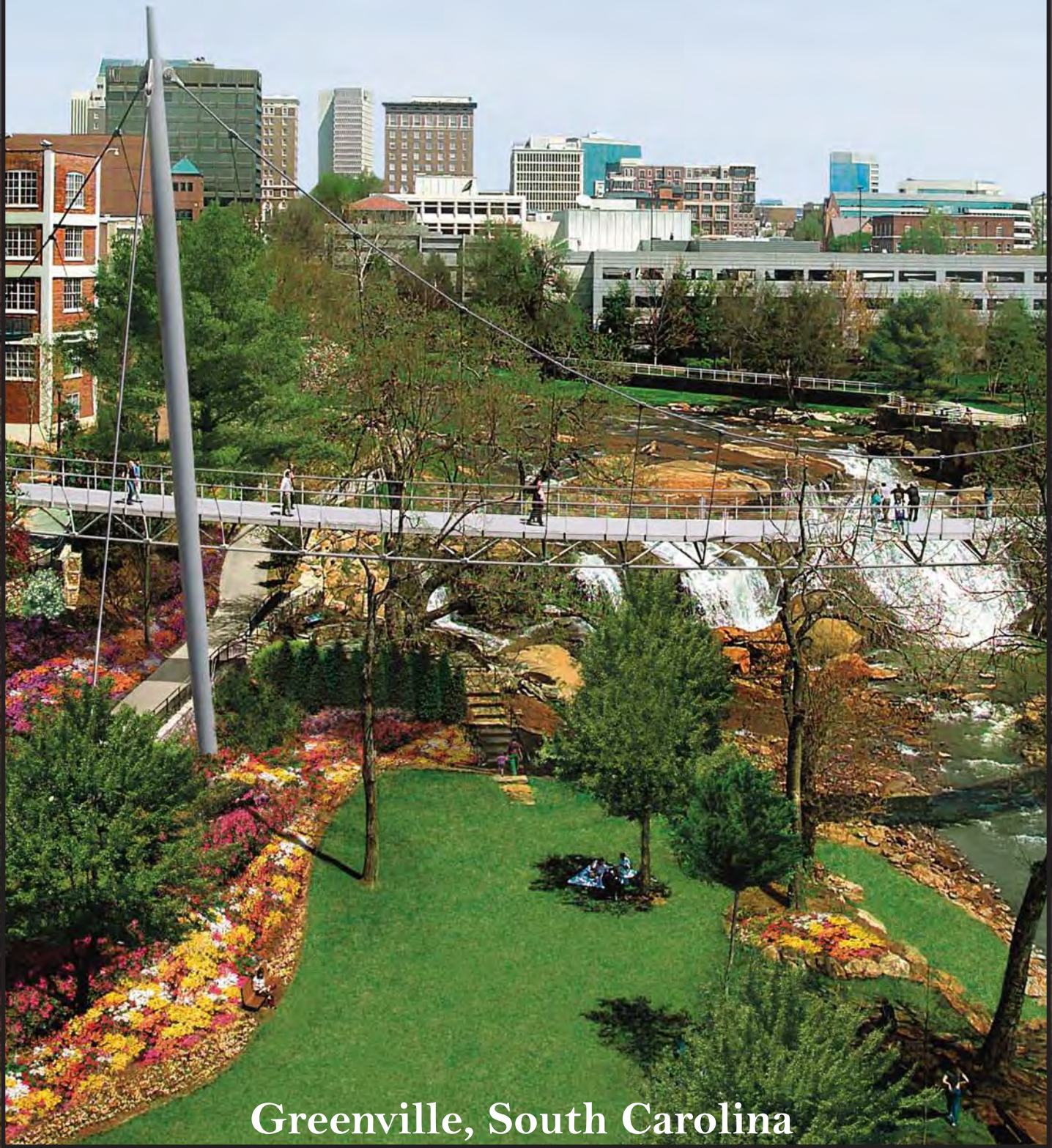
Falls Park

on the Reedy



Greenville, South Carolina

Submitted by The City of Greenville for the Rudy Bruner Award, 2015

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PROJECT DATA

RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

PROJECT DATA

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written 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 original form.

Project Name: Falls Park on the Reedy | Location | City: Greenville | State: SC

Owner: City of Greenville

Project Use(s): A green space within the heart of downtown, Falls Park is Greenville's gathering space for events and an urban oasis for respite.

Project Size: 26 acres | Total Development Cost: $13,445,000

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate): $1,070,741

Date Initiated: July 1, 1999 | Percent Completed by December 1, 2014: 100%

Project Completion Date (if appropriate): September 2004 | Project Website (if appropriate): www.fallspark.com

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates

Application submitted by:

Name: Knox White | Title: Mayor

Organization: City of Greenville

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Perspective Sheets:

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Developer: N/A		
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Community Group: Carolina Foothills Garden Club	Anna Kate Hipp	akhipp@me.com
Other: Hughes Development Corporation	Bob Hughes	bhughes@hughesdevelopment.com

Please indicate how you learned of the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*. (Check all that apply).

