The South Platte River extends 12.5 miles through the City and County of Denver from its border with Adams County on the north to Englewood on the south. It is part of a larger 87-mile network of watersheds and interconnected streams, floodplains, and groundwater that work together to support the health of Denver’s water resources. Years of industrial use, railroads, infrastructure investments, and channelization have impacted the health and functionality of the South Platte River, making it often the City’s “back door” rather than an accessible community asset.

Today the South Platte River is experiencing increasing development pressure and growing demand for mobility and recreational options, competing with what little remains of the river’s natural beneficial function. These urban pressures, coupled with changing climate concerns, force the City and County of Denver to examine the future of its urban waterway through preservation, enhancement, and recognition of this resource as a critical element of the urban environment.

The City’s policy direction supporting the future health of the South Platte River and its waterways is established through the 2021 Denver One Water Plan, Comprehensive Plan 2040, Blueprint Denver, and Game Plan. Policies within these plans provide the direction for establishing space along Denver’s waterways to improve ecological conditions and user experience. The City and County of Denver seeks to restore and enhance the natural beneficial function and experience of the South Platte River by ensuring adequate space to address floodplain, environment, mobility, recreation, and resiliency goals for the river’s edge. Through a 200’ Influence Zone as defined in the 2023 Healthy River Corridor Study, the City seeks to:

A. Prioritize the restoration of riparian habitat and healthy function of the river through 50’ of space generally free of structures, development, or furtherance of infrastructure improvements; and

B. Ensure room for future connectivity, increased trail, park, or natural space opportunities, equitable public access, and supporting land use patterns in the additional adjacent 150’ of space.

These City and County of Denver Departments hereby express support for the Healthy River Corridor Study and pledge to ensure the future of the South Platte River through consistent application of the goals within the Study, analysis of redevelopment within the Influence Zone, and engagement of property owners and stakeholders to achieve better design outcomes along the river.

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