

Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area Midpoint Progress Report



Bringing Projects and Programs to Life
for the Yuma Community

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Introduction



A lone egret enjoys the East Wetlands.

In October 2000, Congress authorized the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area through Public Law 106-319. The legislation required the development and approval of a management plan and the creation of a management entity. The legislation authorized up to \$10 million in federal matching funds, initially for a 15-year period through 2015.

In February 2002, the citizen task force that had worked with the city for many years organized itself into the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area Corporation. This 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation is managed by an 11-member board of directors. The board of directors reflected a broad cross section of public and private community interests -- business, historical, and environmental.

The management plan was developed throughout 2002, and approved by the Secretary of the

Interior in December 2002. At the request of the community, Congress adjusted the boundaries of the Heritage Area in 2005 to conform to the seven districts created in the original plan.

The year 2008 represents the midpoint of the initial 15-year authorization period and is an appropriate time to assess progress achieved thus far, the challenges ahead, as well as what new issues may have arisen since the management plan was issued in 2002.

FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSMENT

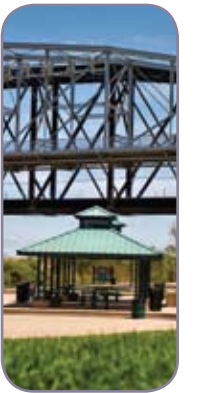
This report will review progress within each of the seven districts in the areas of projects and interpretive programming. There also is an appendix with a financial section, which reviews both base funding and all the match components.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

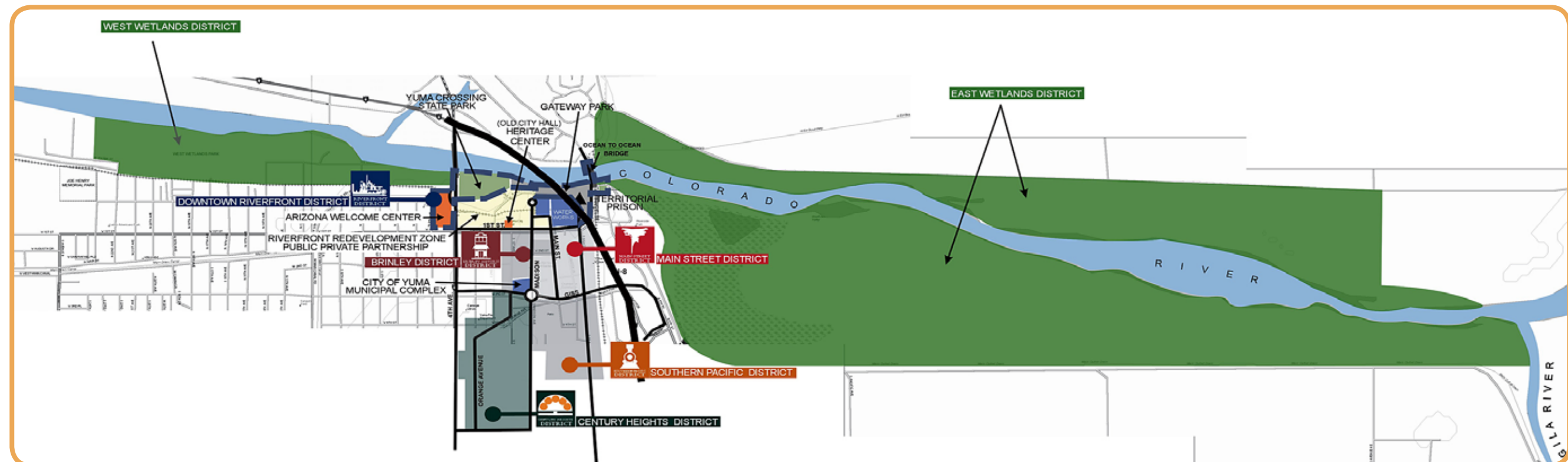
- Despite low levels of funding from the National Park Service (NPS), the Heritage Area has achieved considerable progress, primarily in the riverfront districts.
- The limited NPS funding (\$2.25 million over eight fiscal years) has been focused almost entirely on the Downtown Riverfront District and the Yuma East Wetlands. This narrow focus was necessary not only because of the riverfront's importance, but because these were the districts which had the most potential to attract partners and additional public and private investment. The Quechan Indian Tribe has been a critical partner and leader in that regard.
- While some projects in the four in-town historic districts have been completed, historic preservation/restoration and interpretation projects

have had to be largely deferred. As you will note, almost no NPS Heritage Area funding has been devoted to these districts.

- Major capital projects have taken precedence over those of historic interpretation, education and programming. This imbalance is an issue.
- Without the long-term commitment of the City of Yuma to provide staff and operational support — as well as local match for other federal and state grants — the Heritage Area never would have been able to undertake the work we have accomplished.



Gateway Park, framed by the Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge.



From early in the 20th century until 1970, a 110-acre riverfront site between 12th and 23rd Avenues served as Yuma's landfill—the “city dump”. This land use followed a pattern across the country of ignoring the importance of a river in the life of a community.

Beginning in the 1980's, there was interest in Yuma in converting this land for use as a riverfront park. During that period, Arizona State Parks worked with the City of Yuma to develop such a plan. Environmental concerns about the landfill and lack of funding stalled the project.

In the 1990's, the Yuma community made a sustained commitment to this project. First, the Environmental Protection Agency was asked to determine what mitigation was required to make the area safe and available for public use. After testing and monitoring, it was determined that covering the whole site with 6-8 feet of clean fill was the main requirement

Site of the West Wetlands, circa 1950



for reuse.

The Heritage Area task force, even before national designation, began working with volunteer groups and possible funding agencies to explore the awesome challenge of raising the estimated \$10 million to build the entire park. The first success was a relatively small \$23,000 grant from Arizona State Game and Fish.

The challenge was to develop a phased master plan, secure design and construction funding, and begin “early-action” cleanups and tree-planting involving the community. In addition, there was a need for an implementation team including a grant writer, planner, and construction manager. The City's long-term commitment to fund Heritage Area staffing made this a reality.

Securing construction funding continued to be the most daunting task. Funding agencies understandably were skeptical about committing to a project of such a monumental scale. The crucial breakthrough occurred in 1999, when Congressman Ed Pastor secured a \$1.45 million appropriation through the Bureau of Reclamation, funding that would be used to improve areas adjacent to Reclamation land and facilities, as well as the building of a boat ramp.

With this appropriation in hand, the Heritage Area was able to garner many other grants — all of which required a 50-50% match. In order to advance planning and grant writing, the Heritage Area committed \$150,000 of its funds over a three-year period. The Heritage Area secured three grants from the State of Arizona Heritage Fund: a \$95,000 trails grant; a \$372,500 SLIF grant; and a \$547,500 LRSP grant. The City of Yuma provided \$1 million in funding to help



Entrance to the West Wetlands, circa 2008

build roads and utility infrastructure within the park, and directed all public works projects to ship clean fill to the site. This in-kind match was valued in the millions of dollars, and was an important first step in covering the entire site.

In September 1999, the Heritage Area task force sponsored a community planning effort to finalize design of West Wetlands Park. With the master plan complete, work began immediately. While design began for “Phase 1” in the eastern part of the Park, tree planting by volunteers got underway. In October 1999, the Heritage Area hosted a volunteer day during which 700 volunteers planted more than 450 trees at the Millennium Tree Grove. Those trees today are 15-20 feet tall. Within three years, Phase One — covering about 33% of the entire 110

acres — was designed and constructed. This portion of the park opened in December 2002.

A part of the West Wetlands that had yet to be addressed was the “lower bench”, the lands closest to the river that were overgrown with arundo donax and salt cedar. This area was impassable and cut the community off from the river. The challenge was to clear the non-native vegetation and replant the species of cottonwood and willows that lined the Colorado River in the 19th century. Some experts questioned whether restoration was possible, given the degradation of land and lack of water. Congressman Pastor was able to secure an additional \$500,000 in 2001 through the Bureau of Reclamation for this pilot revegetation project — a project that would ultimately inspire and inform the entire East Wetlands project. Today

50-foot tall cottonwood and willow trees are testament to the faith that the lower Colorado River can and is being restored.