- ☐ Direct Mailing
- ☐ Online Notice
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- ☐ Previous RBA entrant
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2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD **PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE**

RUDY BRUNER AWARD

FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

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This sheet, the Project Data sheet, and the representative photo will be sent to the Committee in advance as the *Project Overview*.

Project Name: Falls Park on the Reedy

Address: 601 South Main Street City/State/ZIP: Greenville, SC 29601

1. Give a brief overview of the project. Approximately 500 words.

Today, Falls Park is the picturesque epicenter of Greenville's bustling downtown. As the name implies the Park's main attraction is not one, but two natural waterfalls. Turn back the clock roughly 240 years and these falls—the Reedy River Falls—are not just the City's epicenter, but the birthplace of Greenville. Enterprising early settlers located near the falls to harness their energy for grinding flour and cornmeal and powering sawmills. Grist mills eventually gave way to textile mills, and as economic activity along the Reedy River ballooned (at one time fourteen textile mills were operating within close proximity of the Reedy) the river and the falls deteriorated. Unfortunately, by the mid-twentieth century, downtown Greenville's stretch of the Reedy River was so severely polluted by upstream textile mills, that the once pristine and popular falls became desolate and unsafe. In 1960 the Camperdown Bridge, a vehicular bridge, was built across the falls effectively shuttering all public view and access.

In 1967, the Carolina Foothills Garden Club, with support from the City of Greenville, Furman University, and the local Planning Commission, set out to reclaim the falls. To jumpstart the endeavor, Furman University deeded six acres from its original campus site to the City to establish Reedy River Falls Historic Park. The Park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

In the mid-1980s the City, in concert with the Garden Club, facilitated and adopted a Master Beautification/Development Plan. Enthused by the plan's vision for a 26-acre park featuring scenic overlooks, nature trails, a pedestrian bridge that would offer a never-before-seen vantage point of the falls, and numerous specialty gardens, community leaders launched a successful capital fund drive that gradually implemented various components of the plan. As the Park's expansion and restoration advanced, so did neighboring economic development projects.

In 2002, the area's slow and steady progress morphed into a period of rapid change as the City embarked on a $13 million project that removed the Camperdown Bridge and replaced it with Liberty Bridge, a state-of-the-art pedestrian suspension bridge designed by world renowned architect Miguel Rosales. As Liberty Bridge was installed, benches, swings, pavilions, and walking paths were added amongst newly installed gardens and the final donations for the Park's $3.6 million endowment campaign were collected by the Garden Club.

In 2004, nearly 40 years after the City and community leaders set out to rescue the falls and the surrounding area, Falls Park on the Reedy opened to rave reviews. A far cry from its once deserted state, the stunning Park was teeming people. Also, even at this early stage, Falls Park was exceeding expectations for attracting millions of dollars in economic development. Ten years later, Falls Park's capacity for cultivating private investment (since its grand opening it has generated more than $100 million in surrounding development projects) continues to grow and its gorgeous gardens and central location continue to draw large crowds (the Park hosted more than 145 special events ranging from communitywide festivals to weddings last year).

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.) Approximately 500 words.

It's not often a city literally turns its back on its own history, but to gaze upon the Reedy River Falls languishing in the dark shadow of the Camperdown Bridge in the 1960s, it wouldn't have been difficult to assume Greenville had relinquished its point of origin. Voracious amounts of kudzu, river debris, and other trash infested the banks forming a bleak backdrop for the dark brown polluted water churning over the falls. Unfortunately, just steps away, on Main Street, the state of affairs wasn't much better. The four-lane road bisected a tired, downtown district that was hemorrhaging businesses to the suburbs and demolition crews razing vacant buildings were more prevalent than passers-by. Downtown Greenville wasn't just in a downward spiral—it was in a tailspin.

Fortunately, a critical core of committed community leaders gifted with the uncanny ability to look beyond the dire circumstances and imagine a downtown brimming with people and economic activity stepped forward. Some of the top minds in urban planning and landscape design helped community leaders put vision to paper and proposed drastic changes like shearing two lanes of traffic from Main Street and removing the unsightly Camperdown Bridge. Unfazed by the magnitude of these changes and the political and financial resources required to tackle them, Greenville's visionary leaders methodically started to push for transformation. Upon completion, Falls Park was the proverbial "icing on the cake" to the revitalization started several years before and several blocks north on Greenville's Main Street and its opening officially signaled Greenville's shift from recovery to vibrancy.

