

Building Bridges: The Renovation of St. Charles Place Park

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2021 Honor Award Community Engagement

by **Stacey Stickler, PLA**

The vision for the renovation of St. Charles Place Park began as a means to connect two adjoining properties: St. Charles Recreation Center and a new office sharing development located in Denver's Cole Neighborhood. The youth in this neighborhood think of this recreation center, an established cornerstone in the community, as their second home and it saves many from gangs and crime. The adjacent St. Charles Place Park was in disrepair, unsafe, and rarely used. Working together, both properties envisioned improvements for the park while acknowledging the need to put the voice of the community first. Youth leaders from the recreation center were engaged as the St. Charles Ambassadors to become the liaison through which community needs were expressed. The Ambassadors were mentored through the redesign of their park to revive the green space and create safe, active areas. Including the Ambassadors in the planning and design of this park was a new model for the City. Their partnership was critical to the success of building a healthy outdoor amenity in this underserved community.

After nearly five years of planning, design, and construction the ambassadors lead a final community volunteer build day in June 2021 and the park is now complete. Park improvements include nature play areas, fitness equipment, a large open green, accessible sidewalks and building entry, an ambassador mural, new parking lot, trails, an updated irrigation system, and plantings.

Photo credit: Scott Dressel-Martin