Since 2003, slow but steady progress has been made in the West Wetlands — though not on the scale of Phase One. While the Heritage Area has devoted staff time to the continuing development of the park, it has not been in a position to help fund improvements with NPS Heritage Area funds.

The City of Yuma paved the loop road throughout the park, though more improvements are needed. The lake, which was dug out in the Phase One project, was completed, filled, and opened in late 2003 with the additional Reclamation grant funds. In 2005, Arizona Public Service agreed to partner with the City of Yuma to develop a “Solar Garden”, a solar power demonstration area. In 2006, the Army of the West statue was erected with

private funding for both construction and ongoing maintenance. Clearly, however, the most significant recent addition has been the development of the Stewart Vincent Wolfe Creative Playground — one of the largest and most dynamic of its kind in the nation.

To memorialize one of their best friends who also enjoyed West Wetlands Park, Ron and Stephanie Martin made a contribution of \$100,000 to help kick off the fund-raising effort. The community responded and contributed more than \$450,000 in cash along with untold amounts of donated goods and services. The City of Yuma Parks and Recreation Department worked with Leathers and Associates to host design workshops that involved thousands of area school children. Literally thousands of volunteers came out — in the style of an old-fashioned barn-raising — during two weekends in February 2007. The playground

has brought the entire community to the West Wetlands and has reignited a commitment to complete the park.

During the remainder of 2007, the Heritage Area worked with the City of Yuma to update and refine the 1999 master plan. The new master plan will serve as a focal point for completing the park. Despite the current difficult budget environment, city and state grant funds will be needed to complete the park.

COMMENT: At current NPS federal funding levels, it is doubtful that the Heritage Area can contribute significant funds for capital construction. It can, however, continue to provide grant-writing and project management capabilities. If the City of Yuma sets a timetable for completion of the park and designates a revenue stream to pay for that work, the Heritage Area can seek matching grant funds and drive the design and construction of the facility. In the longer term, the Heritage Area may be able to assist with some funding for educational and recreational programming as a match to city efforts.



Top: The lake at West Wetlands
Above: Yuma children swarm the Stewart Vincent Wolfe Playground.
Above Right: Enjoying a walk along the river.
Right: The APS Solar Power Demonstration Garden

In December 2002, Congressmen Ed Pastor and Raul Grijalva joined Mayor Larry Nelson, YCNHA Chairman Steve Bell, and representatives of federal and state partners to dedicate West Wetlands Park.



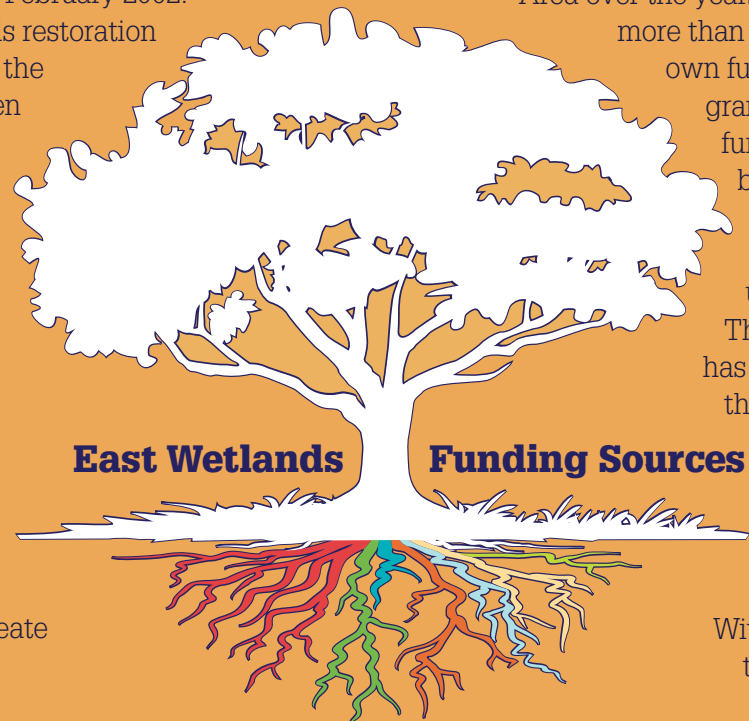


Ibises make their return to the East Wetlands -- and love it!

Over the last eight years, the 1,418-acre Yuma East Wetlands project has evolved from a trash-strewn jungle of non-native vegetation into one of the largest, most ambitious restoration projects in the Southwest. The story of the East Wetlands is the story of a growing partnership among the Quechan Indian Tribe, the City of Yuma, private landowners, federal agencies, and the Heritage Area — resulting in more than \$9 million in project funding and almost 500 acres of ongoing river restoration.

The success of the East Wetlands can be traced back to the reopening of the Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge in February 2002.

Before any wetlands restoration was contemplated, the partnership between the City of Yuma and the Quechan Indian Tribe was greatly strengthened when they agreed to jointly fund the restoration and reopening of the bridge. The bridge literally and figuratively linked both sides of the river and helped create a common cause to clean up and restore its shores.



- Bureau of Reclamation \$4,800,000
- City of Yuma \$1,100,000
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation \$100,000
- Arizona Water Protection Fund \$1,900,000
- State of Arizona, Heritage Fund \$600,000
- North American Wetlands Conservation Act \$575,000
- Arizona Game & Fish \$200,000

Heritage Area staff teamed with Fred Phillips Consulting to undertake the painstaking process of consensus-building, survey, sampling, analysis and design. This effort culminated in the securing of an Army Corps of Engineering permit in late 2003. The first 25-acre pilot restoration project began in early 2004, funded with Reclamation funds secured by Senator Jon Kyl and Congressmen Ed Pastor and Raul Grijalva.

Heritage Area staff knew that a broad base of funding would be needed to mount such a large undertaking. To that end, the Heritage

Area over the years has committed more than \$650,000 of its own funds to write

grants, provide “gap” funding not covered by other grants and manage the growing acreage under restoration.

This commitment has yielded more than \$9 million in grants from a wide variety of funders — a leverage ratio of 15 to 1.

Without the help of these funders, this project would not have been possible.



February 28, 2002, was a pivotal day in the life of the Yuma community: The reopening of the Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge. The Quechan Indian Tribe and the City of Yuma worked together to make this happen, and helped build a partnership which made restoration of the East Wetlands a reality.

The flow of funding has allowed the Heritage Area to increase the scale and accelerate the pace of restoration, transforming what was a wasteland of trash dumps, transient camps and invasive species into high-quality riparian habitat. In 2005, more than 55 acres and one mile of river bank was restored into a grove of more than 6,000 native trees. In 2006, an additional 70 acres of native forest and wetlands was restored. A major project has been the excavation and restoration of the river channels that used to be the historic confluence of the Gila and Colorado rivers. More than 220,000 cubic yards of dirt was excavated, and two miles of restored river channels, side channels

and backwater lakes were completed.

The City of Yuma built a decant water line that brings fresh water into some of the areas most in need of replenishment. An additional 85 acres of restoration took place in 2007.

The most ambitious restoration effort to date is planned for 2008, with more than 150 acres of land slated for restoration. Fortunately, local farmers have also become an integral part of the project in sharing proven tilling, flood-irrigation and farming techniques for dealing with the massive amount of native plant material and seed needed to restore this area.

The Arizona Congressional delegation remains steadfast in its commitment to this



Governor Janet Napolitano toured the East Wetlands "up close and personal" in March 2005.