Falls Park's visually stunning vistas and enduring popularity are rooted in the artistry and ingenuity of superb designs that masterfully married the surrounding landscape with architecture, art, and optimal use of public space. Both the original master plan, designed in 1999 by landscape architect Andrea Mains, and later plans, designed by Tom Keith of Greenville's Arbor Engineering and local horticulturalist Robert Miller, skillfully intertwined the Park's existing landscape—ledges and a steep hillside—with acres of gardens. So as not to deter from the plentiful gardens and beauty of the falls, Liberty Bridge was designed with a horizontal curve radius of 214-feet and suspension towers that lean downstream at a 15-degree giving the impression it floats on air. At Falls Park's Main Street entrance, a commissioned sculpture, by internationally-recognized artist Bryan Hunt and the only piece of its kind on this continent, reiterated the emphasis design plans placed on art and architecture.

The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence seeks extraordinary places linked to local history and created through the processes of transformation that enrich the quality of the urban experience. From the dramatic transformation needed to reclaim Reedy River Falls, the City's birthplace, to its postcard setting equally adored by residents and visitors, Falls Park exemplifies the Award's standards. Moreover, community champions' willingness to execute the forward-thinking park design plans coupled with Falls Park's resounding success, typify another Award quality—fresh and innovative perspectives can and do drive excellence in urban environments.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

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1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, signifcant trade-offs were required to implement the project? Approximately 500 words.

Falls Park accomplished two key goals for the Greenville community. First, it converted a run-down area into an exquisite botanical garden with a world-class reputation. Throughout the year 20,000 annual plants and the blooms from 7,000 annual bulbs and 25,000 perennial bulbs adorn the Park's landscape. Second, Falls Park accelerated private development along the Reedy River and into Greenville's West End District—ultimately becoming the crown jewel of downtown's ongoing resurgence. For example, directly across Main Street from the Park is the spectacular $65 million RiverPlace mixed-use development that combines residential, office, restaurant, retail, and hotel space.

As with any development project of this magnitude, trade-offs were inherent to the implementation process. Some trade-offs, like removing Camperdown Bridge, were finite while other trade-offs, like maintaining the Park in perpetuity, are ongoing. However, the removal of Camperdown Bridge, to this day, remains the largest and most controversial trade-off executed for the Park's development.

Though calls for the bridge's removal echoed throughout the community practically since its construction, those calls were often dismissed by proponents of the bridge as detrimental to traffic flow. A March 1990 report titled "The Evaluation of the Feasibility of Removing the Camperdown Way Bridge" by engineering and planning firm Post, Buckley, Schuh & Jernigan buoyed bridge proponents' claims. The report concluded if the bridge were removed, the motoring public would "incur additional costs of $560.13 per day due to increased travel distances and travel time," equating to a "total cost of $204,447 for the first year after removal." By 2005, the engineers projected the costs would rise to "over $9,000 per day or $3,285,000 per year," and concluded these costs "clearly indicate that the removal of the bridge is not a viable option." This report effectively tabled talks of removing the bridge for seven years, until City officials commissioned a study from Maryland architects and planners LDR International. The study, called "Report Card and Strategic Assessment of Downtown Greenville," was released in February 1997 and determined Camperdown Bridge was a "mistake." Instead, LDR International saw "a great opportunity for the City to capitalize on the beauty of the Reedy River Falls" and declared removal of the bridge "should be revisited in the future."

Galvanized by the study's findings, community leaders quickly worked to surmount the next looming hurdle—obtaining ownership of the bridge from the state highway department. Enlisting support from key local and state leaders, most notably Betty Mabry, then-director of the SC Department of Transportation (a former Columbia Garden Club president), and local senators, the City persuaded the Highway Commission to relinquish the bridge. In February 2001, City Council voted unanimously to tear down the bridge and by 2002 it was gone. The mayor and City leaders waited with baited breath for backlash stemming from the bridge's removal. The backlash never came, and now, standing in Camperdown Bridge's stead is the graceful Liberty Bridge—a Greenville icon and a visible testament to those who dared to push the envelope on Park development trade-offs.

2. Briefly describe the project's urban context. How has the project impacted the local community? Who does the project serve? How many people are served by the project? Approximately 500 words.

Greenville is the major metropolitan area of the Upstate region of South Carolina. Idyllically, nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and conveniently equidistant to Atlanta, Georgia and Charlotte, North Carolina, Greenville's location, aptitude for fostering public-private partnerships, and abundance of quality of life amenities consistently earn it top-billing as one of the nation's best places to live and do business. A key driver behind Greenville's rampant success is its flourishing downtown. As the Upstate's largest central business district, it boasts three million square feet of office space and the corporate headquarters for major companies like Bank of America and TD Bank. Quaint shops, boutiques, and a wealth of fabulous restaurants alongside a topnotch collection of museums and galleries make Greenville the region's cultural and entertainment epicenter. It is here, directly within the heart of downtown's hustle and bustle, where Fall Parks offers urban oasis to residents and visitors alike.

