

## The Economic Impact of Functional Greenspace

Karja Hansen of Potomac Paddlesports, Maple Avenue

Potomac Paddlesports is the premier kayaking instructional organization in the region for over 11 years now. Our education emphasizes Safety, Skill and Self-Sufficiency; we also put a focus on the connection and responsibility to the environment and larger world. This past March we purchased Spring River, located on Maple Avenue, just off of Randolph Rd across from the Montrose Crossing shopping Center, amid the used car lots, which has been the area's largest, oldest, and often only paddling specific shop in the region for 34 years. Having given the shop a full facelift, the school and the store are now one and the same, operating as the region's paddling hub. Personally, I have a 7 year background of Architecture, Planning, Revitalization and Transit.

My guess, gathered from the topics of today's discussions and the goals that this project has, is that the difference between greenery and functional green space is well known here. Further, I am going to assume, for the brevity of my three minute comment, that you all can understand my argument that non functional green space requires frequent, difficult and costly maintenance, and rarely provides benefit anywhere near the input of energy, time and money.

Being familiar with the concepts of functional green space and its aid in building stronger, safer and healthier communities, as well as the other myriad benefits, I am going to move straight into my topic, the additional gain to be had in terms of direct and indirect economic impact.

Being that I am employed within - and also rather addicted to - paddlesports my examples follow suit, but what can be said of these examples holds true for all functional green space.

The Small:

Clear Creek Park, Golden, Colorado

Initial Investment of: \$11000, Total of \$100,000

Direct Economic Impact: 1yr: \$1 Million, 10<sup>th</sup> year: \$10 million

The Large:

Confluence Park, South Platte River and Cherry Creek, Denver, Colorado

With \$70 million spent over the lifetime of this park, from 1970 until now, and an initial 5 year complete turnaround for the once dangerous, dirty and avoided area, the park now boasts an extensive trail network, multiple boating playspots and over 3 million people through it every summer. The area directly surrounding the park went from an unused industrial section to a high end mixed use neighborhood.

The Large and Local:

ASCI Course in Garrett, MD

Developed from the get-go as an economic development project first and foremost. This center has a re-circulating whitewater course with variable difficulty, miles of hiking and biking trails, rock climbing and a cafe. Roughly \$19 million total investment between donated land, philanthropic donations, public, private and federal grants. The park has already been surpassing its 5 year outlook for payback and profitability, and has additionally spurred commercial and residential growth in the surrounding area.

The key point I should mention with these urban parks is that only 10% of the people who go to them are boaters. The rest come to enjoy, spectate and shop.

A common saying in the area is that "living in the DC area and not kayaking is like living in Vail and not skiing."

To wrap this comment up, I'll just mention that by placing a simple sandwich sign with two whitewater kayaks on it, we have over quadrupled the amount of spur of the moment traffic coming into the store. This is in addition to at minimum doubling the amount of destination specific traffic on any given day.