

Las Colonias Park Master Plan

March, 2007

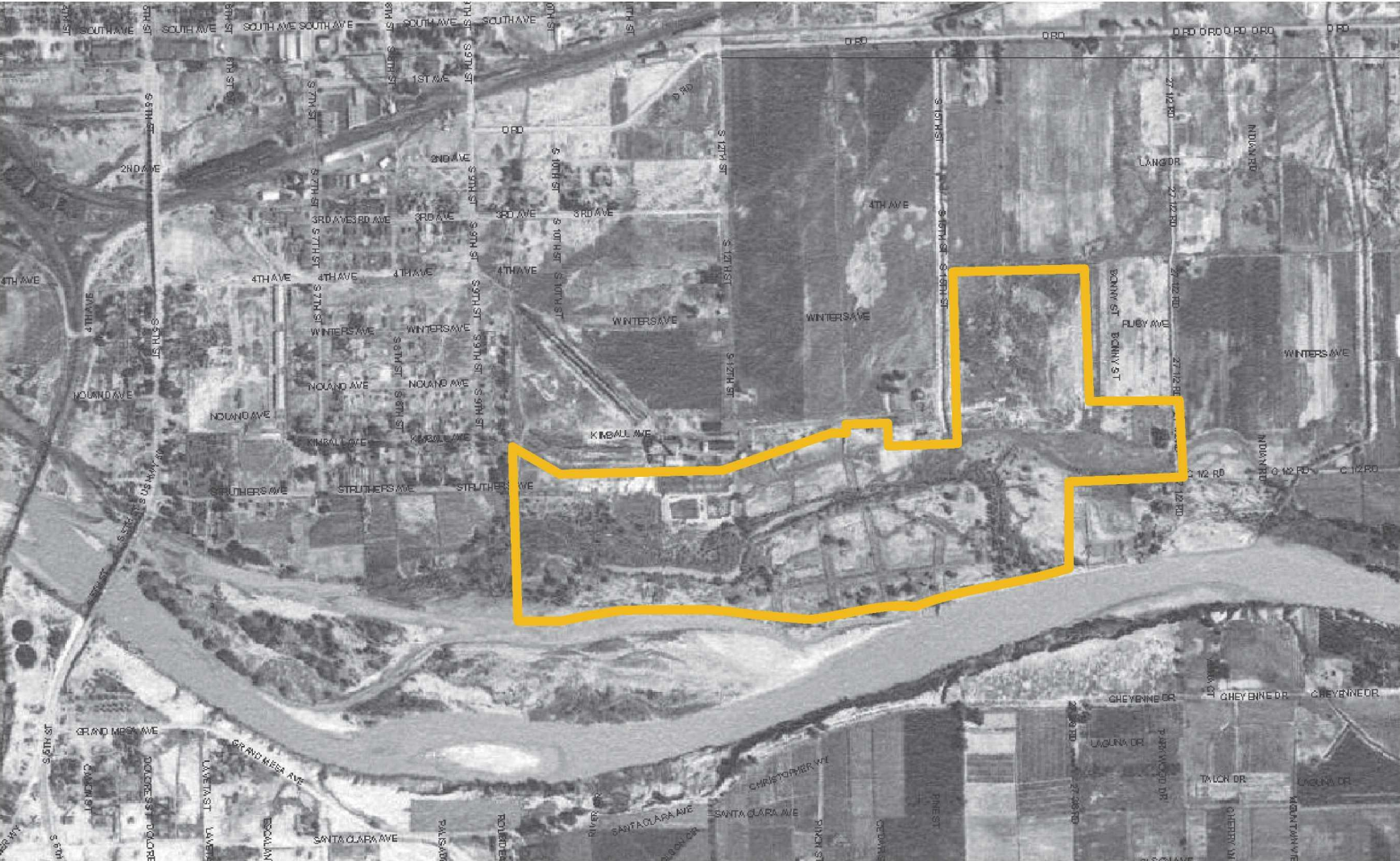
Grand Junction, Colorado

Introduction

Las Colonias Park is a 100-acre park located at the edge of the Colorado River south of Downtown Grand Junction. The park site is located near the confluence, or “grand junction”, of the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers. The site is a place of historic and cultural significance to the citizens of Grand Junction. A naming contest was held to find a name for the park. It was named after the colonies of people who worked in the sugar beet fields and peach orchards that once populated the area, which were known as “Las Colonias”. This name is of special significance to many residents, and pays tribute to the migrant workers of the community.

Later, the site was used as a collection stockpile site for uranium mill tailings. Many residents refer to the site as the Climax Mill Tailing site. Today, the site is largely vacant, with the exception of a segment of the Riverfront Trail system that passes through the site. The Riverfront Trail System is an extensive trail network that extends through the valley along the Colorado River corridor, providing a valued amenity for recreationalists and commuters. Las Colonias Park is envisioned as a “jewel” of the Riverfront Trail system.

In 1997, a master plan was prepared for the park. In 2006, construction began on Riverside Parkway, which provides a new east/west connection through the city. The design of the Parkway impacted the master plan for the Park, requiring the Plan to be updated.



