

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the form.

1. How has the project impacted the local community?

In 1983 when the Providence Foundation began its campaign to reclaim the city's rivers, it faced the following issues:

- The rivers which link Capital Center, College Hill, and downtown together historically and physically were not visible. Of the 2,400 foot riverway between Crawford Street Bridge and Waterplace, nearly 70 percent was covered by bridges, decks, and a building.
- The low clearance of the bridge system and siltation did not permit use by recreational boats or water taxis.
- Historical granite river walls which defined the edge of College Hill were hidden from view by bridge decking.
- Cross-river pedestrian routes were undefined and dangerous because of ill-defined traffic movements.
- The World War I monument served as a confusing traffic rotary and was very difficult to access, hence "Suicide Circle."
- Downtown had no successful civic space that could serve as gathering place for the community.

The River Relocation Project gave the rivers and the city back to the people and organized and channeled the traffic onto a tree-lined boulevard. The project improves pedestrian and automobile access in a series of wonderfully scaled places that are appropriately designed to be part of the city's historic fabric. The project fully integrates architecture, urbanism, and arts programming to make an extraordinary place in the city – a place for living and for human interaction.

Waterplace Park and the RiverWalk are now the host for a myriad of cultural activities and programs. These programs include: the city's signature artwork—WaterFire Providence (a fire sculpture installation that runs for two-thirds of a mile through downtown on selected Saturday nights), Convergence International Arts Festival which sites over thirty large-scale contemporary art works along the rivers banks on an annual basis, exceptional music programming produced by CapitolArts Providence, Trinity Summer Shakespeare Project, and a wide variety of events produced by community non-profit and religious organizations. The architecture and continued programming of the park have provided the heart and soul for the city's renaissance. The cultural programming of the park brings additional positive economic and social impact to the city. Furthermore, the cultural programming is a major factor in the continued maintenance of the park.

WaterFire was designed to appeal to the entire community and to lure them into discovering and taking ownership of the new park and downtown, particularly at night when many cities can become empty. The installation has succeeded to the point of overcrowding. The work also incorporates spiritual aspects of community cohesiveness and public ritual and gives residents a new sense of pride. Remarkably WaterFire has actually changed how visitors behave in the park.

The project has changed the local and national reputation of the city and has encouraged continued economic development in the park area as well as additional urban projects including the extension of the network of walkways and bicycle paths and the river park system, the 5.5 mile Woonasquattuck Greenway restoration project, the relocation of Interstate 195, the creation of Collier Park by the Narragansett Electric Company and the development of the Heritage Harbor Museum on the shores of the Providence River.

2. Describe the underlying values of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project?

Social Values: Two-thirds of a mile of rivers were uncovered and restored for use by the people. 11 acres of open space consisting of rivers and parks were created where none existed before.

Urban Design Values: Transform the then-covered rivers into a major focal spine of the city. Enhance the confluence of the rivers. Provide new bridges with a quality of grace and river traffic accommodation. Provide a clear separation between vehicular and pedestrian use of the river corridor. Improve the setting for the World War I monument and provide historical context for the city.

Water Quality Values: Revealing the rivers and lining them with walkways creates a new public awareness of their value. As a result Citizens Bank formed and funded a group headed by the University of Rhode Island Coastal Center to monitor the river's water quality. A major initiative has begun to reclaim the entire watershed and a 5.5 mile River Greenway is now under construction.

Historic Values: Reestablish the original shoreline at the base of College Hill. Open up to view the 19th century cut granite river walls. Re-establish the traditional presence of water between downtown and College Hill. Create a series of graphic panels about the city's history.

Economic Values: Increase property values along the river corridor. The park area has helped attract nearly \$1 billion of mixed-use development along the river, including a 225-unit apartment building, adaptive reuse of the original railroad station, two office buildings, a hotel, and the \$460 million Providence Place shopping mall.

The park has provided a venue in which the cultural life of Providence is celebrated with all its residents and visitors. The music programming presented by the Providence Parks Department and CapitolArts Providence celebrates the city's diversity and brings the faces of the neighborhoods to the main stage in the center of the city. This programming offers opportunities for the residents of Providence to cross cultural boundaries and build tolerance. WaterFire creates a community celebration on a regular basis during the summer months, bringing thousands into the city and creates measurable economic and social impact. The Convergence sculpture that is on display 365 days a year offers the general public opportunities to experience contemporary art in a welcoming, accessible setting.

