

Communication Services
5334 South Prince Street
Littleton, Colorado 80120-1136
Phone: 303-795-5467
Fax: 303-734-5470
www.arapahoegov.com

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Contact:

ANDREA RASIZER

Communication Services Director

Direct: 303-795-4284

Mobile: 303-882-1909

E-mail: arasizer@arapahoegov.com

A visionary tale

Arapahoe County Working Group releases report outlining future recreation, accessibility and economic development possibilities for the South Platte River

LITTLETON, CO --- After completing a nine-month visioning process, the South Platte Working Group – a collaboration of city, county, state and special district elected leaders and staff - has released a report outlining a future vision plan for recreation, accessibility and economic development opportunities for the South Platte river corridor in Arapahoe County.

The *South Platte River Corridor Vision* report, which is available for review and comment at <http://www.arapahoegov.com/DocumentCenter/View/1792>, is the result of several months of research, discussions and outreach to stakeholders and communities, including a half-day charrette in September 2013.

“This report provides a more comprehensive picture of what we envision for the South Platte River corridor in the future,” said Commissioner Nancy A. Doty, who represents District 1, which includes the communities along the South Platte. “By working together, the members who make up the South Platte Working Group will be able to prioritize projects, pool resources and continue to accomplish our goals for this important amenity in a deliberate and thoughtful way.”

Convened by Arapahoe County in 2006 with an initial \$3 million pledge, and another \$5 million in 2012 – both funded from the Open Space sales and use tax, the South Platte Working Group has racked up several accomplishments in its short existence.

The South Platte Working Group, which consists of 21 local jurisdictions and agencies, has contributed more than \$25 million (including a \$5.25 million Legacy grant from Great Outdoors Colorado) for projects that have improved the environmental viability, restoration and beautification, as well as improved connections to the river greenway and park system from C-470 on the south to Yale Avenue on the north.

“This vision document is our way of strategically identifying how we can continue to restore this beautiful recreational, environmental and economic development amenity,” said Littleton City Council member Debbie Brinkman. “The South Platte Working Group has accomplished a great deal to improve the river corridor and this report charts a new path for future opportunities.”

By working collaboratively, the South Platte Working Group has acquired 50 acres of open space; built six new bike/pedestrian bridges and added six trailheads and 3.2 miles of new trail – all designed to protect, improve and restore this popular recreational amenity, which continues to be impacted by urban development and population growth.

The South Platte River Corridor Vision report outlines the group’s future efforts to improve and protect the river corridor. Some of the outcomes and recommendations from the report include:

- Identifying approaches to further integrate the communities of Englewood, Sheridan, Littleton and Columbine Valley to the river in ways that both increase recreational opportunities and facilitate economic development.
- Completing a series of “quick wins” or projects that can be pursued immediately to improve the recreational experience along the South Platte. The plan identifies 11 projects that are supported and can be completed with appropriate funding. Some of the projects identified include: improving the Oxford to Union Avenue corridor; enhancing the Little Dry Creek Corridor and improving the Centennial Park Oxbow Nature area, to name a few.
- Embracing the unique qualities of the South Platte by building on and embracing the industrial character of some of its areas for education, public art and cultural events.

“It really is exciting to see how the Vision Plan essentially captures some of the best qualities of the South Platte River in the northern part of Arapahoe County,” said Englewood Mayor Randy Penn. “This plan charts the future for the varied land uses that will make its mark on Englewood and other communities for years to come.”

Comments on the draft report are welcomed from anyone interested in the recreation, habitat and economic development along the South Platte. For more information about the South Platte Working Group, visit www.arapahoegov.com/index.asp?NID=469. A copy of the report is available at: <http://www.arapahoegov.com/DocumentCenter/View/1792>. Photos of the South Platte are available at: <http://www.arapahoegov.com/gallery.aspx?AID=13>

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About the South Platte Working Group:

Convened by Arapahoe County in 2006, the South Platte Working Group has secured more than \$25 million in funding, including a \$5.25 million Great Outdoors Colorado Legacy grant, to complete more than 20 projects aimed to improve the quality of life for residents in western Arapahoe County.

Members: Arapahoe County • Arapahoe County Open Spaces and Trails Advisory Board • City of Englewood • City of Littleton • City of Sheridan • South Metro Land Conservancy • South Suburban Park and Recreation District • South Suburban Park Foundation • Town of Columbine Valley • Trust for Public Land

Partner and Stakeholder Agencies: Colorado Water Conservation Board • Great Outdoors Colorado • Trout Unlimited • Urban Drainage and Flood Control District • US Army Corps of Engineers

Awards: 2011 Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners Stewardship Award • 2010 Blue Grama Award for Outstanding Achievement from the Colorado Open Space Alliance • 2008 Denver Regional Council of

Governments Metro Vision Gold Award for Collaboration • 2008 Arapahoe County's *Progress Takes Flight* Award

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