1937 Aerial Photograph



1997 Master Plan *



Riverside Parkway

* 1997 Master Plan not prepared by EDAW

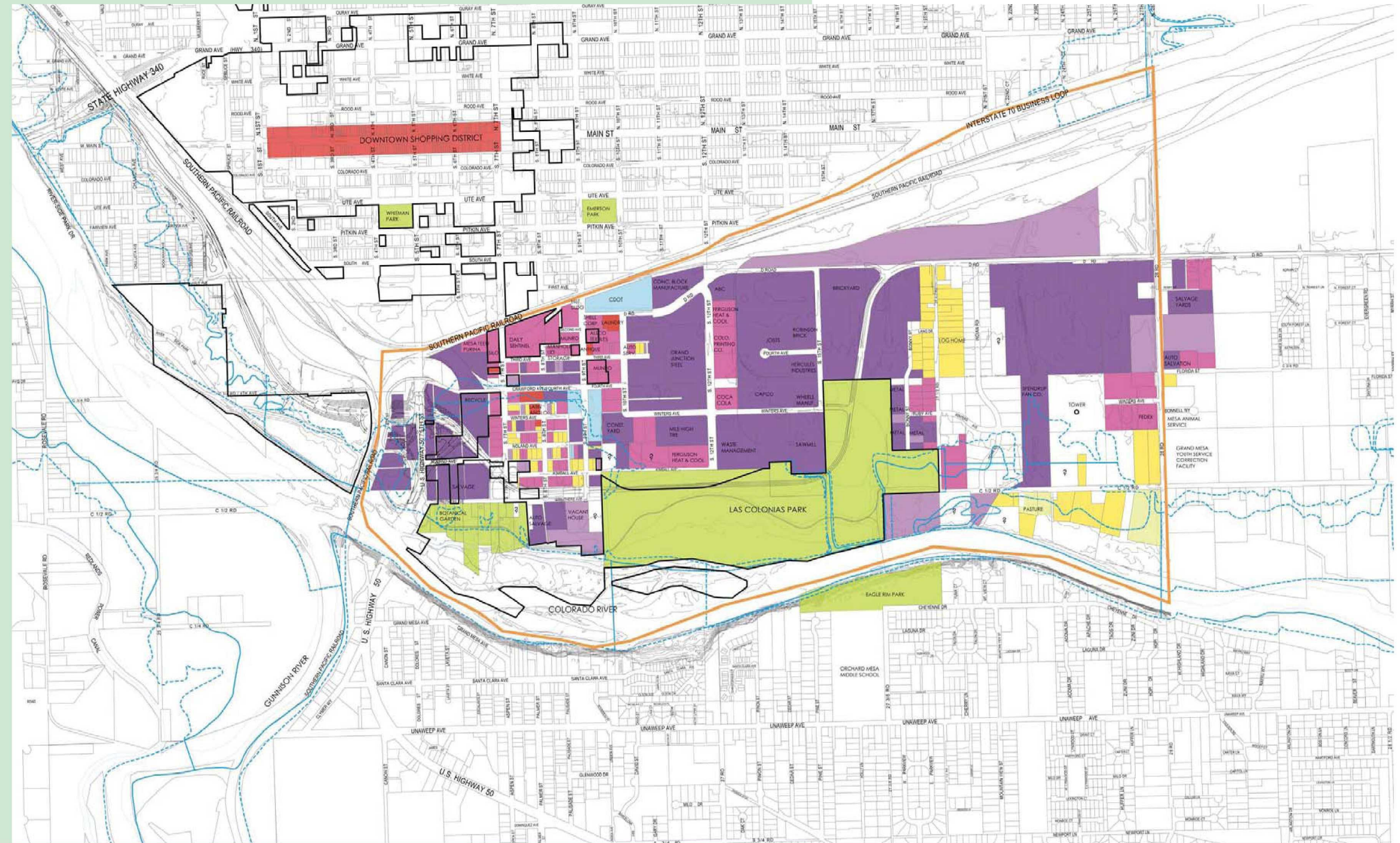


Downtown & South Downtown

The Las Colonias Park site is located on the southern edge of South Downtown. Located within walking distance from Downtown, South Downtown provides easy access to recreational amenities along the river, as well as convenient access to shopping and restaurants Downtown. It also functions as a gateway into Downtown from Highway 50. Its location and context establishes South Downtown as one of the most important places in the city.