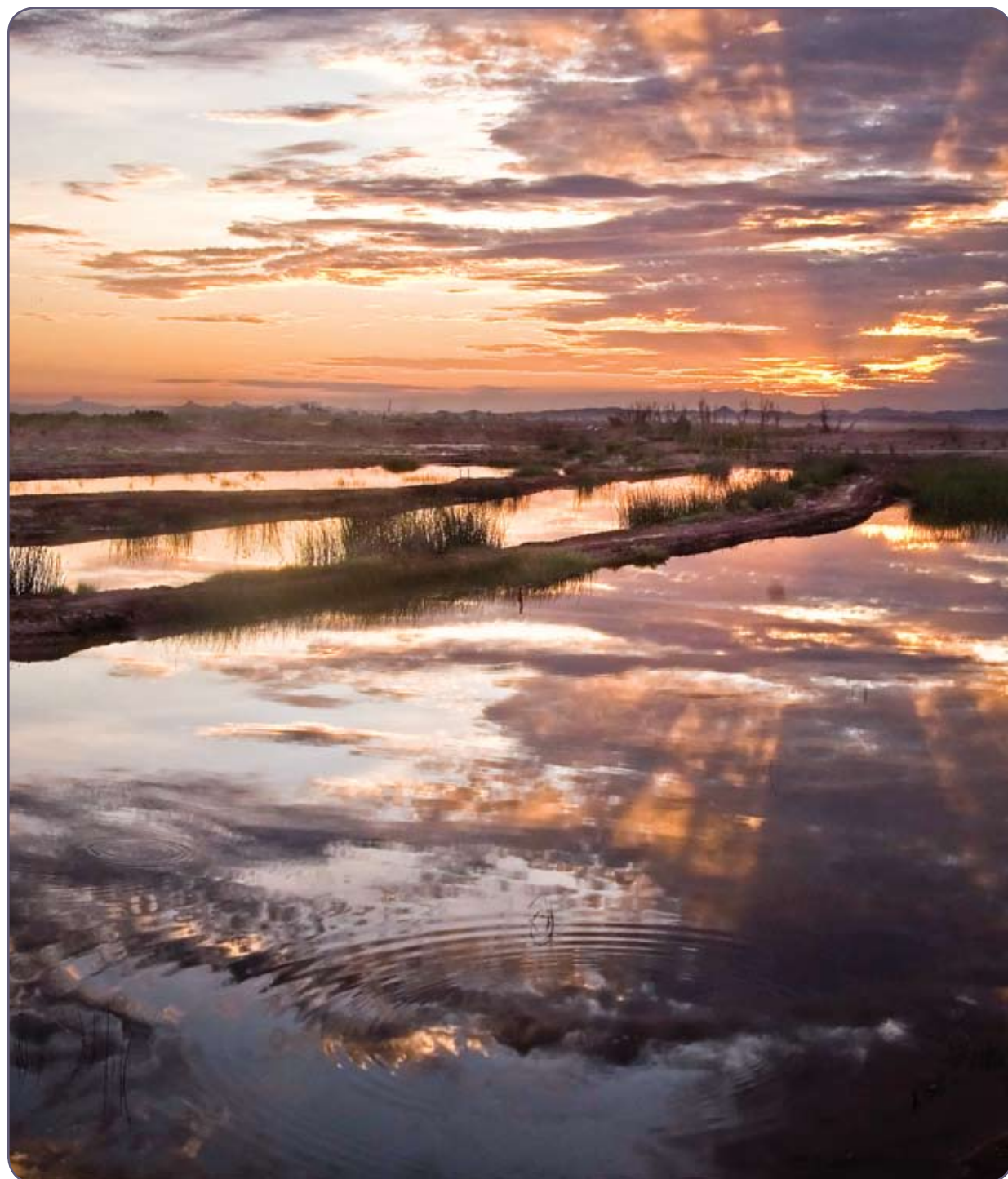
"Slashing and burning" may not seem like conservation to some, but it is the first step of clearing non-native vegetation. The results are beautiful stretches of native forests and restored wetlands.





Before and After:
Above: In 2000, surveyors struggled through 20-foot tall salt cedar to study the area.

Right: At the same spot, seven years later!



project. In March 2008, Senator Jon Kyl toured the East Wetlands and praised the partnership for its work. Senator Kyl pledged his support for completion of the Yuma East Wetlands project, as have Congressmen Raul Grijalva and Ed Pastor.

This renewed ecological haven of wetlands, forests and waterways has yielded exceptional habitat for more than 330 species of birds and wildlife. It also serves as a venue for canoeing, fishing, bird watching and outdoor recreation for the Yuma area. In 2009, the Heritage Area plans to open five miles of public hiking trails through the restored area. The Yuma East Wetlands now truly serve as a model for other restoration programs in the Southwest.

COMMENT: While the amount of acreage under restoration has continued to mount, the Heritage Area is well aware that the issue of long-term maintenance and operation of the East Wetlands must be confronted. Fortunately, the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Project (LCR/MSCP) has approached the Heritage Area about assisting with long-term maintenance of the area. Over the next year, the East Wetlands partners will need to develop a long-term program and budget and negotiate a funding formula that involves the partners along with the MSCP. A successful resolution of this issue will help ensure the long-term health of the East Wetlands. In addition, the Heritage Area needs to continue to seek out other sources of funding to broaden its endowment and foster self-sustainability.



Quechan Tribal President Mike Jackson Sr. and Yuma Mayor, Larry Nelson, present Senator Jon Kyl with a commemorative plaque. Senator Kyl has been a steadfast champion of the East Wetlands project.

For decades, Yuma has sought to reconnect the community to its most precious natural asset — the Colorado River. Although recognized for its historic importance as the Yuma Crossing National Historic Landmark, the downtown riverfront had become blighted from divided and complicated ownership, industrial uses, and disuse. The City of Yuma and State of Arizona had worked to create the Yuma Crossing State Historic Park in 1997, but it wasn't until the establishment of the Heritage Area and the formation of a public/private partnership in 1999, that real progress was achieved. The Heritage Area has committed \$1,080,000 — nearly half of its total NPS funding and much of its staff efforts to advance the Riverfront District. The City of Yuma asked Heritage Area staff to work with the City's development partner, Clark-Lankford, LLC of La Jolla, California, to undertake a six-year effort of joint planning, land assembly, and public improvements. It has taken the cooperation of all parties and considerable creativity, flexibility, and innovation to overcome very difficult constraints: physical, legal, and historical.

The results, however, will truly transform Yuma's riverfront: \$30 million of private investment has already taken place in 2008, with the total projected at \$100 million over the next five years.

JOINT PLANNING

Although the Riverfront District consists of 47 acres of gross land area, only 22 acres was usable for redevelopment, of which the City of Yuma owned just nine acres. As joint planning with C.W. Clark began in 2000, the site was constrained in multiple ways:

- The Yuma Crossing State Historic Park (9.5 acres)
- The Yuma Main Canal and Siphon (seven acres)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Kofa National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters (USF&W) (1.5 acres)
- U.S. Border Patrol Yuma Sector Headquarters (1.5 acres)
- Historic Yuma City Hall (one acre)
- Arizona National Guard Armory (three acres)
- City of Yuma water treatment sediment drying beds and raw water takeoff pump house on land owned by Arizona State Parks with an historic covenant (two acres)
- A massive, dilapidated, but historic hill with former railroad water settling tanks adjacent the Colorado River (two acres)
- The archeological deposits of the Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR) Hotel and the SPRR line where the first train entered the state of Arizona in 1877 (two acres)
- The City Water Treatment Plant (seven acres)
- And bisecting the entire site was the 80' wide inactive Yuma Valley Railroad line owned by the US Bureau of Reclamation, along with miscellaneous "orphan" parcels.



A miraculous transformation of the downtown riverfront —
Above: The Hilton Garden Inn and Conference Center nears completion
Right: A desolate view of the same scene back in 1999.





