

River Parks Trail: Tulsa, Oklahoma

Purpose: The purpose of the River Parks Trail is to maintain, preserve, develop, and promote the Arkansas River for the economic and cultural benefit of the community. The goal for this project was to replace and expand the existing narrow, outdated, and congested multi-use trail while improving the quality and safety of recreation within the park. The deteriorating, existing asphalt trail was well beyond its design life. The rest areas were in disrepair and the lack of consistent lighting along the trail made it less than ideal to use at night or early morning. The new trail system provides dual, multi-use trails that create separation between cyclists and pedestrians that accommodate a large amount of activities to a diverse and growing group of users.

Impact: River Parks is a popular destination offering 26 miles of asphalt surfaced, multiuse trail along the East and West banks of the Arkansas River from 11th Street to 101st Street. The trail connects users to playgrounds, fountains, sculptures, gathering areas, fishing, rowing, kayaking, disc golf, Blue Rose Café, Elwood's outdoor cafe, and 45 miles of primitive hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding trails. River Parks Trail connects with nearby communities of Sand Springs, Jenks, Broken Arrow, and Bixby. Activities along the trail corridor feature concerts at award winning QuikTrip Plaza and Playground, festivals, fireworks, sponsored runs and professional cycling competitions. With the new curbed dual trail, rest areas and amenities, new lighting with improved distribution, and designated native habitats, the trail has become an integral part of Tulsa's Downtown revitalization. An important connection to adjacent neighborhoods, River Parks Trail provides a recreational trail and important commuter route between South Tulsa and downtown.

Special Factors and Significance:

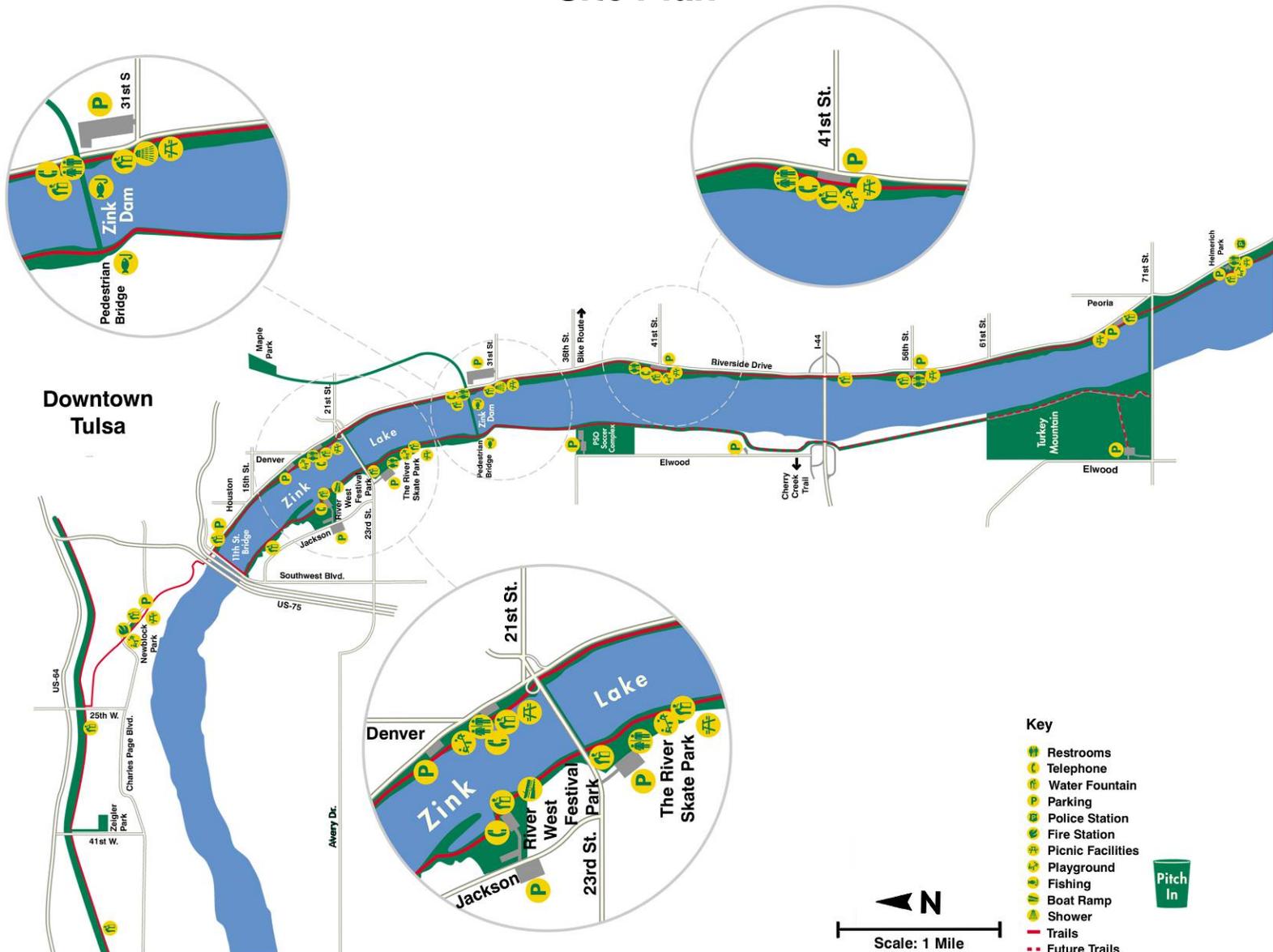
The trail system includes the East and West banks along the Arkansas River. The area is maintained by the River Parks Authority – a public-private partnership between Tulsa County and the City of Tulsa. The entire River Parks Trail system has been divided into ten phases to accommodate construction bidding for multiple property owners and concurrent City and road construction projects within the park area. The East Bank Trail is situated between the Arkansas River and the well traveled Riverside Drive. In order to create a safety buffer, new tree and shrub plantings were used between the trail and roadway to help separate the trail users and cars. When feasible, the trail was diverted away from the road to utilize green space and distancing the user from city noise. Some of the design factors included: increasing overall trail width, improving fluidity of curves for those on bikes, skates or boards while addressing AASTO and ADA slope requirements. A colored concrete flush curb was utilized to help maintain the asphalt edge. To remedy the problem of over crowding on a multi-use dual directional trail, the route was split into separate bike and pedestrian trails. On each trail, directional pavement markings and signs were used to achieve clarity along with centerlines that help avoid collisions. Along the edge of the pedestrian trail is a 2'-0" wide crusher fines trail for runners. Local crusher fines were utilized in an attempt to decrease the projects overall footprint. Many areas along the Arkansas River are home to a diverse variety of wildlife. In many cases, it was necessary to re-align the trail to preserve and protect the wildlife. Habitat was also increased with the planting of attractive, wildlife friendly varieties of trees and shrubs.

Role of the Landscape Architect:

The Landscape Architect served as the prime/lead for the project with responsibility to facilitate and manage the overall process from schematic design through construction. Several city wide design charrettes took place to gain an understanding of what the trail users wanted. As the prime/lead the LA either provided or guided the overall aesthetics of the site elements including the architectural features. The LA hired and coordinated the efforts of the architect and engineer through the entire design process. In addition, the LA coordinated the efforts of the City of Tulsa's engineer, irrigation consultant and geotechnical engineer. The LA was exclusively responsible for obtaining the 404 Permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers and finding of "no adverse impact" to federally listed species from the US Fish and Wildlife Service due to the proximity to the Arkansas River. The LA was responsible for managing the general contractors through ten phases of construction, and coordinating activities of specialized subcontractors (fountains, bridges, and playground). This included pay application review, budget review and coordinating with the City of Tulsa and River Parks Authority.



Site Plan



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General Design (Constructed Projects)

Project Name: River Parks Trail



Schematic Sketches



Dual Trail heading towards downtown by 21st Street Bridge



Trail leading by the disc golf course.