Land Use

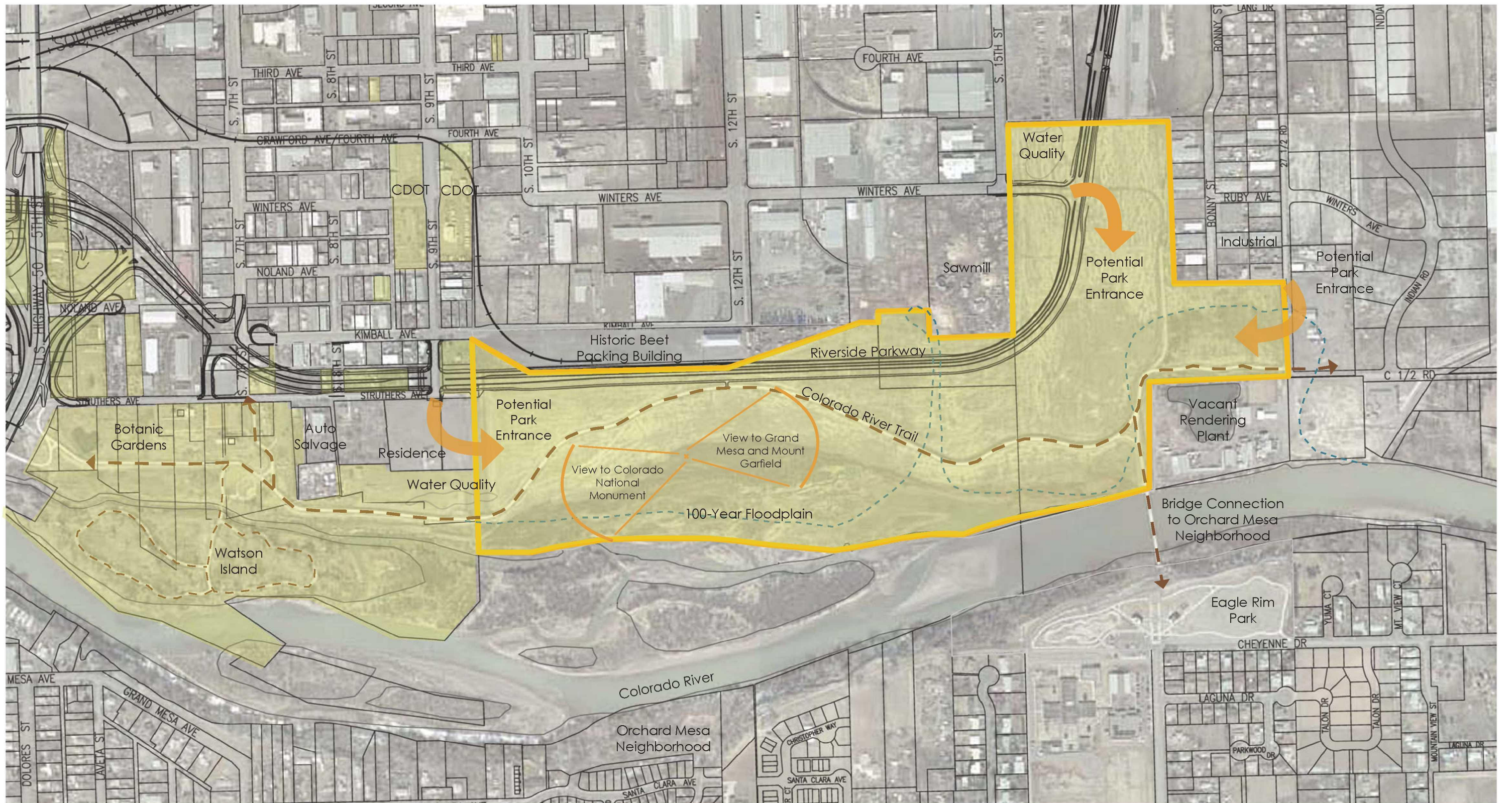
As part of the South Downtown Study prepared prior to the Las Colonias Park Master Plan, existing land uses within South Downtown were mapped. This map illustrates how adjacent land uses will inform the use of the park, as most of the adjacent land uses are commercial and/or industrial and are not occupied after business hours on weekdays, or on weekends. In order to maintain a safe and vibrant environment for park users, it is important for the park to include other programmatic elements that will attract visitors to the park after business hours.



Site Conditions

A Site Context Map and Site Conditions Map illustrate some of the opportunities and constraints of the site related to the adjacent properties. Contiguous parcels of City controlled property adjacent to the park site provides a unique opportunity to expand the park towards the Botanic Gardens along the Colorado River front, creating a contiguous cultural amenity for the community. Prominent views of the Mesa, the Colorado National Monument, and Mount Garfield are provided from the site. Potential entrances to the Park are located on the east and west boundaries of the site.





Public Controlled Property

Reclaiming the beautiful Colorado River as an amenity for the community is critical to the success and vibrancy of the Park. It is equally important in advancing a unique and distinct identity for the City as a whole.



Colorado River

The historic Beet Packing Building provides a unique redevelopment opportunity or other destination amenity near the river.



Historic Beet Packing Building

The pedestrian/bicycle bridge across the river defines a dramatic threshold between Las Colonias Park and the Orchard Mesa neighborhoods. The crossing announces arrival into a new district - South Downtown and Las Colonias Park. The park edge in its current condition lacks definition and a sense of arrival at this important gateway into the district.

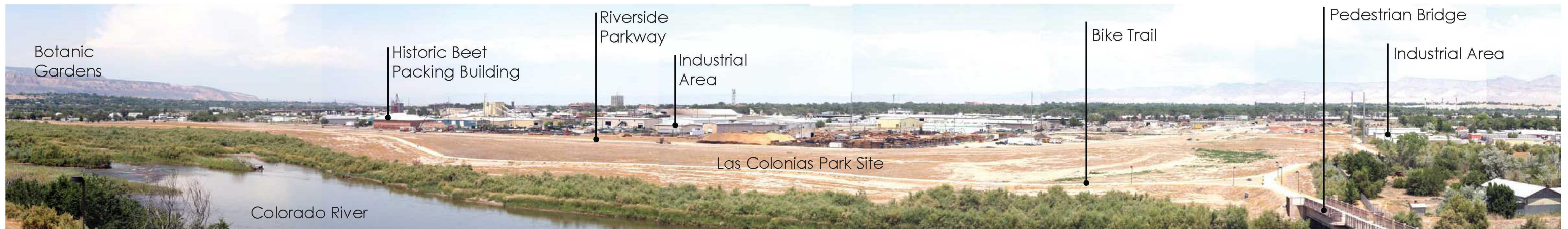


Pedestrian Bridge

The berm adjacent to the trail provides flood protection for the adjacent structures. It is not FEMA approved, and will require reconstruction if its configuration is changed.