Above: A Unique Bit of "Recycling": A section of the Southern Pacific Settling Tanks was reused as the entrance sign for Gateway Park

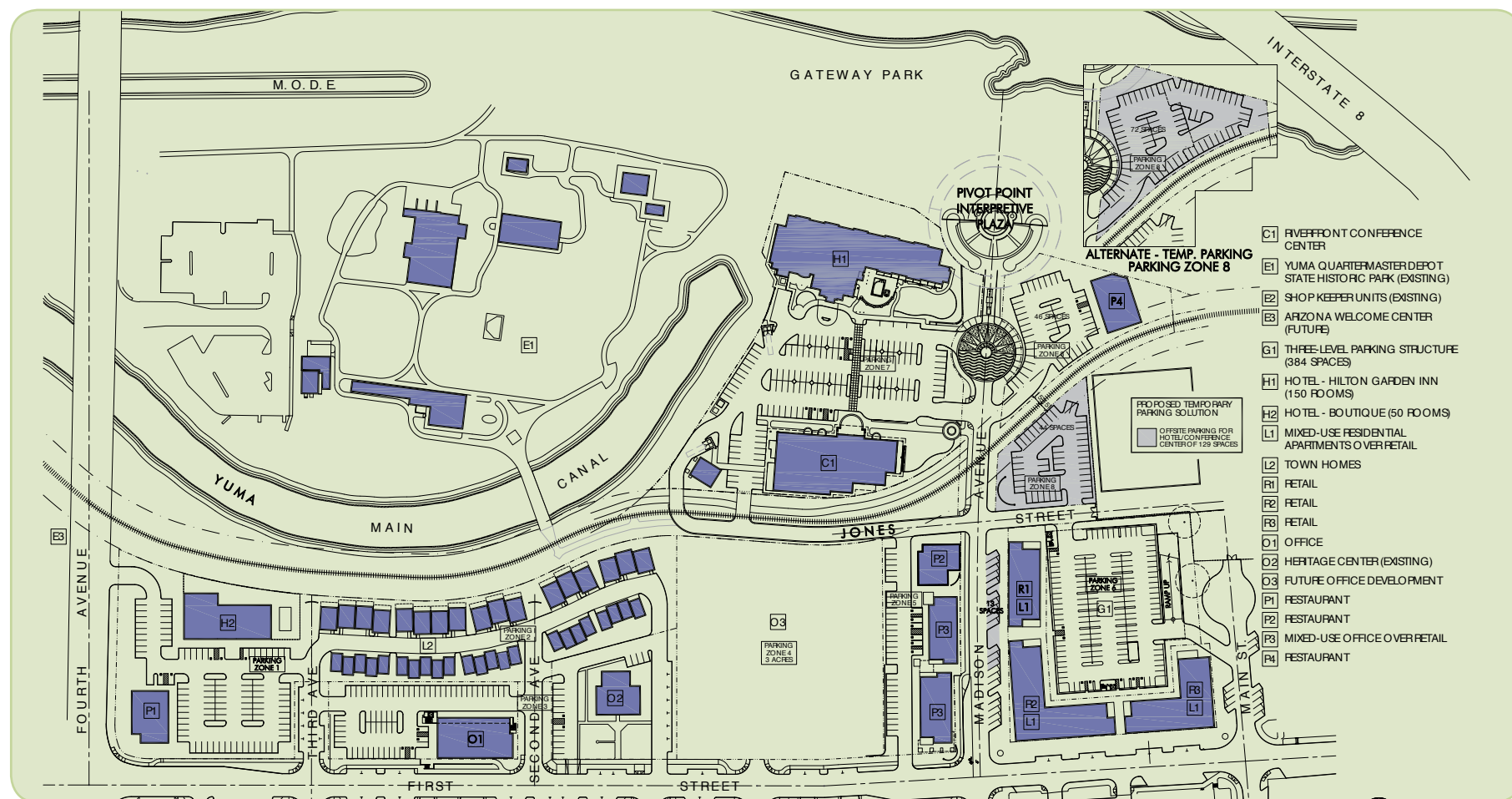
Right: The Riverfront Master Plan calls for \$100 million of private investment, including new condo, retail, and office development plus a new Federal Courthouse.

The north site boundary was further complicated by a high-pressure natural gas line operated by El Paso Natural Gas Co., the exact location of which was not known. In 2000, Heritage Area staff on behalf of the City and Clark examined the site in great detail, working together with all of the affected property interests and the public for more than a year to create the first master plan for the redevelopment of the site. The first and most difficult obstacle to the project was the historic

settling tank hill, which was slowly eroding and posed a growing threat to public safety. It also occupied one of the prime parcels for a new riverfront hotel and conference center. Through a series of meetings and working with local preservation groups, the City of Yuma and C.W. Clark, the Heritage Area secured permission from the City's Historic District Review Commission to dismantle the hill on the condition that portions of the tanks be conserved and reused in the project and that appropriate interpretation of the history of the

railroad be done somewhere on site.

With this obstacle overcome, the partnership completed its first master plan in 2001. The plan, which included a riverfront hotel and conference center, otherwise was heavily weighted toward retail uses. In August 2001 the Riverfront Master Redevelopment Plan was nearly complete and had been placed on the November agenda for approval by the City Council. But the events of September 11, 2001, along with the development of the Yuma Palms Regional Mall, changed the market completely.



What goes around, comes around... **Top:** In the late 19th century, the Southern Pacific Railroad built a magnificent riverfront hotel, which was demolished after the Southern Pacific line was relocated in the 1920s. **Above:** Bringing back the spirit of the railroad era, the new Conference Center reflects a similar architectural style as the historic Southern Pacific hotel. **Left:** The new Hilton Garden Inn will have great views of the Colorado River and Gateway Park.



Master planning was begun anew. While the riverfront hotel and conference center remained the linchpin for the entire project, the new plan created a “downtown neighborhood” concept, with a vibrant mix of residential, entertainment, office and retail. This plan was approved in December 2004 and updated slightly in April 2008 by Yuma City Council.

LAND ASSEMBLY

While the assembly of 13 acres of land for re-development was funded by the City of Yuma, the work of Heritage Area staff actually was critical to actually securing the property. The Heritage Area’s role — and some of its funding — has been important in consensus-building and resolving potential conflicts between development and historic preservation as well as working with state and federal agencies to assist in their relocation.

An excellent example of the Heritage Area’s

role was in helping resolve land issues associated with some of the hotel/conference center site. Two acres of the proposed hotel and conference center property, overlooking the Colorado River and located in the very heart of the Yuma Crossing and Associated Sites National Historic Landmark, was owned by Arizona State Parks. To complicate matters further, the land was burdened with an historic covenant held by the federal government that permitted no new development on the vacant land other than a parking lot.

To remove the historic covenant, the Heritage Area undertook and funded an 18-month process to reach consensus with federal, state, non-profit and local stakeholders to allow new construction within the National Historic Landmark through the creation of historic design guidelines. The Yuma Crossing Design Guidelines were structured to meet the requirements for historic preservation and infill of

Trying to Thread the Needle:

Building a new hotel & conference center in a National Historic Landmark presented great challenges. The Heritage Area brought all parties to the table, including the developer and historic preservation interests, to forge a consensus. The result was a set of new historic design guidelines for the riverfront which everyone supported.



the NPS, the State Historic Preservation Office, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the local Historic District Review Commission. The Guidelines provide for review and approval of all construction outside of the State Historic Park by the local Historic District Review Commission, which is unprecedented for National Historic Landmarks.

Of similar concern to the Heritage Area and historical groups was the preservation of the original rail line corridor and interpretation of the entry of the first train into Arizona in 1877. The developer, the Heritage Area and city agreed to create an interpretive overlook to tell the story of the Yuma Crossing on the very site of the arrival of the first train into Arizona. The Heritage Area undertook an archeological investigation to determine the best method to interpret what little remained of the rail corridor. In fact, the developer began to more fully appreciate the enormous marketing appeal of building in a National Historic Landmark and increased his commitment to preservation. The

developer has called the commercial project “Pivot Point, Yuma” in honor of the remaining concrete cylinder upon which the 1877 swing-span railroad bridge rested.

Land assembly began in 2000 and involved a number of relocations. The site had been used heavily by the federal government from 1845 until the 1960s and the property lines were so convoluted that it required more than a year of survey work just to define property ownership and parcel boundaries.

