

Platte River Greenway

The City of Denver has turned a polluted river in into seven miles of ecological and recreational space for residents.

City: Denver, CO

Purpose: Create an ecological and recreational resource out of a polluted river in the center of the City of Denver

Lead Stakeholders: Government, Community, Philanthropy

Process: The South Platte River was a polluted river running through Denver until a major cleanup effort was started in 1974. The State of Colorado provided funding for the initial cleanup, and a coalition of city and state representatives formed the Platte River Development Committee to lead efforts.

The Committee developed small nodes along the Platte River into park space to start the greenway and simultaneously identified polluters in the river. They sued several polluters to force them to stop dumping in the river.

The Gates Foundation provided seed funding to develop and maintain the park. The newly minted Platte River Development Foundation invested \$35 million in the development of the greenway from 1975-2002 and now operates a variety of programs to maintain this ecological resource.

Outcomes:

- **\$350 million in federal funding** provided in 2023 for restoration work, resiliency updates, and infrastructure
- South Platte River Environmental Education (SPREE) programs offer annual **educational opportunities for 5000+ children**
- 11+ projects along the South Platte river that increase **recreational opportunities, waterfront reclamation, development, and public facilities**