Bike Trail



Botanic Gardens

Historic Beet Packing Building

Riverside Parkway

Industrial Area

Las Colonias Park Site

Bike Trail

Pedestrian Bridge

Industrial Area

Colorado River

View of Park Site from Eagle Rim Park Overlook



Eagle Rim Park



Eagle Rim Park Overlook

The amphitheater at the Botanic Gardens provides seating for approximately 300 people. A larger venue with approximately 1000 seats could provide a place for larger community events within the Park. Combined with the Botanic Gardens and other cultural amenities, a cultural/arts center could be created within the Park.



River Parks Trail



Tamarisk at the river edge prevents access to the river, causing the river to be largely ignored and disconnected from the Park.



Las Colonias Park Site

Pedestrian access across Riverside Parkway from nearby neighborhoods and industrial/commercial areas is key to the success of the Park.



Botanic Gardens



Riverside Parkway

Site Analysis

Public Process

A select group of local business owners, key stakeholders, and City staff members met together with the EDAW design team for a 2-day workshop on November 29 & 30, 2006. The goals of the workshop were to:

1. Present the design team findings of the Site Analysis to the advisory groups for review and comment.
2. Develop a set of park program elements for the Park.
3. Establish a set of clear goals for the project.
4. Develop some alternatives for the park for the advisory groups to review and discuss.
5. Present the findings of the design team and advisory groups to the public in an open house format.

A public open house was held on two consecutive nights for local residents to review the progress of the design team and advisory groups, and to provide their comments. Following the workshop, the EDAW team prepared a final master plan and aerial perspective rendering as a final product of the workshop discussions.

Park Program Elements

Program Elements

1. Trail and Trailhead (50 cars)
2. River Access
 - a. Non-motorized, hand-carried boats and rafts (put-in/take-out part of larger river boating experience)
 - b. Swimming (at own risk)
 - c. Fishing
 - d. Viewing and sitting
 - e. Whitewater course/kayak skills events
3. Group and Family Picnic, Events and Passive Play
 - a. Various size picnic shelters – range from small to large group (up to 200 people)
 - b. Adjacent lawn
 - c. Water feature/spray park and community playground
 - d. 2500-person multipurpose outdoor amphitheater (12 events/year?)
 - e. Disc golf (if space allows)
 - f. 500-1000 parking spaces (shuttle from downtown for major performances?)
4. Services, Amenities and Lighting
 - a. Bike and boat rental
 - b. Food concessions and nearby restaurant(s)
 - c. Drinking water
 - d. Restrooms
 - e. Benches, picnic tables
 - f. Low-level lighting for evening use and security
 - g. Sustainable, local materials and construction techniques
5. Riverbank Restoration
 - a. Tamarisk removal and re-establishment of cottonwood, willow, native grass complex
6. Botanic Garden (approximately 12 acres)
 - a. Master plan exists
 - b. Maintain existing 1000-person amphitheater with landscape seating
7. Festival Space (1-2 major events per year that cannot be accommodated downtown)
 - a. 5-acre open “commons” or lawn area

8. Dog Park (2-3 acres)
9. Land for Future Civic Structures
 - a. Recreation, community or senior center
 - b. Library
 - c. Arts center
 - d. Other

Project Goals

Project Goals

1. Create the “Jewel” of the Riverfront Trail System
 - a. Integrated with entire system, Botanic Gardens, Fifth Street Gateway, Jarvis property
 - b. Destination attraction and major trailhead
 - c. Attractive and inviting
 - d. Something for all ages and abilities
2. Focus on the River, Civic and Passive Leisure-Time Activities
 - a. Restore river habitats
 - b. Incorporate outdoor visual and performing arts opportunities
 - c. Provide spaces for self-directed, family and group activities
 - d. Provide visual and physical access to the river
3. Supports Investment in Downtown Living and Redevelopment by Providing Quality Open Space and Park Experiences
 - a. Strong pedestrian, bike and vehicular link to north along 7th Street
 - b. Clear pedestrian links to adjacent neighborhoods
 - c. Provide amenities for local residents
4. Public/Private Partnerships for Land Uses, Funding and Management
 - a. Explore possibilities for land swaps, sales, leases, etc.
 - b. Foundations, volunteer programs
 - c. Concessions
 - d. Incentives

Project Examples

The EDAW design team assembled a variety of project examples from across the country that illustrate potential program elements for the park. A range of approaches to waterfront development were also considered for the Las Colonias Park site. As shown in the images, these options range from a highly constructed waterfront edge such as a riverfront promenade to a more naturalistic approach such as a meandering trail along the river. These different approaches were discussed in the workshop with the advisory groups in order to determine the best approach for the Las Colonias Park site.