The first of the relocations was moving the Yuma City Hall off site and into the downtown. The City assembled underdeveloped land and the developer constructed a new 150,000-square-foot City Hall, freeing the site and the Historic City Hall for historic preservation and reuse as the Yuma Heritage Center, home of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area.

Also interspersed throughout the site were miscellaneous parcels, that the Bureau of Reclamation no longer needed. To avoid the protracted standard disposal process with the

One City Plaza:
Relocating municipal offices from the historic City Hall presented a great opportunity for downtown redevelopment.



The new “place to be”:
Gateway Park has become a very popular spot for fun on the river.

General Service Administration — and the risk that another federal agency might claim interest in these parcels — as well as to assure that Reclamation would receive title to the rail line, the Heritage Area staff provided technical support to the City’s Congressional delegation to introduce land-exchange legislation in 2003. Hearings before Congress on the legislation were not held until 2005. In the interim it was also decided to add the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (U.S. F&WS) Headquarters relocation to the land exchange legislation so as to expedite its relocation. The City’s Congressional delegation was able to enact this legislation on the very last day — and hours — of the 109th Congress. The City purchased the U.S. F&WS site in 2007, and took possession in 2008.

The U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) site was simpler to clear. The land was under a 50-year lease to USBP from the City and the partnership worked with the Congressional delegation to assure that the USBP received sufficient construction funds to relocate prior to the expiration of the lease. USBP vacated the site on schedule in 2003.

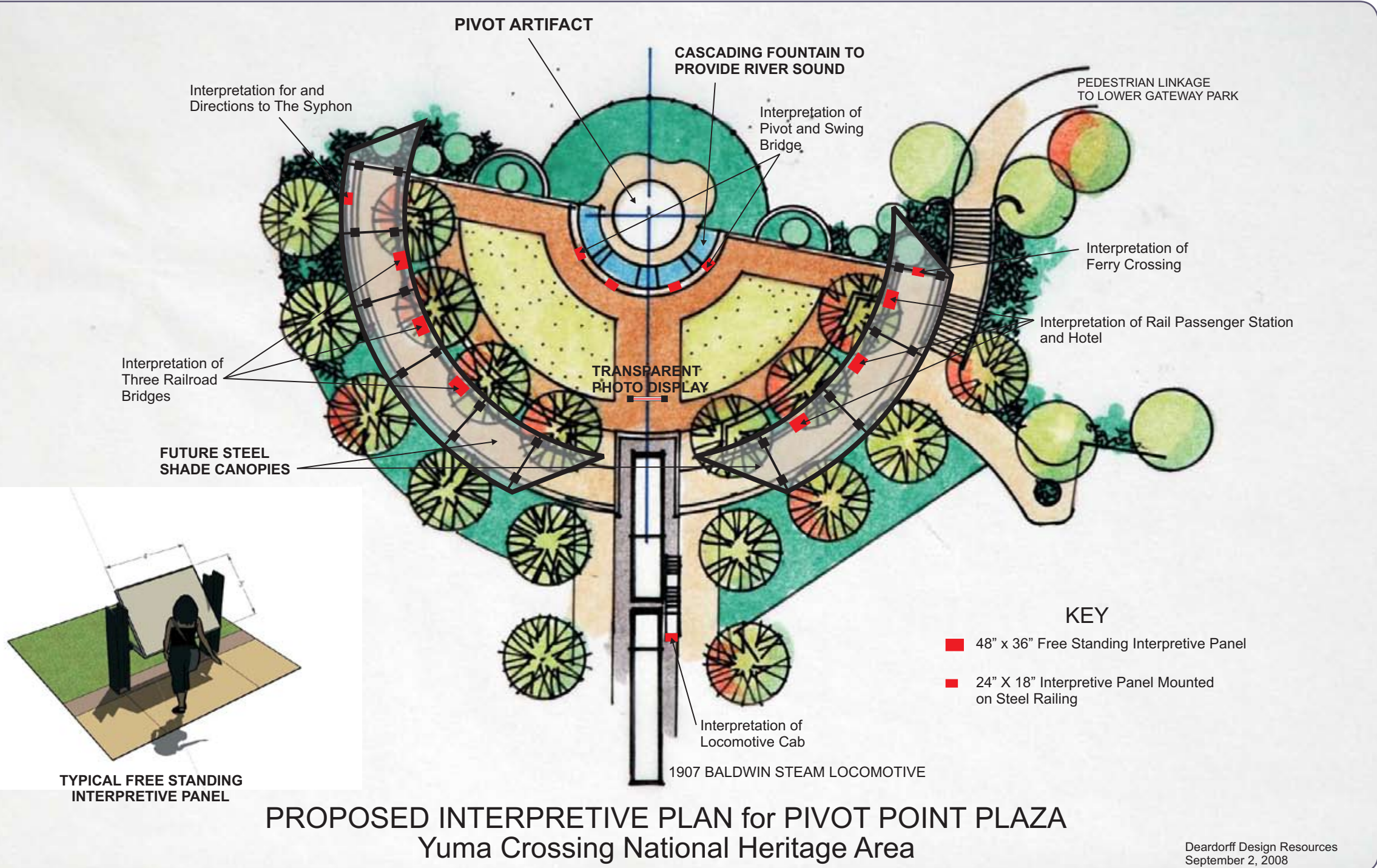
Relocating the National Guard Armory was a more complex undertaking. The partnership worked at both the state and federal levels to secure funding and negotiate a joint-use agreement for a new facility. The end result was the “Yuma Readiness and Community Center”, which not only gives the National Guard a new home but also provides public recreation amenities in the eastern part of Yuma.

PARKS AND PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

As a part of its commitment to riverfront redevelopment, the Heritage Area has undertaken a series of projects adjacent to and near the Pivot Point redevelopment. Overall, the Heritage Area has committed more than \$1 million in NPS funds to this district. The Heritage Area secured funds to design and build a multi-use pathway along the Colorado River between the East and West Wetlands. At the river’s edge just below the new hotel, the Heritage Area assembled more than \$4 million in local, state and federal funds to construct “Gateway Park”, which opened on May 31, 2007. The park greatly expands public access and use of the Colorado River, and is designed in tandem with the private development.

Yuma’s “front door” has been transformed in dramatic fashion.





Telling the story of the Yuma Crossing:

Above: This swing span pivot bridge let steamboats and railroads coexist on the Colorado River of 1895.

Left: The plaza next to the Hilton Garden Inn will overlook the Colorado River and bring Yuma's rich history back to life.

The Pivot Point Interpretive Plaza is a \$1.75 million undertaking intended to showcase the history of the Yuma Crossing and to connect the commercial redevelopment with Gateway Park. The Heritage Area funded its design and secured an additional \$700,000.00 of grant funds for the project, which was then matched 50-50% by the City of Yuma. The goal is to complete the plaza by mid-2009, and open the interpretive exhibits by late-2009.

Progress has also taken place in connection with the planned Arizona Welcome Center. The City was able to secure the site west of North 4th Avenue through the land exchange with Reclamation. The State of Arizona originally appropriated \$4 million for the project, with the City to provide \$1 million. In 2008, design has been completed with state funds, and a contractor has been selected. However, state budget difficulties forced the elimination of most of the construction funding. It is anticipated that grading and site work can move forward in the hopes that construction funding can be restored in coming years. The Heritage Area has committed considerable staff time to this project, and some NPS funding will be needed

to help interpret the City of Yuma Endurance Flight plane in its new home.

Just as the northern gateway to the downtown is being addressed by the Welcome Center and the southern entrance has been enhanced through the development of the new City Hall and roundabout, the eastern gateway along Giss Parkway needs to be examined.

A project that has been deferred due to lack of NPS funding has been the upgrading of the interpretive exhibits at the Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park, which still features 1960's-era exhibits. The management plan envisioned Arizona State Parks and the Heritage

Area each contributing \$400,000.00 for this upgrade. While State Parks has offered to commit these funds, the Heritage Area has been unable to match their commitment. The low level of NPS funding has had its most significant impact on this project.

