



## **CONFLUENCE PARK MASTER PLAN 2013**

### Executive Summary

#### PLANNING BACKGROUND:

Confluence Park is Denver's most notable cultural, historic and natural resource in the downtown area. Over 150 years ago with the discovery of gold, the city was founded at this location where the South Platte River and Cherry Creek converge in the Central Platte Valley. The face of the confluence has changed considerably over time as adjacent land uses changed from the original mining settlements to industrial dumpsites. In 1974, the City County of Denver and The Greenway Foundation formed a valuable public-private partnership to reclaim the South Platte River from a place of abuse and abandonment to a recreational and environmental amenity. The area now known as Confluence Park was the first and highest priority of the partnership to reclaim and revitalize it as a vibrant and inspiring place for Denver and its citizens. The park is the heart of an extensive 850-mile bike trail network throughout the Denver metropolitan area; and is surrounded by regional attractions, such as the REI Flagship store, Platte River Trolley, Elitch Gardens and the Downtown Aquarium. The park's points provide many opportunities for people to enjoy summer concerts, picnic, relax on the "beach" and experience the best whitewater kayaking course along the South Platte River.

Since the dedication in September 1975, Confluence Park has evolved with a number of additional improvements and enhancements, the latest of which will be the \$3.4 million reconstruction of Shoemaker Plaza and the South Platte River trail access. Funded by a federal DRCOG TIP grant, the project is scheduled to be complete by end of 2015.

#### PLANNING NEED:

The popularity and related usage of the various amenities within Confluence Park have reached a point where a re-visioning of the area is critical so that Denver's birthright can continue to evolve and meet the increasing needs of the park's visitors.

#### PLANNING GOAL:

To develop a comprehensive master plan that is bold and impassioned. The plan must respect and recognize the unique and significant status of Confluence Park, while allowing for its continued evolution, enhancement and protection.

## PLANNING VISION:

Confluence Park will be a regional destination and a local hangout. Park improvements will balance river restoration and recreational use to demonstrate the city's highest aspirations. A flexible framework will protect and enhance the river, provide an attractive gathering place in the city, and contribute to the vitality of the neighborhoods. **Confluence Park will represent the next generation of Denver's parks through four guiding principles: A Unified Whole, A Place to Touch the Water, A "Third Place", A Venue for Regional Gathering.**

### A Unified Whole

The Central Platte Valley has changed dramatically over the last 30 years, including the land uses along the edges of Confluence Park. Confluence Park has grown in size incrementally over the years and has been a major regional attraction on the river. The master plan makes large and small changes to unify and connect the park to take better advantage of its unique location and resources.

### A Place to Touch the Water

Confluence Park is Denver's 'beach'. Located at the confluence of its two watercourses, it has become increasingly popular for boating, wading and water play. The plan provides opportunities for people to sit along the river's edge and touch the water. The vision also demonstrates ways to improve water quality and raise public awareness of the water's value as a resource.

### A "Third Place"

Contemporary social theory defines the "Third Place" as a gathering place that is neither home nor work. It is a place to relax, meet friends, and socialize. All of which are increasingly important parts of contemporary life. Confluence Park has the potential to become one of Denver's best "Third Places" by activating its edges, linking park activities with adjacent private development. Confluence Park can become integral to the daily life of downtown residents and visitors with better connections to neighboring restaurants and businesses, more places for special activities, and with partnerships that support the park's activities. Confluence Park enhances the quality of life for the surrounding neighborhoods and for those who come to experience the park.

### A Venue for Regional Gathering

One of the select Festival Parks in Denver, Confluence Park is poised to become a venue for competitive whitewater competitions, as well as expanded outdoor entertainment, natural resource and fitness oriented programs, and other civic events. With the support of Denver Parks and Recreation, the Greenway Foundation, REI and others, the proposed improvements will allow robust programming to be balanced with areas for individual and small group leisure and recreational use on a daily basis.