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3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate.

Public participation has been the hallmark of the design process dating from the initial 1983 waterfront study that launched the effort. A design advisory committee composed of citizens and agencies participated in the urban design process on a regular basis.

In addition, several public workshops and hearings were conducted. The Providence Foundation established and advertised six public workshops, including locations at neighborhood schools and a major downtown bank lobby. The final workshop was held at the first Providence Waterfront Festival, with over 100,000 in attendance. Models and renderings were displayed and questionnaires distributed. More than 2,000 questionnaires were returned, and some of their suggestions were incorporated into the final plan. One workshop featured a plan of the existing waterfront on a table complete with coffee cans filled with magic markers for folks to sketch their ideas or locate their favorite places along the waterfront.

The new river parks are now popular places for the entire community, from concerts to church services to weddings, from outdoor classes to historic preservation tours, to eating lunch or strolling with the family. The Convergence Festival features many installations and performances by local artists and non-profit arts groups.

WaterFire was specifically designed to engender and build community. The art installation seems to invite strangers to begin conversations among one another. The music presented comes from cultures all around the world and the symbolism of the balanced opposition between fire and water is universal. WaterFire is created each evening by a corps of over 100 volunteers, many of whom dedicate hundreds of hours of their time to the project each year. WaterFire actually incorporates the volunteers, the viewers and the urban site into the artwork, engaging the viewer and breaking down the barrier that often exists between the public and a performance. WaterFire symbolizes the power of a community to act in concert and transform their urban environment and has become a signature piece for the city and its renaissance.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable.

Financing for the project was innovative in that its roadway improvements enabled it to be funded by federal, state, and city agencies. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) accounted for approximately 70% of the funding, including such elements as the boulevard extension, the roadway bridges, and much of the riverwalk system. Under the RHWA independent walkways program, it was demonstrated that major elements of the project qualified for 100% funding, including five pedestrian bridges, a pedestrian concourse under the boulevard, and a significant length of the walkway itself. The City and State funded the construction of the relocated river walls. The planning for the project resulted in the creation of an additional development parcel assessed at \$2.5 million, which helped the City fund its share of the costs. Waterplace Park was funded by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) along with FHWA for the eligible independent walkway elements.

The Convergence International Arts Festival and WaterFire are free public events and both non-profit organizations raise their own funds. Convergence is partially funded by the Providence Parks Department with additional support from corporate sponsors, individual donations, and grants and additional in-kind support from the city.

WaterFire is always presented as a free event, open to everyone. It was initially funded primarily by private donations supplemented by corporate sponsors and in-kind support from the city. As WaterFire has become better known, it has received funding from the state of Rhode Island. WaterFire still depends upon a devoted corps of volunteers and regularly collaborates with other groups and non-profits.

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings?

Unique features of the project:

- Portions of three rivers are relocated in the heart of the City to provide an 11-acre river park and roadway system.
- The entire project was completed without the demolition of a single building.
- Because of the extensive roadway and transportation improvements, approximately 70% of the project cost was funded by the Federal Highway Administration.
- An in-depth coordination and participation effort involving the general public, State and City agencies, and institutions led to unanimous support for the project. The adjacency of a historic district enabled design features to be incorporated on the bridges which transportation agencies would not ordinarily consider eligible for funding.
- The project is classified as a multi-modal transportation project accommodating vehicular, boar, and pedestrian traffic.
- The project served as a model to the writers of the 1991 ISTE A transportation program.
- The project demonstrated that a mature small city can generate a renaissance which attracts residents and assists the "Grow Smart" movement.
- The balanced opposition of fire and water placed in the midst of a modern city is unique and WaterFire's impact is unprecedented.

The Convergence International Arts Festival is a regional success and has expanded to include Newport, Westerly, and Pawtucket. Convergence takes a fresh approach to bringing art and people together in public spaces and their solutions are adaptable to other cities.

WaterFire is a unique work of public art originally created by Barnaby Evans for the Providence river setting. One of his concerns was to create a work of public art that would reanimate downtown and transform how the public interacts with urban space. WaterFire embraces the entire urban site as part of the artwork, including the audience. The design elements that make WaterFire an urban success could certainly be incorporated into other urban settings and WaterFire is working with several other cities to design new projects.