



STRATEGIC PLAN

Adopted May 20, 2014



Colorado Riverfront Commission

Advocating for coordinated community stewardship of our river corridors

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Introduction

The Colorado River provides a valuable water resource that sustains the agricultural and urban economies of the Grand Valley (greater Grand Junction area) in western Colorado, which is one of the largest metropolitan areas located on the river. Since 1987 the, Colorado Riverfront Commission (RFC) has been dedicated to helping Grand Valley communities be stewards of this precious resource through revitalization and enhancement the river and its tributaries. We have done this through the development of the *Riverfront Project*. Often described as a string of pearls, the Riverfront Project is comprised of county properties, city parks, state parks and wildlife areas, and open space which are connected by multi-use trails stretching along the Colorado River.

2014 marked a significant milestone in our history, the completion of the Riverfront Trail connection between Grand Junction and Fruita. We look at this milestone not only as an accomplishment, but as an opportunity to evaluate and build on all of our accomplishments to affirm our vision for the future. To do this we have reviewed our history, conducted multi-partner retreats, and interviewed community members. We see this strategic plan as a way to honor our rich history, incorporate our accomplishments and lessons learned, and set a strong path forward which will propel the Riverfront Project to continue to be a successful and sustainable venture.

Our Vision

A Colorado River system that is a centerpiece of the Grand Valley for ecologic, economic, cultural, and recreational values.

Our Mission

Advocate for coordinated community stewardship of our river corridors.

Our Values

- **Collaboration:** Our history and structure is rooted in collaboration and coordination. RFC's success over the years would not be possible without the combined work of local and state government, property owners, nonprofit organizations, service clubs, community volunteers, foundations, financial contributors, and many others. Collaboration is integral to our organization and we strive to continuously promote and practice collaboration.
- **Service:** The Riverfront Project was born out of a response to community needs. As an advisory commission to the four local governments, we are ultimately serving the community in unison with our local governments. Our community, the citizens of Mesa

County, and the visitors to the County are the people we serve as we implement the Riverfront Project.

- **Respect:** We highly respect our partners and our community. The RFC operates with respect for public process, private property rights, and for our partners. Each individual organization and their unique mission is integral to making this project a success; as RFC members we respect the perspectives of all of our partners as they collectively add to the success and dynamism of the Riverfront Project.
- **Apolitical:** Our charter positions us as an advisory board to the local governments in the Grand Valley. As such, we strive to serve our community and provide advice only on issues that advance our mission, and do so in a non-partisan, apolitical manner.
- **Communication:** The Riverfront Commission is the face of the Riverfront Project. In order to uphold this responsibility we strive to clearly communicate to the users of the riverfront greenway, raise awareness of the Riverfront Project, and coordinate with the other partners involved in the Riverfront Project.
- **Legacy:** As our founders before us, we strive to make the Colorado River a legacy for future generations. Additionally, our goal is to learn from our past and respect our history.

Our History and Accomplishments

By the 1970's and 1980's, years of industry and degradation had severely impaired the Colorado River in the Grand Valley. This, as a resource that the community depends upon, impacted the quality of life for area residents. For example, there was very little public access to the river between Palisade and the Utah State line and many areas along the river were severely polluted with garbage, mill tailings, and other wastes. There had been attempts by the Grand Valley community to reclaim the riverfront which resulted in several riverfront parks, Connected Lakes, Riverside Park, and the Lucy Ferril Ela Wildlife Sanctuary. However, more needed to be done. In 1987, our founders led an effort to clean-up junk cars and uranium mill tailings from a central parcel near downtown Grand Junction, Watson Island. The project was successful as it not only accomplished its tangible goals of cleaning up the site, it served as an example of how diverse members of the community from residents to governments could come together and collaborate to make these improvements. The RFC was formally established by Mesa County and the City of Grand Junction in 1987 to serve as the coordinating body to plan, advocate, and implement a multifaceted program to redevelop and reclaim the Colorado River and associated open space. The legislatively-created Colorado River State Park in 1988, helped by adding another key partner in the effort.

Since then, we have worked collaboratively with our partners to raise millions of dollars for the acquisition, design, construction and maintenance of the Riverfront Project's parks, trails, and open space. Additionally, the Riverfront Project partners have initiated and supported numerous events such as the Colorado Riverfront Concerts at the James M. Robb Colorado River State Park Fruita Section, Western Colorado Botanical Gardens events in Grand Junction, and Palisade Peach Festival at Palisade's Riverbend Park and others that promote the use of the river and its amenities.

How We Work

The Grand Valley's state and local governments – City of Grand Junction, City of Fruita, Town of Palisade, Mesa County, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife – are responsible for construction, operation, maintenance, management, safety, and liability for all components of the Riverfront Project.

The RFC serves as the coordinating body for the work behind the Riverfront Project. The RFC is an advisory commission for the City of Grand Junction, Mesa County, the City of Fruita, and the Town of Palisade. Commission members are volunteers and are appointed by the local government elected officials. We support the local governments by assisting with land acquisitions, fundraising, public awareness and education, and supporting improvements to the trail that enhance the users experience. We are a unique entity in that we maintain many long-standing relationships with many government agencies and industries that operate or manage land along the riverfront; we are able to work with these entities to solve challenges at a regional, rather than localized level. These relationships have been key to our success over the years.

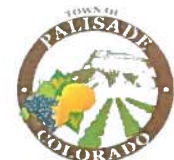
The Colorado Riverfront Foundation (RFF) is our financial arm. The RFF is a Colorado nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation and its purpose is to work with the RFC to raise and manage money to support the completion of the Riverfront Project. The Commission advises the Foundation as to the types of community projects the Foundation should support.