Practically from the day it opened, Falls Park's generated significant economic and social impacts for the local community. Its economic impacts started with the adjoining RiverPlace development valued at $65 million and continued with a $29 million mixed-use baseball stadium, residential, office, restaurant and retail development. As a result, the Park not only became the poster child for Greenville's ongoing resurgence but the impetus for propagating revitalization efforts far into Greenville's west end. Today, nearby facilities like the Peace Center for the Performing Arts, the South Carolina Governors School for the Arts and Humanities, and the new Salvation Army Ray & Joan Kroc Community Center benefit from close proximity to the Park. The Park also facilitated advancement of the Swamp Rabbit Trail—this 17.5 mile-long trail is the backbone of the City and County's greenway system. Now, the trail connects through the Park and sees upwards of 1,100 daily users. Future nearby development projects—a major mixed-use development featuring a hotel and residential units as well as office and retail space and a new Greenville Visitors Center—reaffirm the Park's continued economic contributions.

Falls Park's social impacts are as numerous and varied as its economic ones. Erected to reclaim the birthplace of the City from the ravages of industry and the grips of a major State road, the Park restored a widespread sense of community pride to Greenville. Its beauty and scale were unparalleled regionally and Greenvillians were quick to adopt Falls Park as the City's official gathering spot. Falls Park regularly hosts numerous concerts and events, including the Upstate Shakespeare Festival, providing free access to the arts for Greenville's 61,000 residents. Furthermore, just as City leaders hoped and planned for when designing the Park, its active programming and beautifully maintained gardens also draw a steady stream of visitors from well beyond the state's, and even the nation's, borders. Whether it is a lunchtime retreat destination for Greenville's 19,000 downtown office workers or a getaway destination for Greenville's 5.2 million annual visitors, Falls Park serves a broad array of individuals.

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate. Approximately 400 words.

While some cities work to maintain their distinct identity, Greenville had to work to uncover its uniqueness. The quest started with participation and encouragement from the community—namely the Carolina Foothills Garden Club who adopted the area around the falls as a clean-up project in 1967. Members pulled weeds, pushed back kudzu, and began building small amenities. Though these small changes were nearly lost in the shadow of the Camperdown Bridge, they played a critical role in fueling the vision for transforming this bleak space into an outstanding park graced by gardens and accentuated with waterfalls.

As Greenville's Main Street underwent a drastic makeover that included reducing traffic from four lanes to two, widening sidewalks for easier walking and outdoor dining, and planting numerous street trees, Garden Club members and the City cemented their vision for Falls Park. In the late-1990s, landscape architect, Andrea Mains, created a redevelopment plan for the Park. Introducing the concept of transforming Falls Park into a regional attraction, her plan presented the natural beauty of the falls and a world-class pedestrian bridge as critical design components. Support for the plan was confirmed in the 1999 Reedy River Corridor Master Plan.

Once the City successfully advocated for the demolition of the Camperdown Bridge in 2001, City Council assembled a stakeholder group comprising community activists and City staff to begin designing the new park. Bridge architect Miguel Rosales designed the landmark Liberty Bridge which from conception to detailed construction documents took about 3 years, including an extensive review process by City officials and residents. Construction took another 14 months and was completed in 2004. As the bridge was constructed, landscape architects and City staff worked with the area's undulating rocky terrain to showcase the falls and to install several distinct gardens before the Park opened in September 2004.

Today, the community is once again influencing the Park's future. The City and Garden Club recently partnered to add 3.5 acres of new public space. Known as "Pedrick's Garden," the space pays tribute to Pedrick Stall-Lowrey, one of the women instrumental in Falls Park's development, and represents a $3 million investment. This newest addition is a gleaming example of how the community, ten years later, continues to treasure Falls Park as a location for recreation, celebration, and sanctuary.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable. Approximately 400 words.