Grass Slope Amphitheater



Concerts



Festivals



Soft Surface Trails



Grass Terrace Amphitheater



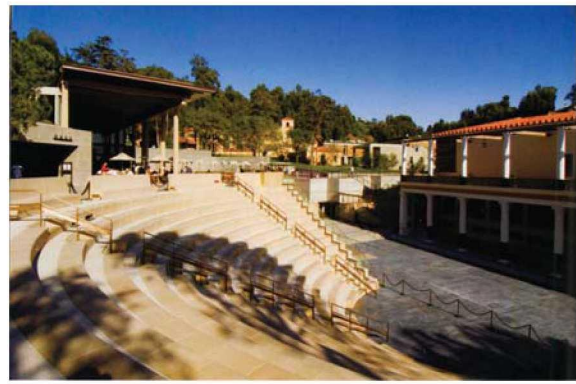
Fishing



Sports Fields



Hard Surface Trails



Hard Surface Amphitheater



Disc Golf



Kayak Run



Farmer's Market

constructed

naturalistic



Haihe River Embankment - Tianjin, China



Historic Arkansas Riverwalk, Pueblo



Miller Landing Park, Omaha



Miller Landing Park, Omaha



Allegheny Riverfront Park, Pittsburgh



Historic Arkansas Riverwalk, Pueblo



Stuyvesant Cove Park, Manhattan



Cuernavaca Park, Denver



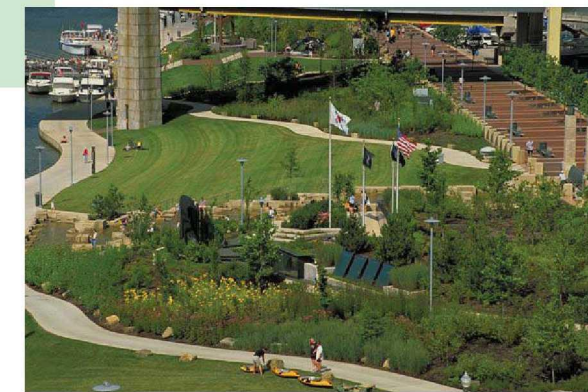
Allegheny Riverfront Park, Pittsburgh



Historic Arkansas Riverwalk, Pueblo



Harriet Island, St. Paul

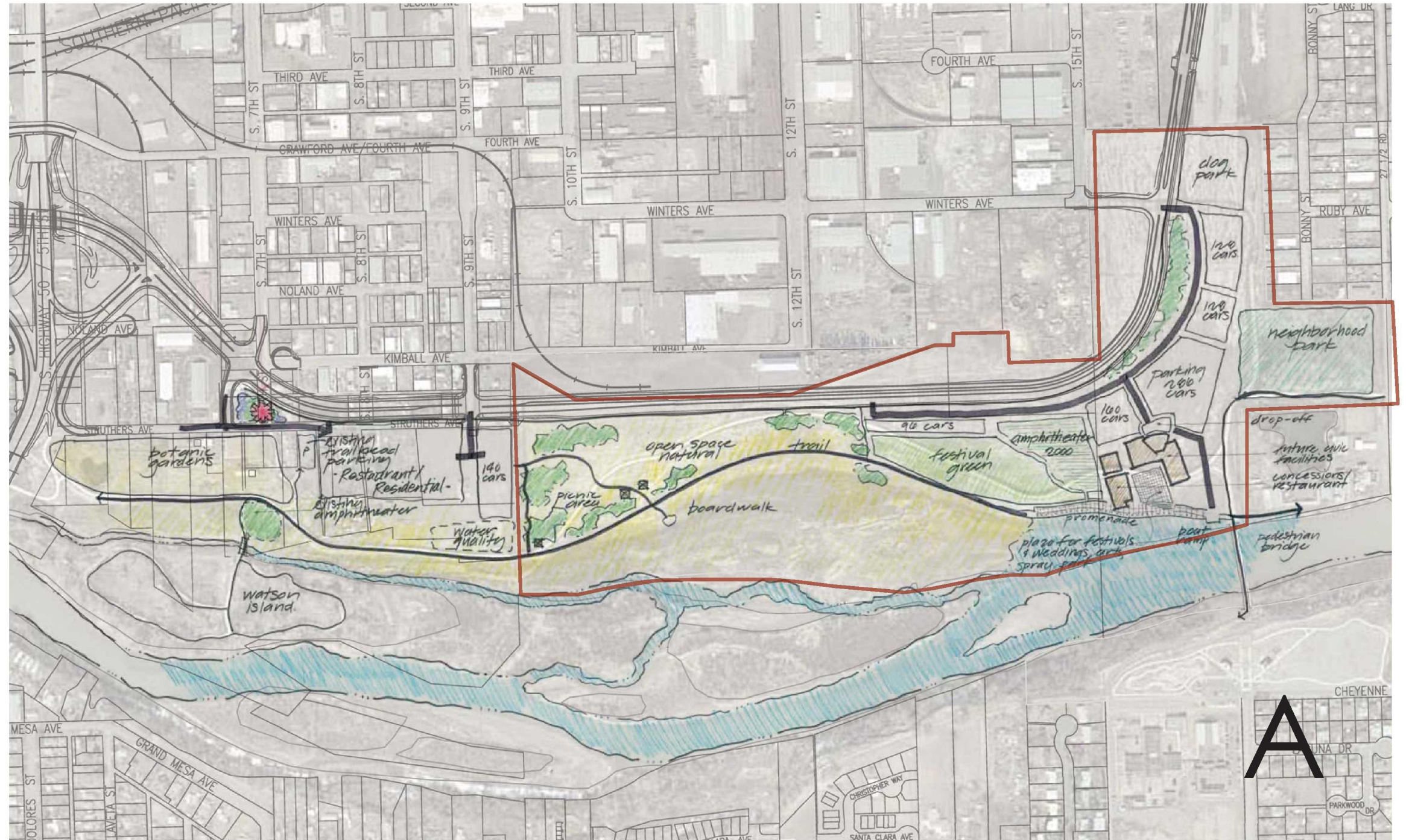


Allegheny Riverfront Park, Pittsburgh

Alternative A

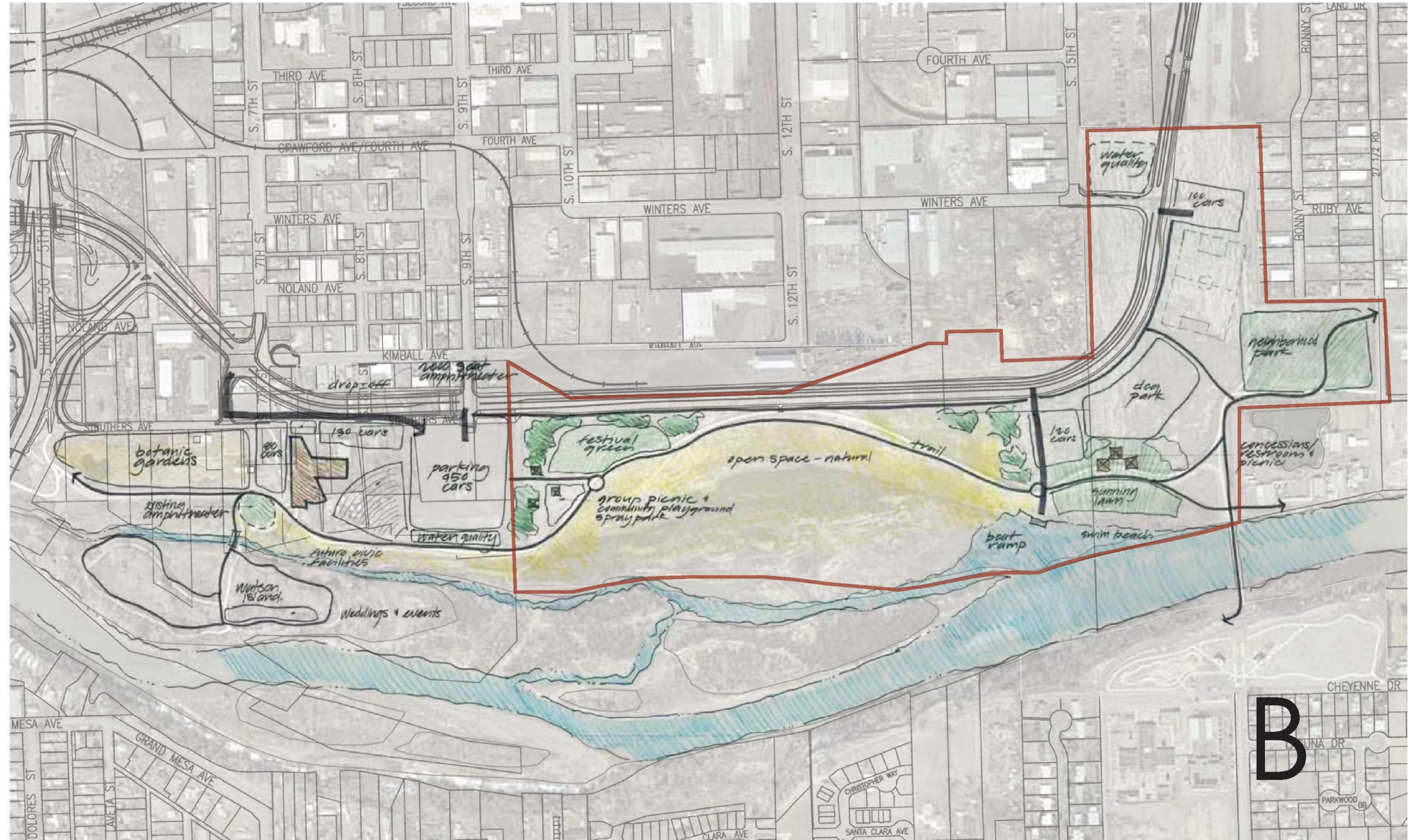
After meeting with the advisory groups to develop the program elements and goals for the project, the EDAW design team developed two alternatives for the Park.

Alternative A includes a new civic facility at the river edge near the existing pedestrian bridge. This location was chosen because it provides a unique opportunity for the building to be located near the river edge, but out of the flood plain. The new civic facility may be a library, a recreation center, or other similar facility. The building anchors the eastern edge of the Park and provides an active place after normal business hours, which is an important step in keeping the Park a safe and vibrant place. A generous plaza overlooking the river provides a unique place for community events such as festivals, weddings, etc. An amphitheater and festival green are located adjacent to the