The Urban Trails Committee (UTC) is a subcommittee of the RFC whose mission is to advocate for urban trail connections to the Riverfront Project.

The Riverfront Trail itself was built through the acquisition of properties and conservation easements. All of the land that is utilized for the trail was either purchased or donated to the local and state governments that manage the trail.

Funding for the purchase of property, construction and maintenance of the trail, and other Riverfront Project activities has historically been provided by grants, matching contributions from local governments, and private donations.

Other Riverfront Project partners include Bureau of Land Management, Colorado National Monument, Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trails Association, Grand Valley Bikes, Grand Valley Audubon Society, Grand Valley Trail Alliance, Mesa Land Trust, School District 51, Tamarisk Coalition, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Western Colorado Botanical Gardens, and Western Colorado Conservation Corps.



Our Strategies and Goals

Strategy #1: Cultivate the economic, cultural and ecological values of the riverfront corridor

Strategic Issues

The Riverfront Project and its associated amenities have proven to be a community asset drawing community members and visitors alike. Opportunities exist because of the Riverfront Project that would not otherwise be available. For example, the Riverfront Trail provides non-motorized access to riverfront parks. The RFC has become ambassadors of the trail and other project features and must take leadership to partner with all of the other riverfront-related organizations to promote this community asset. There are countless opportunities to enhance the private sector and public use of the riverfront through development of restaurants, parks, open space, projects, etc. All of these types of development will collectively enhance the use of the riverfront and benefit the community. Creativity is required to make this happen. There are opportunities for the Commission to draw on its dynamic relationships and the diversity of this community to promote the economic, cultural, and environmental components of the trail system.

Goals

- Support the development and enhancement of riverfront parks, trails, open space, educational centers, and other venues that support the community's ability to enjoy the river;
- Foster and facilitate economic development along the river corridor where appropriate;
- Promote compatible land use to the riverfront and encourage compatible adjacent land uses such as parks, open space, wetlands, nature centers, and river oriented commercial uses;
- Encourage events along the river;
- Position the Riverfront Project as a destination for visitors to the Grand Valley;
- Encourage restoration and conservation of riverside lands;
- Promote educational and interpretive programs;
- Foster opportunities for art and other culturally significant events on the river; and
- Work with the business community to establish "riverfront friendly" projects.

Strategy #2: Support multiple uses of the river corridor

Strategic Issues

The Riverfront Project began with a group of community members who wanted to inspire change among a community to care for the riverfront rather than neglecting it. Today, there are numerous ways for community members and visitors to enjoy a clean and safe river. However, as much progress has been made, there are still many challenges ahead. For example, now that the trail is so expansive and used by so many people, it is

more important than ever to keep the trail a safe place. The opportunities for recreation along the trail and riverfront are endless. The trail also provides an option for alternative transportation that is unmatched in the Grand Valley.

Goals

- Promote the recreation along the river corridor as an important component of a healthy lifestyle and venue for physical fitness;
- Complete the Riverfront Trail as a backbone of the trail system in Mesa County;
- Support efforts to connect the Riverfront Trail to other urban and recreational trails;
- Uphold the trail as an alternative transportation corridor for commuting, and providing non-motorized access to riverfront parks and open space areas;
- Maintain public access to the river and river corridor through trailheads, parks, boat launches, and other venues;
- Strive to enhance the trail and riverfront user experience for all user groups (including families and the elderly);
- Keep the riverfront and associated trails safe; and
- Encourage ongoing efforts to clean-up and keep clean the riverfront.

Strategy #3: Inspire Stewardship our river systems

Strategic Issues

For the past 25 years the local governments have helped the RFC by taking leadership over the construction and development of the trail. As budgets get tighter the local governments, though supportive of the trail system, may not be able to take on as much of a leadership role. It is up to the RFC and the community to fill the gaps to ensure that the vehicle for connecting people to the riverfront, the trail, is supported. Stewardship of our river corridor and benefit to our quality of life depends on it.

Goals

- Educate the public, governments and the business community regarding the economic benefits of trails.
- Advocate for the ongoing maintenance of the Riverfront Project parks, trails, and other components;
- Build a diverse funding portfolio to sustain the ongoing maintenance and construction of the Riverfront Project;
- Raise awareness of the Riverfront Project among the community; and
- Foster community support of the Riverfront Project through use of the parks, trails, and open space, volunteerism, and financial contributions through programs such as creating a membership to the Riverfront Project.

Our Capacity for Reaching Our Goals

In order to achieve the above goals, the RFC must remain effective. The following are some strategies we will employ to do so.

- Strengthen our structure and recruit commission members with strong skill sets that will help us meet our goals;
- Focus on commission development and recruitment;
- Communicate often with our local governments, partners, and the community;
- Bolster collaboration between the RFC and our partners, namely the RFF and UTC;
- Raise funds from diverse sources;
- Create annual action plans; and
- Evaluate our progress annually.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the RFC founders and community partners for their tremendous accomplishments, for maintaining their passion, and continuing to pursue their vision for the Riverfront Project. We could not do any of this work if weren't for our government partners – City of Grand Junction, City of Fruita, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Mesa County, and Town of Palisade – who have been dedicated to the completion of the Riverfront Trail construction through funds procurement and grant applications, trail construction, trail maintenance, and park/open space management. We thank the Colorado Lottery and Great Outdoors Colorado for contributing a legacy of grant contributions to help us construct the Riverfront project. We acknowledge all of the landowners who have over the years gifted their estates, created conservation easements, or sold their properties to support the vision for the Riverfront Project. Finally, thank you to the members of the Riverfront Commission, Riverfront Foundation, and Urban Trails Committee for their volunteer service to the Riverfront Project.

