

Reimagine the Rivers Edge

Our collaborative vision for the re-imagination of the river's edge is centered around balance. We are balancing the restoration and conservation of the Jordan River with activity, recreation, development, and connection. This balance will not only link residents and visitors to an ecologically diverse corridor, but provide year-round recreational opportunities, foster vibrant social gathering areas, support economic prosperity, and connect the surrounding communities and businesses alike.

Restoration

This design celebrates natural riparian features by restoring degraded and disconnected floodplains to their historic locations. The natural meander of the Jordan River creates a variety of native habitats to preserve and encourage wildlife habitat, buffering runoff to improve water quality, and embracing the river's natural hydrologic cycle with floodable landscapes and wetlands. One of the key elements designed to meet these multi-faceted and varied goals is restoring, and reconnecting, the Jordan River's floodplain to its natural meander corridor. Terraced floodplains provide a variety of hydrologic regimes and inundation levels to support emergent and upland wetland vegetation which creates specialized niche habitats and a vast array of ecological diversity in a relatively small area. Floodplains and wetlands also provide a wide variety of benefits, including floodwater storage, reduced flood damages, improved water, and air quality, soil formation processes, carbon storage, and recreation and education opportunities. We recommend restoring the floodplain along the Jordan River wherever possible. Where existing development prohibits restoring the riparian corridor, a variety of green infrastructure techniques can be used to achieve some of the same benefits. By giving the land back to the river, we can create a development that communicates with the natural world and allows the river to naturally activate and connect all the development, people, and wildlife along its corridor.

Conservation

This design focuses on the protection and enhancement of what is at the heart of the parkway, the natural corridor. Having considered the variety of habitats, the hydrologic cycle, river flow, wetlands, invasive species, native species, wildlife (existing and potential), and the necessary buffers to protect the critical ecological functions and features. Along with focusing on protection and enhancement, we have balanced the aesthetics, safety, and natural elements in an ecologically sustainable way.

Activation

Creating places, not just designs. Activation is more than a physical space, more than a destination. Ideas for activation should add up to more than the sum of the parts; diversity of activities, density and frequency. Activation requires new uses and users, differing but complementary scales, opportunities to gather, and ways for unique users to relate along the river corridor.

Recreation

Multi-use recreation is a focus of the design. Having considered the waterway, formal trails, passive use areas, active use infrastructure, and multi-use potential to expand the recreational use along the corridor. This design explores year-round recreation opportunities in one location, on a socially equitable basis, that represents the myriad outdoor activities that are available throughout the region. Design ideas are important, but we are also looking for cutting edge recreation-based business models that could be located along the corridor and stretching into the fabric of the Salt Lake Valley. This design brings several passive, and active, recreational opportunities that include disc golf, mountain biking, paddle boats, kayaking, fishing, walking, running, cross country skiing, bird watching, and ice skating.

Economic Prosperity

Greenways are fuel for economic prosperity; this is conventional wisdom. Considering the positive relationship between well-designed greenways and critical economic indicators as we have developed a vision along the corridor. Factors include the spectrum of recreation-oriented, mixed-use, and greenway-supportive bases. It is essential to explore development that embraces the surrounding context and is adaptable for future opportunities. Through these progressive development outlooks, we have provided a "heart" of the river's edge that would incorporate a hotel, movie theatre, restaurants, food truck center, boardwalks, and mixed-use residential and business opportunities. By daylighting currently channelized tributaries, the "heart" can become a destination for river-front public parks and private business. These opportunities will not only bring economic development to the area on a seasonal basis but provide economic sustainability throughout the entire year. The existing and surrounding business will benefit from the increase in activity and opportunities in the area.

Connectivity

Access is vital, and successful edges are porous. Connecting the parkway to the surrounding communities and businesses, emphasizing the opportunities for integration and interaction rather than merely geographic proximity. A goal of this design is to create a river walk district that is an iconic destination for the public with easily accessible trailheads and transportation hubs. From any direction, a user will be able to access the river walk and explore the higher intensity uses, such as the urban heart, or wander along the trail and appreciate the native wildlife in the same journey. A cultivated community will provide a sense of stewardship and involvement along the corridor. Through the design solution, there are multiple modes of access and circulation for people and wildlife, increasing the opportunity for active and passive uses, along with supporting the economic draw and viability throughout the year.

Through these solutions, we believe the river's edge will balance the natural environment with economically sustainable opportunities. This balance will not only increase the usability and draw into the corridor and surrounding area but allow for economic and development opportunities throughout the area.