civic facility, providing a large flexible gathering space for community events. The western edge of the Park is anchored by a new mixed-use development located at the existing trail head. This mixed-use development may include restaurants, residential, and retail uses. Combined with the Botanic Gardens, this development creates a unique cultural hub for the community at the river front. The center of the Park is kept open. The naturalistic character of this part of the Park is an extension of the character of the river. The bike path, picnic areas, and boardwalks near the river edge provide multiple and diverse experiences for park users.



Alternative B

Alternative B locates the civic facility, parking, and amphitheater on the western edge of the Park, adjacent to the Botanic Gardens. In addition, a group picnic area, community playground, and festival green are provided. Together with the Botanic Gardens, this creates a cultural hub for the community. The eastern edge of the Park is recreational focused, and includes a sunning lawn, dog park, concessions, recreational fields, restrooms, boat ramps, and picnic areas. A smaller neighborhood park provides a playground and other amenities for local residents. As with Alternative A, the center of the Park is kept open, with a more naturalistic character that is an extension of the river basin.



Concept Plan

The EDAW design team presented Alternatives A & B to the advisory groups and to the general public in an open house format. These alternatives were evaluated and discussed to identify the best approaches from each Alternative. Following this comment and discussion, the EDAW design team prepared a final concept plan at the end of the workshop.