Finally, the low level of NPS funding has deferred efforts to restore the historic City Hall building, which is home to the Heritage Area and a number of other nonprofit organizations who share the operating costs of the building. Given competing demands, this project will probably continue to be deferred.

The new Arizona Welcome Center will house the Yuma Visitors Bureau, greet visitors to the state, and help transform the 4th Avenue gateway into Yuma.



COMMENT: While the Heritage Area will need to expend NPS funds for interpretation at Pivot Point and the Arizona Welcome Center, it will only be able to help upgrade interpretation at the Yuma Territorial Prison if NPS funding is greatly increased. In fact, most of the new investment in this district in the next five to seven years will come from the private sector.

Given the needs of other districts that have not received funding, it is unlikely (especially at current NPS funding levels) that the historic City Hall will be restored.

While NPS funds will be minimal, there is the possibility of attracting transportation enhancement funds to improve the Giss

Parkway gateway to both the Yuma Territorial Prison and the downtown. This would involve a commitment of staff time for grant writing and project management.

Finally, the Executive Committee of the Board has discussed the importance of partnering with the Quechan Indian Tribe to help assess and undertake restoration on the north side of the river from the Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge to just beyond the 4th Avenue Bridge. This was considered a high priority by the Board.

Total public and private funding to date is \$40.75 million, not including NPS funding.

Welcome to the Rock!:

The Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park is a favorite for residents and visitors alike. With increased funding, the Heritage Area could help Arizona State Parks upgrade the park with an improved entryway and historical exhibits featuring 21st century technology.

“Down on Main Street”:
Main Street hosts many festivals and special events, like this Classic Car Cruise-In.

Although the Heritage Area has committed no NPS funds to this district, it did undertake the reconstruction and reopening of Main Street. The Heritage Area helped to foster consensus and secure \$1.5 million in transportation enhancement funds to complete the project with \$2.3 million in City funds. The Heritage Area staff managed the design and construction of this project on behalf of the City of Yuma as part of its partnership with the City.

Another key project in this district is the restoration of the Hotel Del Sol. Again, while staff time has been committed, no NPS funds have been available. However, staff did secure a transportation enhancement grant to purchase the building on behalf of the City of Yuma and to complete asbestos abatement and structural analysis. The challenge, however, is that the cost of restoration far exceeds available intermodal funds from the Federal Transit Admin-



The reopening of Main Street in 2007 brought traffic back onto the street for the first time in 30 years -- as well as new investors wanting to be a part of this revitalization.

istration. For this project to succeed, greatly increased grant funding sources and a strong real estate market are both needed, and prospects don't look bright at present for either.

The Heritage Area also recently applied for and secured \$50,000.00 in Community Development Block Grant program for the restoration of historic facades of Main Street canopies. Work should proceed in 2009.

COMMENT: The Heritage Area has worked to foster conditions which will stimulate new private investment on Main Street. The riverfront redevelopment should help strengthen investor confidence. Indications are good that the two major restaurants along Main Street will reopen in 2009. Ultimately, Main Street's success will depend on continuing investment and growth of residential, office, entertainment, and retail uses in the downtown neighborhood. One area in which the Heritage Area could help is to implement the Wayfinding/Signage program. A transportation enhancement grant has already been submitted for review in 2008.

This district retains some of the most unique architectural features and is located amidst significant public and private investment. However, the low levels of NPS funding have prevented the Heritage Area from playing a more active role in this district thus far.

The Molina Block is the project which has suffered the most from the paucity of NPS funds. Initially slated as an “early-action” project, the extremely high cost of adobe restoration has outstripped the ability of the Heritage Area and the facility’s owner, the Arizona Historical Society (AHS), to undertake this project. In 2006-2007, the Heritage Area supported the efforts of AHS to secure a \$1.75 million state appropriation, but the State of Arizona’s current severe budget difficulties have closed off that possibility for the time being.

An even more challenging project is the Gandolfo Annex. This City-owned build-

ing has experienced continuing deterioration and suffered a near-fatal trauma in 2007 from earthquake aftershocks. Currently, the Heritage Area is working with the City of Yuma and a private developer to salvage parts of the building for restoration, although independent structural analysis has determined that parts of the building must be demolished. Earlier intervention by the Heritage Area might have saved this building. Instead, triage is now the best approach.



Yuma’s rich heritage of adobe architecture at risk :

Above: The City of Yuma is working to try to salvage and restore parts of the Gandolfo Annex, which was further threatened by a series of damaging earthquakes.

Left: The Molina Block, one of the most historically important adobe buildings in Yuma, is in need of significant state and federal funding in order to be restored and brought back to productive use.



Comment: This district contains the most significant historic resources in the Yuma community, but has received practically no funding through the Heritage Area. These are resources which are degrading and cannot be replaced. The enormous cost of the restoration work is far beyond the NPS resources of the Heritage Area. However, as in many other cases, the Heritage Area should respond to efforts by AHS and the City with whatever financial support is available.

Yes, It can be done:

The Modesti House is an example of what can be done to restore adobes in Yuma. This was undertaken entirely by a private developer.

This land still sits vacant and underutilized in the hands of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). The original concept for this site was for development of higher density in-town residential living. Given the current state of the national residential market it is unlikely that this will take place in the near term. It was never envisioned — nor is it allowed — that NPS funds would play any role in this redevelopment. However, Heritage staff efforts should continue to encourage the public or private sector to develop this property.

However, the Heritage Area was successful in convincing the UPRR to donate the historic

freight depot to the Heritage Area. Other than minimal funds to secure the building, the Heritage Area has not been in a position to expend NPS funds to restore this building. An effort to secure transportation funds was unsuccessful. The Heritage Area thereafter sought a private developer. In 2007, the Heritage Area entered into an agreement with Kodiak Produce of Phoenix under which the building will be restored and reused as a wholesale produce and retail “farmer’s market”. The agreement calls for restoration by 2010.

The Railyard Blues:

The railroad stopped using this site over 50 years ago, but still owns it. This seven acre parcel is adjacent to the new Municipal Complex and faces Giss Parkway. The Heritage Plan envisions dynamic redevelopment of the site.



COMMENT: This is the largest parcel of downtown land available for redevelopment. The Heritage Area has fostered a good relationship with UPRR so that it might facilitate redevelopment. If residential development does not materialize, another potential use would be to use this parcel for higher education. Yuma’s long-term development as a city probably requires the development of a separate four-year college, and putting its campus downtown would spur redevelopment of the entire North End. Again, while NPS funds may be minimal, the Heritage Area should continue its advocacy role for the creative redevelopment of this site.



The New and the Old:

Above: One vision for this site is a major “in-town” residential development.

Left: Union Pacific railroad donated this freight depot to the Heritage Area, which has teamed with a private developer to restore it.

Saved by the Bell: *The Heritage Area helped save these Queen Anne Victorians, which were in the way of the new Municipal Complex. The City of Yuma allowed a private developer to move and restore these houses just a block away.*

This historic in-town residential neighborhood has achieved some revitalization, although the Heritage Area has been unable to invest significant funds in the district.

The Orange Avenue Boulevard concept has found its way into the City of Yuma's Capital Improvement Program, although a definitive timetable for implementation has not been set. The Heritage Area could seek federal transportation enhancement funds to help further the project.

In 2004-2005, the Heritage Area allocated \$35,000 of NPS funds for façade restoration of Century Height residential homes. The Heritage Area provided matching 50 - 50% funds for materials on a 0% interest basis — funds which do not have to be repaid until the homeowners sell their property. Under

the program, four properties were restored and saw significant new private investment beyond just the 50-50% match. The idea was to create a long-term revolving loan fund for the neighborhood. Unfortunately, the Heritage Area was not in a position to fund the program on a continuing basis.

The Heritage Area also was successful in securing the donation of a blighted property (Stan's U-Save) along Orange Avenue. The former owner/operator of the gas station site is currently undertaking environmental remediation. Redevelopment of this site into either a pocket park or appropriate new construction could help the neighborhood and perhaps provide a new rental income stream for the Heritage Area.