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River Parks Trail: Sculptures



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River Parks Trail: Disk Golf Course

- A new 18 hole disc golf course located between 36st and 51st street was designed with new DISCatcher Pro baskets, custom tee signs, and colored concrete tees.
- The course layout was specifically designed to work with the flow of traffic along Riverside Drive as well as trail user safety.
- The course utilizes varied terrain, elevation changes, existing vegetation, and water hazards for a variety of shots throughout the round.



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River Parks Trail

- The River Parks Trail winds through a green corridor on the east and west banks of the Arkansas River.
- The trail was constructed with colored concrete flush curbs along the trail edges for longevity and ease of maintenance.
- The trail consists of separate bicycle, pedestrian, and in some areas soft surface jogging paths.
- The trails converge into a dual trail divided by a reflective paint centerline



Bike Trail



Pedestrian Trail



Rest Area



Soft Surface Trail



Split Level Trail



Dual Trail Transition

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Site Amenities

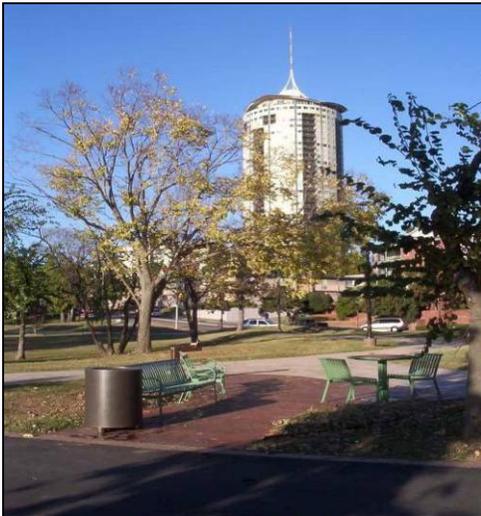
- The rest areas are comprised of stamped and stained concrete.
- The rest areas are coupled with local mossy limestone boulders & native plantings.
- Powder coated benches, chairs, and teak inlaid tables were utilized to provide a durable and aesthetically pleasing rest area.
- Each rest area has handicapped accessible tables & chairs. At least one table at each rest area was provided with an opening for wheel chair picnic access along with the use of armless chairs and benches.



6' Long Bench



Kim Bounce Light Fixtures



Trash Receptacle



Drinking Fountain and Dog Bowl



4'x4' Table and 2' Chairs

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Trail Planting

- The River Parks Urban Reforestation Master Plan encompassed an area between the pedestrian bridge (29th Street) and 61st Street. As a result of a thorough inventory and analysis, the primary concern was to address the **rapidly aging urban forest along the river corridor**. In addition, the need for **greater variety of color** in spring and fall was identified, along with a requirement for **low maintenance plant materials**.
- Special attention was given to the visual and spatial experience of the River Parks' visitors, with large trees used to enclose passive and active recreation areas, and medium and small trees strategically placed to provide a human scale to the reforestation plan. All trees were selected and placed to enhance the spring, summer and fall color palette in the River Parks urban forest.
- The dual trail is separated by landscaped greenspace with native tree plantings. The native tree plantings include native oaks, lacebark elm, zelcova hawthorns, pecan and redbud trees. **Over 1,065 new trees were planted along the River Park Trails.**



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Bridges

- There were many creeks and tributaries along the trail that needed bridging. The Design intent was to carry the trail theme and elements across the bridge with the color, frame work, & stone columns.
- The Bridges needed to be wide enough to provide an adequate flow of traffic without congestion when pedestrians or bicyclists converged.
- Increased lighting, caution signs, and narrowing the trail to slow the bike lane helped with the obstructed sightlines that occur near underpasses.



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Activities along the River Parks Trail

- Von Franken Run
- Polar Bear Plunge
- Scottish Festival
- Oktoberfest
- Tulsa Run
- ONEOK Freedom Fest
- Turkey Mountain Urban Wilderness Area
- Rowing/Kayaking/Boating
- Fishing
- Disc Golf
- Cycle station
- Exercise Station
- Rugby
- Volleyball
- Geocaching
- Reynolds Floating Stage and Amphitheatre



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Miscellaneous Site Photos



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