Anchoring the eastern edge of the Park, the Concept Plan includes a 75,000 sf civic facility, a generous terrace overlooking the river for weddings or other community events, a water feature/children's play area, a festival green and a 2,000-seat amphitheater, and an 800-space parking lot. A dog park and park maintenance facilities are also included along this side of the Park.

West of the Park boundary between the Botanic Garden and the Park, a privately-owned mixed-use center provides restaurants and appropriate retail uses, such as canoe and bicycle rental, and other river recreational focused businesses. An adventure course or other similar use is proposed on Watson Island, providing a unique place for children to play or a place for group team building exercises. A 100-space parking lot is provided near the existing trailhead, which expands the capacity of the existing parking lot. Near this parking lot, a small community playground, picnic shelters, and common green are located. These areas are clustered near the parking lot, providing easy access for frequently used functions.

At the center of the Park, a series of

boardwalks extends toward the river from the common green, providing a place for park visitors to explore the rich vegetation and wildlife of the river basin. This central area is restored as a natural area that extends to the river edge.

Phasing

The master plan is well suited for phasing, allowing the Park to grow over time, as funding comes available. The following is a suggested phasing approach:

Phase I

1. *Mitigate tamarisk along river edge.* This will open up the river edge, providing views and access to the river from the Park.
Approximate Cost: \$30,000

2. *Revegetate with native seed.* Amend park soils as necessary to accept native seed mixes, and install an irrigation system. This revegetation effort will make the Park more usable in the short term.
Approximate Cost: \$1,700,000

2. *Establish western entry into the Park.* This may require the City to acquire the private development parcel south of the 9th and Riverside Parkway intersection. This parcel provides access to the park on the west side.
Approximate Cost: \$235,000

3. *Construct new playground, picnic shelters, and commons area.* This will immediately activate the western edge of the Park, with visitors using these areas on a regular basis.
Approximate Cost: \$950,000

Phase II

1. *Establish eastern entry into park.* Construct park entry and small parking lot on eastern edge of the Park at Winters Avenue intersection.
Approximate Cost: \$235,000

2. *Construct dog park.* As with the community playground on the west side of the Park, the dog park will be used on a regular basis, and will help to activate the eastern edge of the Park.
Approximate Cost: \$375,000

3. *Construct Park Maintenance Facility.* Construct a new Park Maintenance Facility to house Park Maintenance equipment and supplies for Las Colonias Park, as well as other River Parks.
Approximate Cost: \$2,600,000