COMMENT: The Orange Avenue Boulevard project would help define this neighborhood, so its advocacy by the Heritage Area is important. The re-institution of the facade program could help stimulate new private investment in this historic neighborhood.



Not easy, but it is worth it: *Historic restoration is not for the faint of heart, but the rewards can be considerable. With increased funding, the Heritage Area could assist homeowners in honoring the legacy that is Century Heights.*

Proposed Priorities for the Coming Years | In Priority Order

MAINTENANCE & PROGRAMMING FOR THE YUMA EAST WETLANDS:

Now that much of the East Wetlands is being restored, the Heritage Area must focus on how to maintain this asset as well as how to pay for that long-term maintenance. If the Heritage Area, Quechan Indian Tribe and City of Yuma are successful in securing 50-year maintenance funds from the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation program, the Heritage Area should be able to gradually shift its heavy commitment of NPS funds away from this program. While state grant funds will need to be secured for the City of Yuma's Nature Park at 2E, the Heritage Area can begin focusing its commitment of NPS funds to education and

recreational programming. Beyond the MSCP funding, the Heritage Area must continue to seek other sources of funding to make the Heritage Area more self-sustaining. Private fund raising and developing an endowment, therefore, become a priority.

DOWNTOWN RIVERFRONT DISTRICT:

This is the district which has necessarily received the most NPS funds during the first seven years of the program. Some work still needs to be completed. While the Pivot Point Interpretive Plaza is expected to be completed by 2009 with City and transportation enhancement funds, the Heritage Area will need to invest NPS funds to complete the interpretive

Tender loving care needed:

Ongoing maintenance is necessary to make the East Wetlands a lasting legacy for Yuma. A top priority is to secure long-term funding for such maintenance.



The Quechan Indian Tribe is a leader in downtown riverfront redevelopment. The next decade should see a strengthening partnership to complete restoration on both sides of the river.

exhibits. Thereafter, the interpretive focus will shift to the Arizona Welcome Center. While the State of Arizona has cut the \$3.5 million appropriation for construction of this facility due to its budget crisis, it is hoped that the project will be funded in future years. Thereafter, the Heritage Area should be able to refocus its funding commitment to this district, as \$100 million of private investment takes place over the next five to seven years.

Communities evolve, and plans need to adapt to new circumstances. Perhaps the greatest new opportunity is to expand the Heritage Area's vision of the "Downtown Riverfront District". Since 1999 when the Heritage Area was authorized, the Quechan Indian Tribe has

emerged as one its strongest partners. Beyond its leadership in the Yuma East Wetlands, the Quechan Indian Tribe has made two major investments in improving its riverfront — the Quechan Walking Park and the new Quechan Nature Park. For the benefit of the entire community on both sides of the river, the next logical step is to develop and implement a plan to restore and revitalize the north side of the Colorado River between the Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge and the 4th Avenue Bridge. Obviously, this effort will be directed and led by the Quechan Indian Tribe, as it is entirely their land, but the Heritage Area should be willing to provide whatever staff and grant support it can.



Jewels to be Protected:

The Century House is yet another example of important historic resources which Yuma must find a way to conserve.

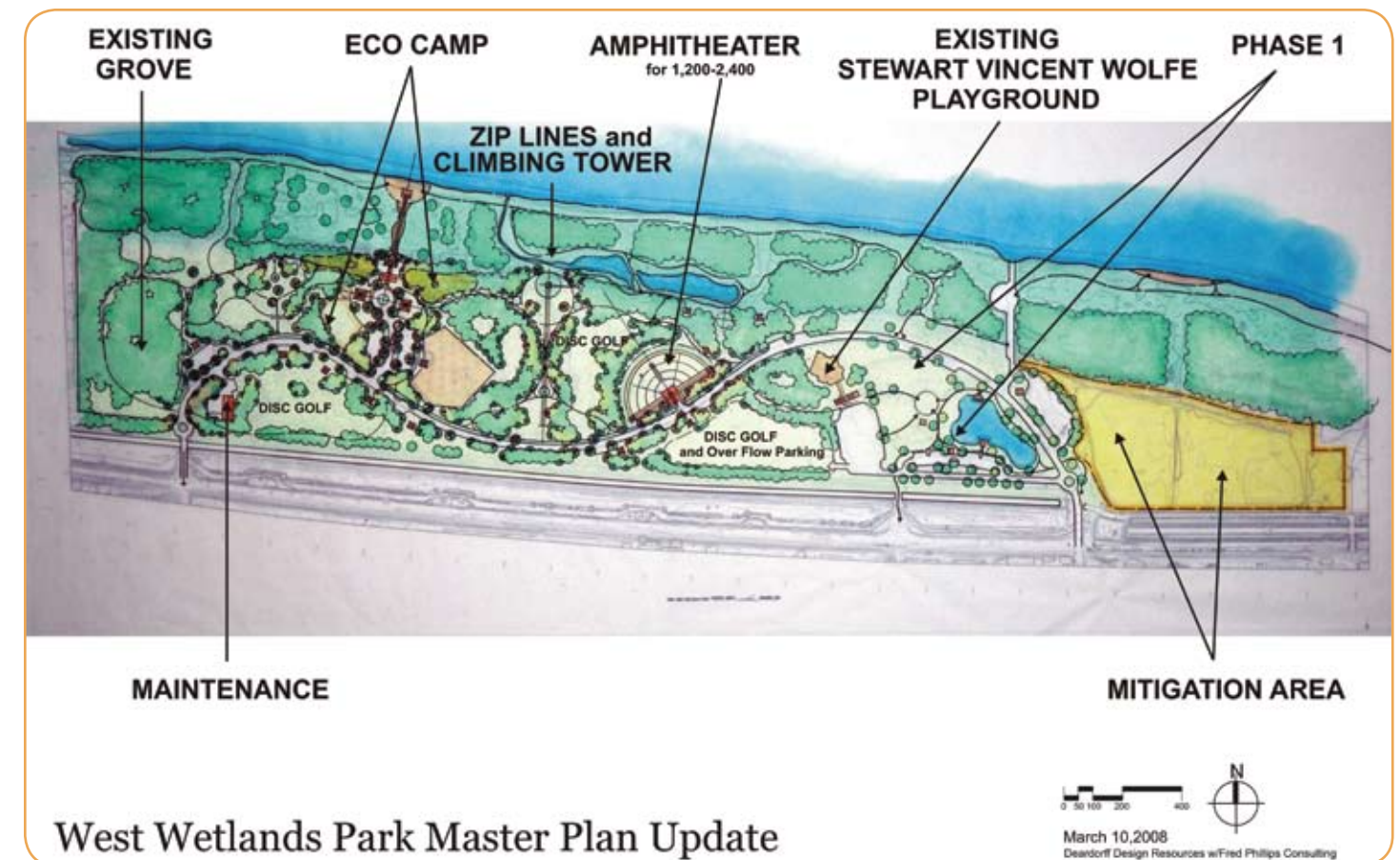
ADDRESSING UNDERFUNDED ASPECTS OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN:

Over the next eight years, the Downtown Riverfront and East Wetlands could very well recede as funding priorities allow for other needs to be met. The operating principle, however, should remain the same. It should seek out active partners — public or private — who have the staff and funding resources to help bring projects and programs to life. Investments in interpretation at Pivot Point and the Arizona Welcome Center will be required in the next federal funding cycles. Thereafter, the Heritage Area should be engaging partners such as Arizona State Parks, the Arizona Historical Society, as well as the private sector to determine how best to leverage NPS funds to implement the balance of the management plan. The Board has already expressed an interest in using both Heritage Area NPS funds and new grant sources to increase programming throughout the Heritage Area. The Board also expressed a concern that the City would not refill the planning staff recently vacated. Despite current budget difficulties, it is important that the City maintain its ongoing commitment for staff, as that has been the key to the leveraging of public and private funds along the riverfront.

