs, as well as enhancing wildlife habitat. Finally, due to the enormous popularity of the South Platte River Greenway, more and more people utilize this resource putting an increasing strain on the system. The once abandoned land adjacent to the river now consist of additional developed parks and

revitalized commercial and residential areas. To offset the growing trend of an urbanizing river, the communities are aggressively acquiring open spaces adjacent to the river and its tributaries.

Strengths include the designer's ability to be flexible as design and engineering solutions were tested and improved upon based on the rivers habit and the growing and ever changing needs of citizens. Additionally, developing architectural and landscape architectural design guidelines at an early stage in the design process helped to reinforce that the river is a contiguous system that knows no political jurisdiction or boundary. Greenway amenities such as white water boat chutes and bank stabilization and landscaping double as fish, bird and small mammal habitat. Information signs, bicycle/pedestrian bridges, an amphitheater for small concerts, thirteen developed pocket parks, and ten miles of multi-use trail reflect the urban context of the river and the need for outdoor recreational amenities in this densely populated area.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided.

This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name Dana Crawford Title Chairman
Organization Urban Neighborhoods, Inc. Telephone (303-892-1888)
Address 3012 Huron Street City/State/ZIP Denver, CO 80202
Fax (303) 892-6308 E-mail dana@urbandenver.net

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Signature _____

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

In 1974 I was asked by Mayor Bill McNichols to serve on a small committee charged with the responsibility to reclaim the Platte River, an abandoned eyesore running through the heart of Denver. My career has been dedicated to the preservation of historic buildings; the idea of saving an historic river was very appealing. The committee represented an intriguing cross section of our city and was led by the brilliant and charismatic Joe Shoemaker. My job was to work on the confluence section of the river near downtown, establishing an important central node as a high profile location to regain the community's use and their hope for the future.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

Major issues originally required that we establish credibility for the committee, for the city, for the prospect of success after many years of repeated failures. The strategic plan called for a "small is beautiful" philosophy as we designated four prominent locations on the river. We commissioned professional design and use plans for each section and quickly started the reclamation process. With growing credibility we were able to raise money to continue the work.

3. What tradeoffs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

It is important to recognize the remarkable leadership power and passion found in Joe Shoemaker. He and, later, his son Jeff are the strength of this success story. The committee behaved as an unofficial advocate and activist for the river. Accolades were given to the elected officials. We just did the work and the river came back to life. Yes, there were tradeoffs and compromises along the way. Common sense prevailed.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

The Platte River is now one of the greatest assets in our city. The current Mayor has championed the river adding more than 50 acres of new city park on its banks. The river, once the putrid centerpiece of an industrial mess, now boasts 120 acres of riverside parks and 155 miles of hike/bike paths. Today, thousands of housing units are under construction with the Platte River as the major magnetic amenity.

5. What would you change about this project, or the process you went through?

I wouldn't change a thing.

Public Agency Perspective

Bar Chadwick, Director of the South Platte River Initiative
The City & County of Denver
110 16th Street; Ste 400
Denver, CO 80202
303-964-2497

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency.

The Greenway Foundation initiated the clean-up and restoration of the South Platte Riverfront in 1974. During the last five years of the Webb administration, this office has supplemented the original work with substantial enhancements, e.g. \$50 million in parks such as Commons, Cuernavaca and Northside parks.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What tradeoffs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

The most obvious is through dedicated open space. The Central Platte Valley was one of the nation's last buildable open spaces within the confines of a major urban center. The Mayor formed a commission (The South Platte River Commission) to work with private organizations like the Greenway Foundation, to facilitate feedback from a diverse group of stakeholders, including property owners, developers, parks and open space advocates and habitat interests.

3. Describe the project's impact on the neighborhood and the city.

The project has evolved from its beginning with the Platte River Greenway – a 10.5 mile hike/bike trail along the Riverfront and a series of public “pocket parks,” both build by the Greenway Foundation – to become the backbone of a system of larger parks and recreational amenities in the Central Platte Valley (CPV).

The impact on the City has been extremely positive. The CPV is now recognized as the recreational hub of Denver, with capitol investments approaching a billion dollars. In the past three years, a world class aquarium (Ocean Journey), sports complex (Pepsi Center), amusement park (Six Flags Elitch Gardens) and mixed use development has sprung up within a 2.5 mile radius. None of this would have happened when it did without the initial efforts undertaken by the Greenway Foundation.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnership? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

Absolutely! The Mayor's South Platte River Commission and the Greenway Foundation have worked as partners since 1991 and the Commission is now composed of a multi-faceted group of stakeholders including different interest groups

representing neighborhood interests, habitat and wildlife advocates, recreation, water quality and residential development. The Mayor wanted to make the CPV a cornerstone of his administration's commitment to further revitalize the Riverfront. By appointing individuals with definite interests in the Riverfront, from residents to business to local agencies, a focused effort has yielded positive results in a timely fashion.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The most successful would have to be the collective approach early and often by the stakeholders and the Commission. The Comprehensive CPV Plan was designed with critical input from the stakeholders during the entire process. Amendments to the plan mandated that 6% of future development be dedicated to open space. Trillium Corporation, the private land owner, through a series of land swaps and private property donation, was able to realize the intent of the Commission and the Greenway Foundation's original concept of a Riverfront that affords recreational, riparian habitat and mixed use (retail and residential) development along Denver's Riverfront.

The least successful aspect of this project is this: due to the success and popularity of the project, land values have escalated making it increasingly more difficult to acquire *future* land for open space.

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

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1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project?