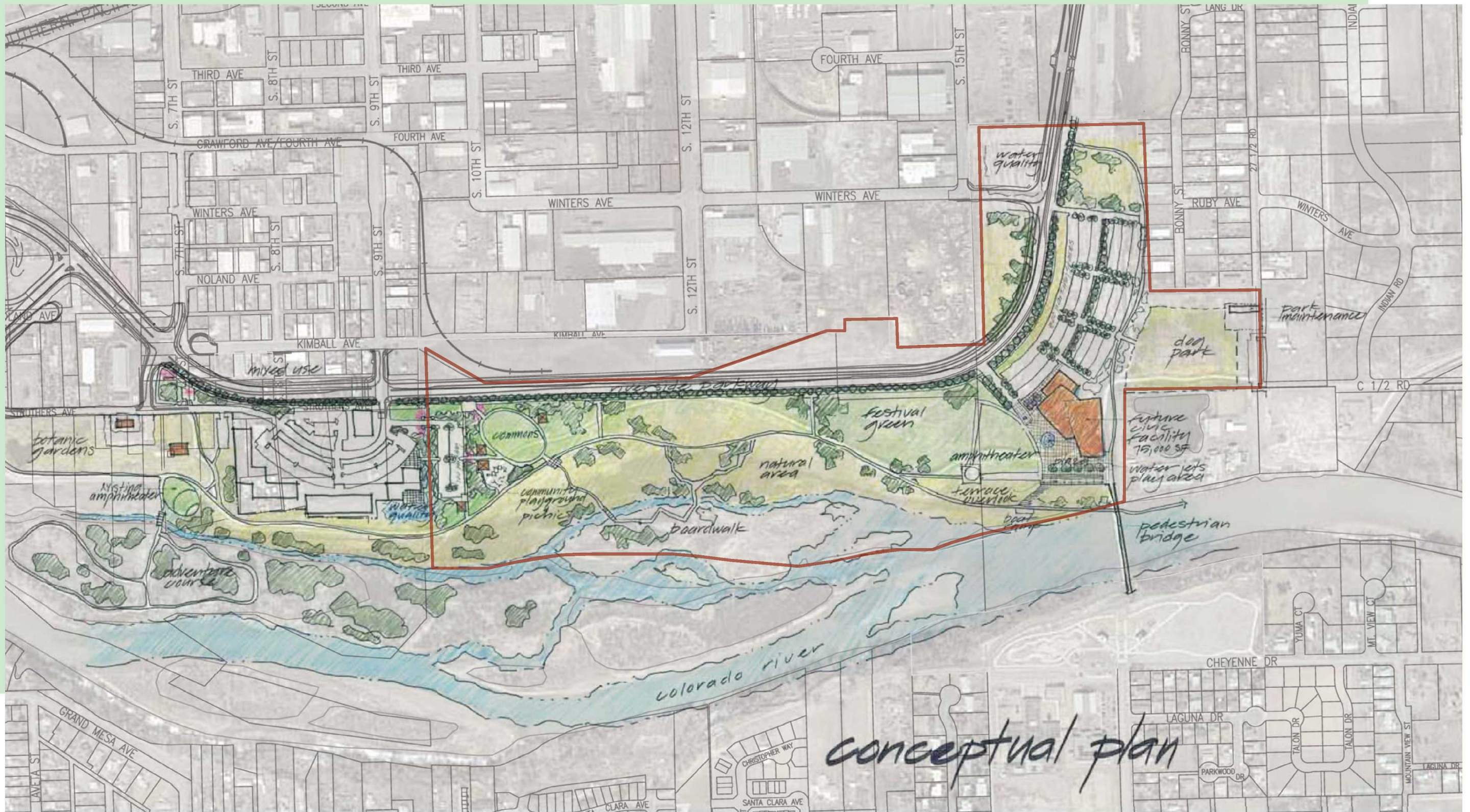
Phase III

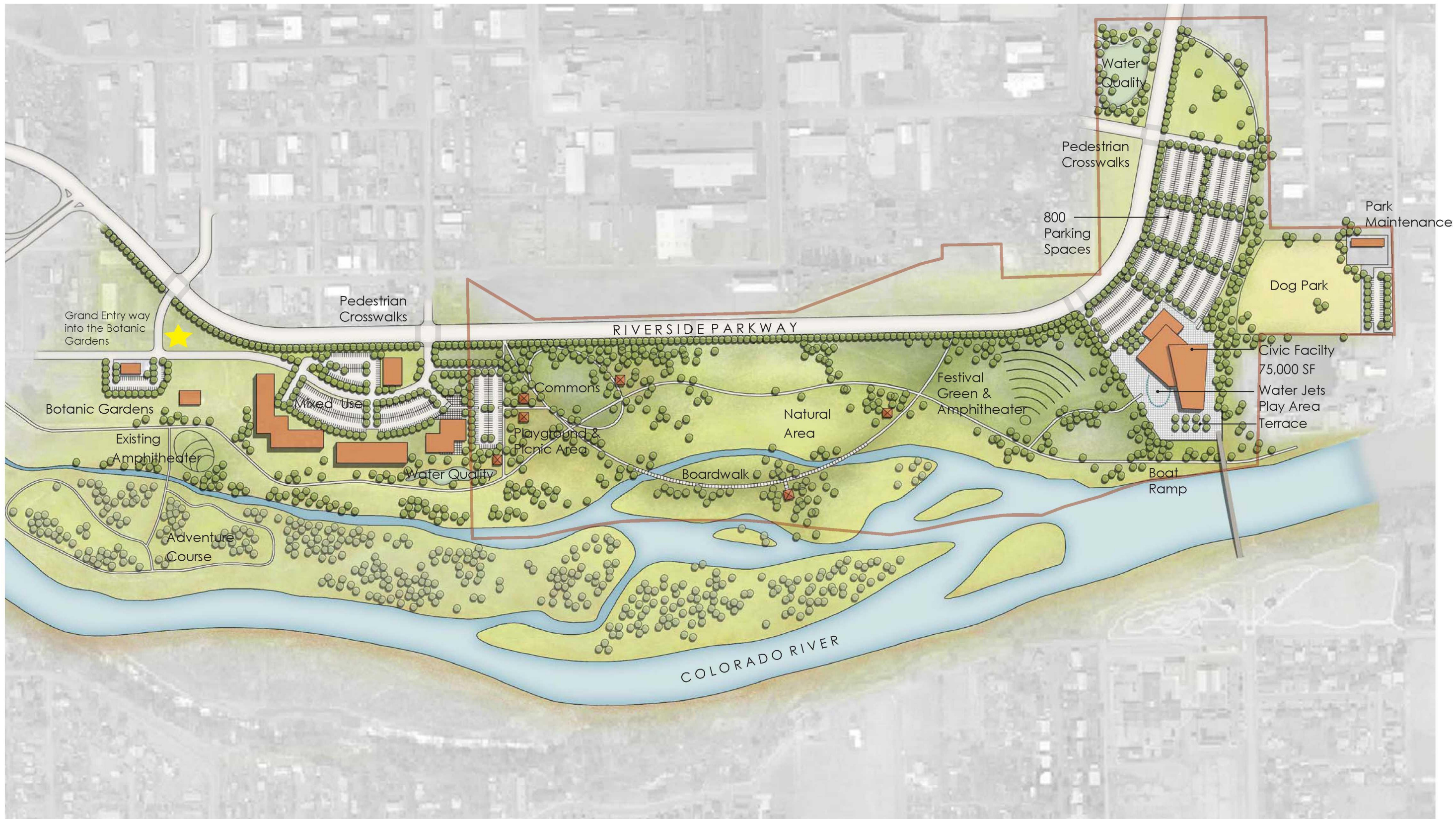
1. *Construct future civic facility, terrace plaza, water feature, and expand parking lot.*
Approximate Cost: \$11,000,000

2. *Construct amphitheater and festival green.*
Approximate Cost: 3,000,000

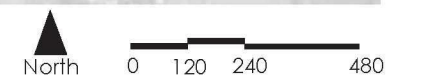
Phase IV

1. *Establish Mixed-Use Center.* As the Park grows in popularity, private mixed-use development including restaurants, retail, and potentially residential will become more attractive to developers. This will be funded with private development dollars.





Master Plan





Aerial Perspective



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