

Las Colonias Park



by Tamra Allen, AICP - City of Grand Junction Community Development Director

The Riverfront at Las Colonias Park is a 140-acre mixed use development along the Colorado River, located in the River District of the Greater Downtown area in the heart of Grand Junction. The site has a diverse and rich history, first as an area for sugar beet processing and migrant farm housing in the 1920's and 30's and later as a uranium mill in the 1950's and 60's, which produced 2.2 million tons of radioactive tailings. After clean-up of the site by the Department of Energy Legacy project, the property was deeded to the City in 1997 for public use. The initial master plan for the park was completed in 1998, with revisions made in 2017.

Recreational amenities in the Park include the Botanic Gardens, hard and soft surface trails, disc golf course, picnic shelter/restrooms, play area, amphitheater complex, festival area, a butterfly shaped lake, a dog park and boat launch. In addition, the Colorado Riverfront Trail extends through this area, connecting the valley from Fruita to Palisade, for a total of over 30 miles. Through a public/private partnership, the City of Grand Junction is developing a Business Park at the east end of Las Colonias Park, integrating it into the community park. The Business Park includes the development of approximately 15-acres as a high fit and finish campus, including 10 pad sites to attract outdoor recreation related businesses and 4 pad sites along the riverfront trail for retail/restaurant use. The plan also

includes a zip line across the River and a river recreation area through an enhanced side channel of the River.



The City partnered with the Downtown Development Authority to build the Business Park for an overall public/private investment of \$30 million (\$10 million public and \$20 million private). Anchor tenants are Bonsai Design, a local company that designs and builds aerial adventure courses, and RockyMounts, a company that produces bike, ski and cargo racks. Most of the Park infrastructure was completed in the summer of 2019 and the anchor businesses anticipate completion of their facilities in 2020.

The ambitious project restores and enhances the banks of the Colorado River, celebrates the history of the area, provides access for trail use and recreation and creates a unique outdoor events venue with a regional draw. The Riverfront at Las Colonias Business Park provides a desirable setting for the attraction and retention of outdoor recreation industries that will strengthen the Valley's economic growth and diversification. The public investment is also a catalyst for private reinvestment and revitalization of the River and Rail Districts envisioned in the Greater Downtown Plan.

This project would not have been possible without the support of the City's economic development partners, specifically, Grand Junction Economic Partnership, which is coordinating the recruitment of businesses and the Downtown Development Authority, which has provided the debt financing mechanism for the project. In addition, the City has been successful in leveraging a variety of other funding sources, including the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Great Outdoors Colorado, Grand Junction Lions Club, Colorado Riverfront Foundation, and a number of other private foundations.