The design and construction of Falls Park required a total funding commitment of $13,445,000; funded by the City over a multi-year period and in three primary phases. Phase 1 – The FY1999-2000 budget provided design and improvement funds in the amount of $380,000. Since much of the early discussion was focused on demolishing the Camperdown Bridge, which would open the view to the falls, the project was funded in the "Bridges" section of budget. Phase 2 – The FY2001-2002 budget provided $2,200,000 for additional design work, starting physical improvements in the park, and demolishing the Camperdown Bridge. Phase 3 – The FY2002-2003 budget provided funding in the amount of $10,065,000 for park construction. Funding in this phase was used to construct the Liberty Bridge (pedestrian), develop extensive flower gardens and the Woodland Walk, and construct public gathering spaces. The Woodland Walk is now part of the very popular Swamp Rabbit Trail. Additional appropriations of $800,000 for project expenses were approved by City Council. Funding for Falls Park was appropriated by the Greenville City Council from the following sources: Central Business District – Tax Increment Fund Bond – 2000 $380,000; Central Business District – Tax Increment Fund $1,450,000; Certificate Of Participation (COPS) – Series 2001 $10,850,000; Greenville Water Commission $200,000; Hospitality Tax Fund $215,000. Total funding appropriated was $13,445,000.

The Falls Park Endowment, in the amount of $3.6 million, was also established in FY2002-2003. The endowment was raised privately by members of the Carolina Foothills Garden Club. The campaign was led by Pedrick Stall-Lowrey and Anna-Kate Hipp. The endowment campaign offered naming rights to featured elements of the park including a $500,000 gift by the Liberty Corporation for naming rights to the new pedestrian bridge (Liberty Bridge). Since its establishment, the endowment fund has been held by the Community Foundation of Greenville. A three-person Endowment Fund Board, consisting of two representatives from the Carolina Foothills Garden Club and a representative from the City, was established in 2002. The committee determines how funds may be spent.

In FY2003-2004, the City established the Falls Park division within the Parks/Recreation Department budget. Funding is provided through the City's Hospitality Tax Fund. Crews assigned to Falls Park also are responsible for RiverPlace and Greenville's iconic Main Street. The Falls Park annual operating budget is currently $1,070,741 and employs 13 full-time staff members. At 26 acres, the square foot cost to build Falls Park was approximately $11.85/square foot.

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings? Approximately 400 words.

There is a story being told over and over again in towns and cities across America—a story that reveals our Nation's evolution from a manufacturing to a service economy. For centuries, American cities were built around rivers, railroads, and highways. Along these routes arose mills, warehouses, and manufacturing plants. As each technology was supplanted by another, the previous fell to disuse. As a result, small towns throughout America now suffer abandoned central spines of water or rail flanked by dilapidated structures. What used to be the economic engines of towns are now post-industrial blights separating deteriorating downtowns from potential open space. Fortunately, local leaders and developers slowly started to realize that while the manufacturing value may have evaporated, these spines offered open-ended potential for other uses. Greenville quickly embraced this shifting perspective with Falls Park, thus making the Park its flagship project in reclaiming lost riverfront and a pioneering example for other municipalities with similar challenges.

Today, delegates from as far away as Ireland regularly travel to Greenville to discover first-hand the secrets behind Falls Park's success. The delegates come with the impression they will be unlocking an enigma—after all Falls Park's dramatic transformation seems more the stuff of fairy tales than the meticulous workings of urban design that capitalize on a unique community asset. They depart with the knowledge that they too can begin the process of transforming problem areas into new city centers and economic engines, if they look to their unique community characteristics and work to generate broad-based community support. While the scale of Falls Park's transformation appears unattainable, there is nothing unrepeatable about its evolution or outcome. Its adaptability to other urban centers is without question and is a lesson the City has enthusiastically shared with more than 1,700 delegates to date.

A simple look at before and after photos of the Falls Park area reveals monumental changes to the surrounding city fabric. Run down mills, abandoned warehouses, and empty lots have all been transformed into vibrant retail shops, housing, offices, and cultural centers. Re-addressing waterfronts and abandoned rail yards and lines, as well as acknowledging their value for expanding public space, is an enormous opportunity for cities throughout America. Falls Park is a best practice example of how a city can seize that opportunity and use it to drive lasting economic and social benefits.

2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE **PERSPECTIVE**

RUDY BRUNER AWARD

FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

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COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name: Anna Kate Hipp

Title: Community Volunteer

Organization: Carolina Foothills Garden Club

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Signature: Anna Kate Hipp

Digitally signed by Anna Kate Hipp
DN: cn=Anna Kate Hipp, o, ou, email=akhipp@me.com, c=US
Date: 2014.11.16 13:42:13 -05'00'

Date: November 16, 2014

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play? Approximately 400 words.

As a member of the Carolina Foothills Garden Club, I was directly involved in the development of Falls Park. I served as co-chair of the endowment fund campaign. The endowment fund was created to safeguard the completed park with an "emergency fund" and to supplement the City's future maintenance costs associated with maintaining Falls Park on The Reedy. As a result of the campaign, the endowment, which is housed at the Greenville Community Foundation, has more than $3.6 million dollars. Over the years, these funds have directly contributed to the park's aesthetics and development by purchasing public amenities like sculptures and benches and, most recently, by developing the park's final 3.5 acres. Known as “Pedrick’s Garden,” this space opened in early October and pays tribute to Pedrick Lowrey, one of the women instrumental in starting the Falls Park endowment.

