

Revitalizing and Reconnecting Riverside Communities through Art, Civic Engagement, and Commerce

Oral panel presentation

Moderated by Stacy Beaugh & Shannon Hatch, Tamarisk Coalition

Contact Info:

- Stacy Beaugh, Tamarisk Coalition, sbeaugh@tamariskcoalition.org, 970-256-7400
- Shannon Hatch, Tamarisk Coalition, shatch@tamariskcoalition.org, 970-256-7400

Potential panelists/organizations to include:

- Traci Wieland – Recreation Superintendent, City of Grand Junction (*committed*); traciw@gjcity.org
- Thadd Shrader, Bonsai Design (*committed*); thaddeus@bonsai-design.com
- Cindy Enos-Martinez or other representative from Rio Initiative and Riverside Community
- One Riverfront
- Super Rad Art Jam
- Edgewater Brewery

This panel, comprised of diverse individuals (e.g. community, business, and arts leaders), will explore ongoing efforts to revitalize and reconnect long-neglected lands located near the confluence of the Colorado and Gunnison rivers; Grand Junction's namesake. Panelists will speak to personal goals and experiences pertaining to the implementation of the area's broader community vision, including expected and unexpected challenges and opportunities.

History and Civic Engagement: This area, which serves as the gateway to the Grand Valley via Highway 50, extends from the 130-acre Las Colonias Park to the Riverside Community, located west of downtown. Over the last century, this land transitioned from an agricultural area home to migrant farm workers to an industrial site occupied, at various times, by a uranium mill, a landfill, and a large-scale auto salvage yard. The Department of Energy began clean-up of the site in the 1980s and the land was deeded to the City of Grand Junction in 1997 for public use. Subsequent to this transfer, countless organizations and individuals have worked tirelessly to improve riverside habitat in this area, while also fostering access to recreational, arts, and business amenities.

Economic Development and Commerce: The City of Grand Junction recently began developing Las Colonias Park, which is located within the River District of the Greater Downtown Planning Area. Positioned within walking distance from shopping and businesses in the adjacent Rail and Central Downtown District, the River District also offers easy access to recreational amenities and active transportation commuter routes along the river. Development of Las Colonias has been a catalyst for private reinvestment and revitalization of the River and Rail Districts envisioned in the Greater Downtown Plan. In addition to Edgewater Brewery, which opened in 2013, several outdoor recreation businesses are considering office and manufacturing spaces along the riverfront through the development of Las Colonias Business Park. The Business Park, which will be housed on the eastern end of Las Colonias, encourages collaboration and creativity amongst industries, along with engagement and excitement for the outdoors with the general public. This Business Park will break ground in the fall of 2017 and will provide the momentum to finish Las Colonias Park improvements including a boat launch, dog park, and wetlands area.

Art and Education: A coalition of partners recently launched *Recreation Inspired by the Outdoors* (RIO), a program to promote connections to nature, while also encouraging healthy and safe lifestyles. Focused on the Riverside Community, this movement aims to inspire nature conservation and recreation promotion with area youth and their families. RIO leaders and participants, including those spearheading and installing murals along the Riverfront Trail, will discuss how their efforts have broadened support for the Colorado River, while also sparking greater community engagement and pride.