Camp Dresser & McKee (CDM) was responsible for bringing together the project stakeholder group (i.e., the Greenway Foundation, Urban Drainage and Flood Control District, the City and County of Denver, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers, among others) including public, private and non-profit entities. We performed grassroots interviews and discussions, developed lines of communication, and ultimately sponsored the initial stakeholder meeting and river tour with the help of the Greenway Foundation and the City and County of Denver.

As the project began to develop through the newly found partnership, CDM was involved with meetings, developing and circulating action item lists, and basically providing support to the local non-federal sponsors. We were called in to help dislodge project roadblocks and encourage project team productivity whenever stakeholders or relationship issues threatened project progress.

2. From your perspective, how was the project intended to benefit the urban environment?

The stretch of river containing the project reaches (i.e., Colfax and Zuni/Sun Valley Reaches) has been one of the few remaining areas of urban and habitat blight in the Central Platte River Valley located in Denver. The Colfax and Zuni/Sun Valley Reaches are two of the last remaining unimproved areas along the river.

The project is intended to combine ecosystem restoration and flood control improvement measures in and along the river to enhance the river and its overbanks such that the community can better access and benefit from this important local amenity. To this end, not only will the project provide for the improved quality of life to near-by low income housing residents, but will improve the river corridor's riparian habitat – beneficially impacting water quality in the river, flood water conveyance, general area safety and recreational use.

3. Describe the project's impact on its surroundings and on the people in the area. Do you have data that documents these impacts? Attach supplementary material as appropriate.

The South Platte River is the only major river that passes through the City and County of Denver. As the area's key water feature, it draws people and wildlife alike to its water course. Urban settings such as Denver's must have open space recreational features to sustain a high quality of life for all income and socio-economic factions of its populace. Given that the improvements on the river provide this kind of value to the general population of the Denver Metro area, this particular project provides two key benefits to the people and its surroundings.

First, the project improves the river in a specific area impacted by urban blight. Second, the project will tie together other river improvement projects both up and down stream of the Colfax and Zuni/Sun Valley reaches, creating a continuous recreational corridor through this blighted urban setting. As we have seen on other stretches of the river, both of these impacts will bring with them an improved sense of community, a greater quality of life, and improved economic prosperity for those living in the adjacent neighborhoods.

4. *What tradeoffs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?*

The history of the river's restoration and the Greenway Foundation's efforts to provide recreational enhancements, revolved around local sponsors and their funding. Since the Colfax and Zuni/Sun Valley Reaches were considered to be too large for local funding to complete within a desirable timeframe, federal involvement was sought. However, federal involvement required a certain amount of "stretching" by the local non-federal sponsors, including giving up some control of the project.

We were asked to aide in supporting various critical project tasks, sometimes in only a small way, that required additional person power, or organizational skills. In the end, all the various parties stretched into new areas outside of their respective comfort zones, and produced a product in a much accelerated time frame, to the benefit of all the parties.

5. *What are the most and least successful aspects of the project?*

The most successful aspect of the project is that the project design and construction award occurred in such a remarkably short time frame. The non-federal local sponsors also responded with an outstanding effort by any account. In particular, the real estate appraisal and acquisition efforts, the technical review comment and response process, and the bipartisan support of the project came together in uncanny speed and persistence.

The least successful aspect of the project has to do with the difficulty in engaging a more diverse group of project stakeholders. Given the speed of project execution, it was difficult to conduct regular project status meetings and maintain the engagement of less directly impacted stakeholders and/or decision makers. This was, and still is, an important aspect of the project given the need to continue to leverage the relationships and energies related to this kind of partnership on other reaches in and along the Platte River, and its tributaries in the Metro Denver area and surrounding counties.

6. *How might this project be instructive to others in your profession?*

The Colfax and Zuni-Sun Valley Reach projects indicate the value of a partnership between private industry (CDM), public entities (City and County of Denver, etc.), and non-profit (The Greenway Foundation) organizations. The value of this relationship is realized based on the diverse business viewpoints and resources each entity brings to the table. The synergy associated with diverse business interests supporting one another helps each entity ascertain goals beyond their individual reach through normal channels. Those organizations, and more importantly, teams of organizations that are able to stick together, working through the conflicts and challenges, to achieve a common mission, are able to rise above the common and the ordinary to excel in providing the public with better projects and better solutions. The Greenway Foundation was key to this process.

OTHER PERSPECTIVE

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1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

In the year 2000 I became a member of the Greenway Preservation Trust steering committee. The project is an ongoing effort to clean up the river and create both a recreational and educational aspect. The Greenway Foundation's efforts started in 1974 in the city of Denver with the reclamation of the river, which was literally a garbage dump, and turned it into a great resource for the entire metro area.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on the neighborhood and the city. Include any data or supplementary materials that support your conclusions.

The Greenway Foundation, I believe, carries the bulk of the responsibility for the renovation and growth of the S. Platte River Valley. Starting in 1974 they have pursued river cleanup activities, built kayak whitewater runs and river access that is boater-friendly, and "Punt the Creek", a great amenity for downtown. It is safe to say that without these efforts, the Central Platte Valley would not be the thriving community that it is now. REI committed to build a flagship store in its current location (on the riverfront) in a large measure due to these improvements.

3. What tradeoffs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them?

I am not aware of any.

4. What are the most and least successful aspects of the project?

Most successful:

- * The South Platte River was reclaimed as a recreational community resource
- * Part of Denver's history was preserved as the confluence of the South Platte and Cherry Creek (the birthplace of Denver!) See attached.
- * Made the river front desirable for businesses to move including Colorado's Ocean Journey aquarium, REI, Children's Museum, condominiums, retail and new parks.

I am convinced that without the Greenway Foundation's efforts this growth and development would not have been possible!