Well before Falls Park on the Reedy opened in 2004, the Carolina Foothills Garden Club championed developing a six-acre tract of land adjacent to the Reedy River Falls into a small park. Over the course of the next thirty years, the Garden Club heavily advocated for further development of the park by successfully launching and completing a $350,000 capital fund drive in the mid 80s, a precursor to the endowment fund mentioned above, and lending significant amounts of time and expertise to design and planning documents. From serving as stewards of the small tract of land destined to be the nucleus of a future grand park to bearing the torch for Falls Park's drastic makeover, the Carolina Foothills Garden Club's involvement in the project was vital.

2. From the community’s point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project? Approximately 400 words.

As both a member of the Carolina Foothills Garden Club and a resident of Greenville, I had the unique opportunity to view the project from various angles. From this joint perspective, the major obstacle standing in the way of the expansion and improvement of Falls Park was the presence of the Camperdown Bridge. This concrete vehicular bridge was built in the early 60s and spanned the Reedy River obscuring the Class 8 water fall and the river from view. Among those fighting for the bridge's removal, it was viewed as the "concrete monster". State and federal agencies, as well as citizens who had no idea that a beautiful waterfall tumbled beneath it for it was so obscured by the bridge and kudzu, viewed it as a "perfectly good bridge." It took ten years to convince the "powers that be" to undertake the complicated process of removing the massive bridge. The Carolina Foothills Garden Club was at the forefront of this campaign to "Free the Falls".

3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how? Approximately 400 words.

The success of the expansion of Falls Park has surpassed all expectations. It triggered growth in the number of restaurants, hotels, and entertainment venues in downtown Greenville and was the linchpin in Main Street's transformation from a withering thoroughfare to a vibrant street on everyone's destination list. Today Falls Park is integral to Greenvillians quality of life. It's the go-to place where people gather to work, play and celebrate life. From proudly sharing the park with family and friends from out state to dining in a nearby restaurant, the park directly and indirectly impacts most residents' lives. It is the uncontested heart and soul of Greenville hosting countless community events and offering priceless respite from the hustle and bustle of a 9 to 5 job for more than 19,000 downtown office workers. Even on a rainy day one would be hard pressed not to find people using Falls Park. Falls Park bears an undeniable connection not only to Greenville's transformation of yesteryear but to its ever growing future success.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through? Approximately 400 words.

Though it took years and some uphill battles to bring the project to fruition there is nothing I would change about the project or the development process. As Greenville's poster child for Public/Private development, the park's development unfolded with the right players coming to the table at the right time. First, the City Council and Mayor had the vision and the courage to undertake the project. Then, outside experts were consulted to produce a world-class project--unlike any other in the region. Everybody involved dared to "think BIG" and it worked. You can't argue with resounding success!

2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT **PERSPECTIVE**

RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

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PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

Name Miguel A. Rosales, AIA

Title President

Organization Rosales + Partners

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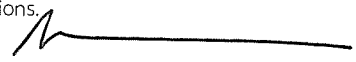
Signature 

Date Dec 5 - 2014

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

Rosales + Partners was the Bridge Designer and Engineer of Record for the Liberty Bridge which is the suspension bridge that is located next to the falls and over the Reedy River in Falls Park. Miguel Rosales was the Principal designer in charge of the project. The bridge in its park context is one of the defining landmarks of the City of Greenville's downtown. The 340'-long suspension bridge is characterized by its use of a single suspension cable attached to only one side of a curved alignment in plan. Its discrete and transparent cable pattern allows unhindered views of the park and waterfall. Locating the cable supports on the outer edge of the curvature created a viewing platform oriented towards the falls. The towers that support the main suspension cable are also located on the outer side and angled in profile to further emphasize the directionality of the views. The inner side of the curvature does not have visible means of support creating a memorable experience. The views along the bridge constantly change due to the curvature and the 3.5% gentle slope of the bridge.

2. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

Greenville's downtown is divided by a wooded valley that contains numerous trails and recreational areas. For several decades before the Liberty Bridge was built a high-level vehicular bridge crossed over the river, obscuring the beauty of the waterfall to motorists and pedestrians. The city decided to demolish the existing highway bridge and replace it with a unique pedestrian bridge. After the bridge and park was completed the downtown and riverfront started to experience a renaissance and many business including residential and hotel buildings were built next to the park along the river with views of the bridge. The bridge has given a new image to the area attracting tourists and locals in increased numbers to the park. The bridge has also become a source of pride to the community and its design imagery has become part of the iconography of the area.

3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession? Approximately 400 words.

