

CONFLUENCE PARK FACT SHEET



LESSONS FLOWING FROM THE RIVER: USING NATURE AS A CLASSROOM

San Antonio, TX – There’s no need to be wet behind the ears when it comes to environmental education in San Antonio. Confluence Park—the San Antonio River Foundation’s largest single project to date—will finally break ground to begin construction on May 11th. Where for decades there sat a desolate and neglected concrete-lined industrial staging area, there will soon stand a state-of-the-art park that will inspire and motivate stewardship of our land and rivers and serve as a regional model for sound environmental education, design, planning and policy. Sitting at the confluence of the San Antonio River and the soon-to-be-revitalized San Pedro Creek, this unused parcel of land is well on its way to being transformed into a visually stunning and remarkably sustainable green space for all.

Confluence Park will be a learning center unlike any other. With environmental education as the core purpose of the park, instructional elements will be interwoven into virtually every aspect of the facility. Through a large scale demonstration of sustainable building and land-use practices, Confluence Park will provide a unique, interactive learning and recreational space for local students, residents, and visitors from across the region and around the world.

Confluence Park will provide experiences that inspire and teach valuable lessons about environmental science, river dynamics, water conservation, and physics, providing a unique opportunity to celebrate the ecology of our region, demonstrate the value of our natural resources, and foster environmental stewardship and education in a traditionally underserved area adjoining the San Antonio River.

State-of-the-Art Facility

Confluence Park can be understood as a life-sized teaching tool that will inspire people to become more involved with the river, practice environmental stewardship, and gain a greater understanding of Texas ecotypes. The park will act as one large, organic machine that gathers rainwater and harnesses the sun, using our South Texas resources to their fullest. At every turn, visitors will find an opportunity to learn through observation, engagement, and active participation. The park's programmatic elements and educational features will include: 1) opportunities to experience and learn more about five ecotypes that occur in our region, 2) a site-wide water catchment system which will collect all rainwater that falls on the site, 3) a primary pavilion constructed of large concrete forms that together create a geometry that collects and funnels rainwater, 4) three satellite pavilions that will create distinct gathering nodes throughout the site, 5) a multi-purpose learning space that has a green roof providing thermal mass for passive heating and cooling, and 6) a photovoltaic array that will provide 100% of the energy use for the project on a yearly basis.

Fostering Deeper Understanding through Hands-On Learning

Nowhere is the San Antonio River Foundation's commitment to education more evident than through its investment in Confluence Park. Through its use as a premier education facility, Confluence Park will fulfill the San Antonio River Foundation's commitment to the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) to provide the students and citizens of San Antonio and surrounding counties with an innovative and welcoming space to learn about natural river ecosystems and one of our most precious local resources—the San Antonio River.

"The need is definitely there. The San Antonio River Authority is able to reach a number of students each year, but there's no meeting place, no classroom, no facility that they can use to teach," explains San Antonio River Foundation Executive Director, Estela Avery. "Confluence Park will fill that gap and so much more—it will be educational, recreational, functional—we've pursued a design that will allow the park to meet a number of needs and be capable of expansion as programs and opportunities grow."

The centerpiece of the park will be an artistically inspired Lake|Flato, Rialto Studios and Matsys designed pavilion and educational facility focused on San Antonio's most prized cultural gem—the San Antonio River. A \$2.4 million gift last year earned BHP Billiton naming rights for the pavilion.

"Our educational system, which relies on textbooks, lectures and standardized tests in fluorescent-lit classrooms, is simply not engaging our students. Study after study has shown that multidisciplinary, experiential, hands-on learning fosters critical thinking and problem solving skills, enriches classroom education by making school subjects more relevant, encourages self-directed learning, and builds leadership qualities. Providing innovative instruction in a beautifully and thoughtfully designed space can only inspire more learning. It's what our students and community deserve," explains Avery.

Educating, Inspiring, and Connecting Communities

The San Antonio River Foundation is working to develop Confluence Park as a learning center like no other, where hands-on experiences in science, art, technology, math, design, hydrology, engineering, and more excite and inspire students and promote a deeper understanding of the principles they are learning in the classroom. It will offer inviting gateways to hike and bike trails along the Mission Reach section of the San Antonio River and it will encourage local citizens to become more involved with their river and its stewardship for many years to come.

The building of Confluence Park will benefit the community at large by providing a place to combine and improve SARA’s educational offerings, and it will enable the San Antonio River Foundation to establish and build community collaborations in a state-of-the-art educational facility that will assist area schools and non-profit partners in demonstrating environmental science lessons outside the traditional classroom setting. Best of all, use of Confluence Park facilities may be scheduled at no cost to area schools and non-profits thanks to a \$1 million educational endowment secured by the foundation.

“Confluence Park will be a first-of-its-kind, world class Park, connecting our neighborhood, our River, our ecosystem and our heritage,” said District 3 Councilwoman, Rebecca Viagran. “It is another chapter in the story of so many organizations working together to bring something beautiful and dynamic to the south side and all of San Antonio.”



Through the multitude of educational programs offered at Confluence Park, children will learn about environmental responsibility, not by listening to a lecture in the confines of a classroom, but by “getting their feet wet” in the open outdoors.

“We’re just starting to scratch the surface on all of the educational outreach programs we intend to offer. So much of the educational programming we plan to present is still being developed—exciting opportunities that we know we can turn into reality,” explains Avery. “Our efforts and those of SARA and our non-profit partners will inspire students by enriching the learning experience. We can inspire future scientists, artists, engineers, naturalists—Confluence Park can be the seed that starts it all. The opportunities are boundless.”

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