COMPLETION OF WEST WETLANDS:

An updated master plan has been recently completed. While much of the funding to implement the plan will need to come from the City of Yuma and State of Arizona grants, the Heritage Area has secured \$500,000 in transportation enhancement funds and is securing

an additional \$500,000 in Bureau of Reclamation funds to complete the wetlands restoration of the 40-acre “lower bench”. If additional NPS funds were available, the funding could be used to supplement ongoing educational and recreational programming by the City of Yuma’s Parks and Recreation Department.



We've come a long way:

But we are not done yet. Completing West Wetlands Park should be a key goal of the Heritage Area over the next five years.



Success in the East Wetlands has brought new opportunities to restore the Colorado River, including international partnerships with environmental groups.

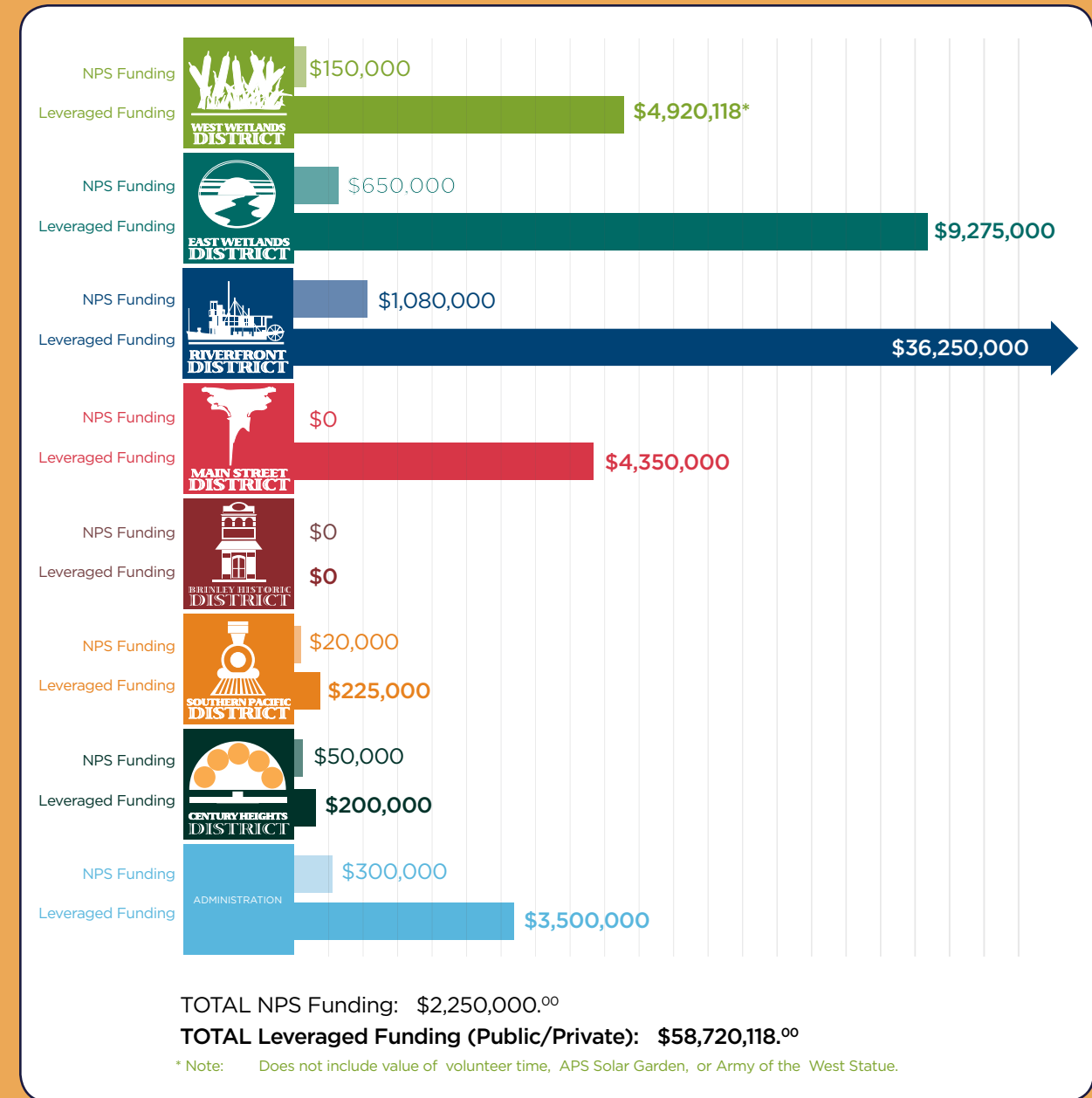
ENTIRELY NEW OPPORTUNITIES: BEYOND THE CURRENT MANAGEMENT PLAN & ALONG THE COLORADO RIVER

In early 2007, based on the success of the Yuma East Wetlands, a private foundation approached the Heritage Area about helping to create a consensus for restoration in one of the most controversial areas in the country: the Mexican border. With a \$35,000 grant, the Heritage Area was able to bring federal agencies, local property owners and Mexican environmental groups together to develop the Hunter’s Hole Concept Plan, which promoted restoration while addressing public safety and border protection issues. Additional private foundation funding of \$200,000 was secured to complete design and permitting, conduct a technical workshops and to fund grant writing. That effort has resulted in two grant applica-

tions: \$140,000 from the Bureau of Reclamation (already awarded) and \$648,000 with the Arizona Water Protection Fund (award decision expected in November 2008).

The Heritage Area teamed with Pro Natura Noroeste to develop a cross-border restoration plan, which was unveiled at the “Common Ground” conference in Yuma in April 2008. Over the next 12 months, volunteer days are planned, and it is hoped that significant “on-the-ground” restoration will begin in 2009.

The innovative restoration techniques developed in the Yuma East Wetlands are sparking interest and enthusiasm all along the lower Colorado River. While the focus of the Heritage Area must necessarily remain within its core area, private foundation funding creates the opportunity to expand wetland restoration efforts throughout the river corridor.



It Pays to Focus:
 With limited resources, it was critical that the Heritage Area devote its energies where they could pay off in a big way.

Acknowledgements | with special thanks to the people of the Yuma community and all the Heritage Area partners, sponsors, supporters, and participants.

LOCAL

- Quechan Indian Tribe
- City of Yuma
- Yuma City Council (1902-Present)
- City of Yuma Administrator Joyce Wilson (1994 - 2002)
- City of Yuma Administrator Bob Wagner (2002 - 2005)
- City of Yuma Administrator Mark Watson (2005 - Present)
- City of Yuma Deputy Administrator Bob Stull
- Yuma County
- Yuma County Sheriff Ralph Ogden
- Yuma County Farm Bureau
- Yuma Rod and Gun Club
- Boy Scouts of America
- Yuma Clean and Beautiful Commission
- Arizona Western College
- Cocopah Indian Tribe
- Arizona Historical Society
- Historic District Review Commission
- Yuma County Water Users Association
- Yuma Jaycees
- Yuma Visitors Bureau
- Yuma County Chamber of Commerce
- Yuma County Educational Consortium
- Yuma Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Marine Corps Air Station Yuma

STATE

- Arizona Water Protection Fund
- Arizona State Land Department
- Arizona Game and Fish Department
- Arizona State Parks
- Arizona State Historic Preservation Office
- Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
- Arizona Office of Tourism
- Senator Amanda Aguirre
- Representative Teresa Ulmer
- Representative Lynn Pancrazi
- Representative Russ Jones (2005-2007)
- Senator Bob Cannell (2005-2007)
- Herb Guenther, Director, Arizona Department of Water Resources
- Governor Janet Napolitano
- Sonoran Joint Venture

FEDERAL

- Bureau of Reclamation, Department of the Interior
- Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior
- Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior
- National Park Service, Department of the Interior
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- North American Wetlands Conservation Act
- Senator John Kyl
- Senator John McCain
- Congressman Ed Pastor
- Congressman Raul Grijalva

PRIVATE SECTOR

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- Ron & Stephanie Martin
- Yuma Garden Club
- Bill Ogram
- Headstream and McVey Families

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