The Liberty Bridge illustrates the importance of balancing aesthetics, engineering and cost to achieve a lasting landmark quality structure. At a construction cost of $4.5 million the bridge is economical and efficient but also beautiful. The bridge illustrates the true art of bridge design which strives to achieve structures which are elegant and attractive within a reasonable cost. Many communities across the US have used the Liberty Bridge as a role model when planning how to build a successful footbridge of their own. The bridge has received multiple awards since its completion over a decade ago and is a source of inspiration to bridge designers and engineers across the nation.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

The bridge is an example of how to merge technology with nature in a sensitive landscape to create a bridge that has acted as a catalyst to transform Greenville's downtown while substantially enhancing its setting. The unforgettable bridge appears to float over the landscape and falls acting as a capstone of a park that has inspired a wave of prosperity throughout the city's downtown. That is probably the most successful aspect of the project. The detailing of the bridge is also very attractive and well resolved in order to achieve a high level of visual appeal. Cast steel components were used which translated into attractive, highly accurate connectors and anchors. The bridge railing is visually transparent and has a series of razor thin cables with slender vertical supports. Lighting has been concealed within the railing which enhances the walking surface at night with a pale blue glow. In terms of the least successful aspect I believe that the contemporary style and understated elegance of the bridge is not completely evident in the style of the other components of the park including other lighting and streetscape details.

2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER **PERSPECTIVE**

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ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services. Copies may be given to other design professionals if desired.

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Title Owner / Principal

Organization Arbor Engineering

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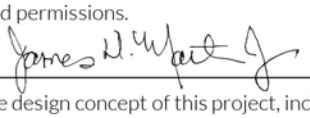
Signature? 

Date 11/24/2014

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc. Approximately 400 words.

During the 90's, the North end of Main Street began a re-birth. Trees were planted, on-street parking added, and restaurants began moving in. However, the West End, including the Reedy River Falls, remained a no-man's land; vagrants and vacancy signs were the only signs of life. In 2000, the City decided to remove the highway bridge in an attempt to open up the River and to connect Main Street with a limited park area that received very little use. A landscape architect team was assembled and after numerous meetings with a citizens committee, developed new goals for the design concept, which were to:

- Remove the highway bridge, among protests claiming it would hurt all existing businesses downtown. We knew exposing the Falls, allowing their beauty to be clearly visible, was critical the project's success.
- Create a new "Postcard" for the City of Greenville.
- Provide accessibility to the River from Main Street, which sits 65' above the River.
- Provide a catalyst for development in the West End.
- Make the Park secure, by ensuring the area had 24/7 activity.
- Meet the needs of a diverse client, knowing if Greenvillians embraced this park, it would become a draw for visitors.
- Clean up the Reedy River in an environmentally sensitive manner. As an "urban river" it had sustained tremendous erosion along its edges and had become an eye-sore for the City.
- Provide "flexible" spaces, supporting single users as well as festivals for thousands.

Our design needed to embrace the historical importance of the site and to address the incorporation of new design so it would seamlessly tie into the historic site. Existing rock and stonework provided the material and color choices for the new design. Both the plant and hardscape (stone and concrete) materials conform to the historic color scheme. The park was designed on a human scale to be approachable and totally accessible.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design. Approximately 400 words.

Our design addresses several important social and programmatic functions. First, the Falls on the Reedy connects users to both Cleveland Park and to the Swamp Rabbit Trail. Users can walk or bike to Cleveland Park to enjoy the Zoo or the playground with their families. Additionally, users can connect to the Swamp Rabbit Trail, where they can ride, run or walk to Furman University, to downtown Travelers Rest, or to Conestee Nature Trail. Secondly, the Park provides both historic and educational events to the public. Shakespeare in the Park, concerts, seminars and other events are conducted on the stage of the amphitheater and in other places throughout the Park. There are over 200 permits for use issued each year. Thirdly, the park is secure. Safety and security were achieved due to the sheer number of users and constant activity in the Park. Lastly, and perhaps, most importantly, the Park provides handicapped accessibility. Getting people from Main Street, 65 feet above the Park, down into the Park was a huge obstacle, but one that our design successfully accomplished. There is an elevator that connects into the Park, and there are areas that you can enter the Park in a wheelchair without using the elevator. Our design includes all users, and invites all users, to enjoy the space.

3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project. Approximately 400 words.

The challenges of designing this project were few in number, but big in design and delivery. The first challenge was convincing the City that it was imperative that a pedestrian bridge be built over the Falls. The City had just removed the highway bridge, so selling the idea of a pedestrian bridge was a challenge. The success of the park depended on the connection of both sides of the Reedy River, which the pedestrian bridge would provide. The pedestrian bridge would also provide incredible views of the Falls. Another challenge was figuring out how to invite people into a space that sits below grade. Placemaking tells us that people do not like being looked down on, so designing a space that invited people in, without making them feel like "spectacles" was a serious challenge. The other major challenge was making the entire Park and all of its spaces ADA accessible. Configuring sidewalks along the grade and providing elevator access to the Park were necessary to give all users the same opportunities to enjoy the Park.

