2011 ASLA Design Awards

Smoky Hill River Renewal Master Plan
Honor Award
Design Studios West

Planning & Urban Design
Smoky Hill River Renewal Master Plan
Salina, Kansas

Project Fact Sheet

Quick Project Summary:
The Smoky Hill River Renewal Master Plan is the comprehensive master plan to reclaim 6.9 miles of neglected urban river channel as a community amenity and resource. The master plan mends an historic downtown and neighborhood fabric by re-establishing flows to the old channel of the river that was cut off and by-passed by flood control levees and channel realignment in 1957. It is the result of two (2) years of organization-building and public engagement to establish a community-wide vision and identify comprehensive river improvements that will serve as tools to strengthen recreation and wellness, environmental, educational, neighborhood, and economic development of the community.
Through this extensive community-based process, the river master plan provides the thread linking community parks, neighborhoods, employment, and convention facilities with private redevelopment opportunities and the downtown.

Purpose of the project:
The purpose of the Smoky Hill River Renewal Master Plan has been to engage the public to establish a measurable public mandate for river channel improvements after 40 years of neglect, and organize a small, privately funded, grassroots citizen effort into an inclusive community-wide movement that evolve with the master plan project over a projected 30 years of implementation. The philosophy of the project as a citizen-based, public/private funding partnership is intended to provide a sustainable and stabile basis for the project duration.

Upon establishing the mandate for a river improvements master plan, the purpose of the project has been to identify and creatively integrate river improvements to restore the river and build economic development opportunities to while identifying and addressing the technical issues necessary to re-establish flows within the Old Channel of the Smoky Hill River.

Construction Budget:
Overall Master Plan (30 year build-out): $ 74,208,000
Primary Phase: $27,736,000

Landscape Architect’s Role:
The landscape architect served as Prime Consultant for the Master Plan, leading strategy development, public outreach conceptualization and facilitation, urban design, landscape architectural master planning and document production.

Special Factors:
Inventory and Analysis The purpose of the inventory and analysis conducted at the initial stage of river renewal planning was not to provide costly, exhaustive, in-depth research studies, but rather to provide an environmental and regulatory “scan” which results in identification of key issues warranting further focus in future phases of the project. In that regard, “existing and available” information compiled and provided to the consultant team by the City has been used for this inventory and analysis.

Based on that existing and available information, the objective of the inventory and analysis is to develop a sufficient understanding of the site to identify:

- Existing physical and regulatory influences that may include topographic, vegetation, soils and siltation as well as land use, zoning, long-range planning documents and Federal, State or other regulatory permitting.
Existing hydrologic, natural and urban systems at work on the site including, understanding how the existing Old Channel works as a watercourse (volumes, capacity, inflow and outflow elevations, etc); floodways, wetlands and riparian forest; access, circulation, streets, and bridges, utilities, ownership, land use and zoning.

Public Engagement - The Master Plan builds upon input, goals and interests expressed by over 3,500 participants in the Phase One Public Outreach conducted by the Friends of the River Foundation in the Spring and Summer of 2009. The Phase Two - Master Plan was conducted by the City of Salina, with the organizational support and mobilization of enthusiastic volunteers of the Friends of the River Foundation. The high standard of community participation established in Phase One Outreach has been continued in Phase Two. Through the Spring and Summer of 2010, Advisory Committee guidance and recommendations were reviewed, amended and widely-endorsed by over 3,200 participants at Community Open House events including over 700 participants at the Master Plan Alternatives Open House, and over 2,500 participants at the Preliminary Master Plan event at the Smoky Hill River Festival.

The Master Plan - Developed through a series of Advisory Committee meetings, followed by Master Plan Alternatives, the final Master Plan identifies river improvements for the Old Channel of the Smoky Hill River. Equally important, future opportunities for uses and activities created by those river improvements have been integrated in the Master Plan. Together, they illustrate a community investment strategy for improving the river, and a strategy for creating opportunities to attract private investment to stimulate the future Economic Development of the Salina Community.

The Master Plan organizes riverfront development concepts to support a comprehensive theme or development strategy that responds to the guidance provided in the Phase One Public Outreach. The Master Plan supports opportunities to build upon the strengths of three (3) Activity Centers identified with the Master Plan Advisory Committee (MAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Public preferences and comments received for each of the Alternatives presented at the Public Open House have been incorporated with the assistance of MAC and TAC input. Those Activity Centers are:

1. Regional Health Center Activity Center
2. Bicentennial Convention Center/ Kenwood Park Activity Center
3. Historical Cultural Activity Center at E. Iron Avenue

The strategy harnesses Salina Regional Health Center future growth opportunities, active athletics and recreation as economic stimuli for downtown and Kenwood Park. Additional components of the cultural and history interpretive center, downtown riverfront infill, mixed-use entertainment development and convention center balance reinvestment opportunities geographically.

Significance:
The significance of this project to the profession is that it highlights the Landscape Architect’s role as leaders in socially, economically and technically complex projects.
Friends of the River Foundation

Economic Development Committee

Goals and Objectives

1. To encourage public and private investment and new development that will create an economic stimulus to the area.
2. To enhance and improve the Old Channel area for the benefit of the Old Channel.
3. To encourage the development of the Old Channel area as a commercial and residential center.
4. To encourage the development of the Old Channel area as a recreational and cultural center.
5. To encourage the development of the Old Channel area as a business and industrial center.
6. To encourage the development of the Old Channel area as a transportation and communication center.
7. To encourage the development of the Old Channel area as a educational and cultural center.
8. To encourage the development of the Old Channel area as a recreational and cultural center.

Economic Development Committee

Friends of the River Foundation

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