4. Describe the ways in which the design relates to its urban context. Approximately 400 words.

Falls Park on the Reedy relates seamlessly to its urban context. The award-winning pedestrian bridge is a unique suspension structure and is the only one like it in the world. It provides a fresh transformation of an old space, blending the old and the new. It connects the two sides of the Reedy River, bridging the gap between Main Street and the Park, and tying into the West End. The Falls Park Area is the new "center" of downtown and the West End has exploded with new development, including a new baseball stadium and a multi-use development of shops, offices, and residential units. In the past two years, the West End has continued to grow and now houses an entire artist community. The citizens of Greenville have embraced the multi-functional park. There is a constant buzz of activity in the Park. Every day business people, students, children, families, tourists, cyclists, exercisers, are using the Park's walkways; open lawn areas; stages and seating; food service and public restrooms; benches and swings; and shelters. Throughout the Park "cutting edge" design can be seen in the unique design responses for the pedestrian bridge design, river stabilization, and ADA access. Quality design can be seen in the use of materials indigenous to the region, which allow the existing falls to showcase her boulders and rock outcroppings, and make maintenance minimal. Protecting and enhancing the river with a design that tames the "urban" floods through creative use of vanes, terraces, and other stabilization techniques, making the Park environmentally safe and sustainable. A natural beauty rising up in the middle of the City, Falls Park on the Reedy fuels the economy, while also providing an escape in the middle of the day, a place to relax and unwind. The success of the park is not simply the bridge and falls, but the creation of a "place" that brings people back time again for a unique experience shared with thousands of others.

2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD OTHER **PERSPECTIVE**

RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

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OTHER PERSPECTIVE

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Signature | Date December 3, 2014

1. What role did you play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

As planning for the Park began the Hughes Development Corporation was closely involved in the vision process as we had expressed interest in developing the site immediately upriver. We brought Santiago Calatrava to Greenville to discuss bridge and park design and, as part of a Chamber of Commerce intercity visit, took a large delegation of community and business leaders to Europe to learn how inner city parks and development had reshaped cities there. This trip helped solidify support for a bold intervention and showed the many ways such an urban oasis could spur development.

Simultaneously with the development of the Park, the Hughes Development Corporation planned and constructed RiverPlace immediately upstream. The first phase of this development consisted of over 350,000 square feet of shops, offices, residences, and restaurants, all connected to the Park and the Swamp Rabbit Trail (which we constructed through our development).

Just prior to the development of the Park and RiverPlace, the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities (where I then served as head of the Building Committee and now chair the Board) had constructed its new campus on the bluff overlooking the Park and the falls. The school had anticipated a great park and purposefully provided connections and passages to the Park.

Finally, we were anonymous donors and named a section of the Park.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on the your community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

Simply stated, the construction of Falls Park was transformational on many levels.

First, the removal of the multi-lane Camperdown Way bridge changed traffic patterns in the downtown area significantly. No longer could vehicular traffic cut through downtown on a wide roadway. While this was inconvenient for some, the trade-off was invaluable. Downtown now had a world-class park in its heart which improved the quality of life for residents and served as an economic engine for business development.

The second transformational impact - Economic Development. Falls Park, together with RiverPlace, completely transformed the South Main and West End business districts. Before Falls Park was constructed, it was common to find vacant storefronts and blight. At the time, North Main St. was a beautiful picture postcard and South Main St. was its antithesis. Once Falls Park was completed and RiverPlace was under construction, investment happened throughout the South Main and West end districts. Today, store fronts are full along South Main from Falls Park to Pendleton St. and the southern end of the district is anchored by Fluor Field, home of the Greenville Drive which is a Single A affiliate of the Boston Red Sox. South Main St. is now its own picture post card with Falls Park, stunning architecture and high quality mixed-use developments.

Finally, Falls Park was only built because the community was united behind its concept and in contributing to its development. As is common for Greenville, a City-led, community-involved effort created a landmark park that will serve generations of Greenville residents and visitors. Based on a strong belief that restaurants would see large sales gains driven by the attraction of the Park, the City issued bonds based on Certificates of Participation. These COPs were backed by Hospitality Tax revenue – derived solely from restaurant sales.

Future enhancements, programming, and special maintenance were to be covered by an endowment to be provided by the private sector.

Both of these programs were based on the belief that the park would become a central community asset and would, in effect, pay for itself. The plan worked. Not only did visitors to the Park create more business for the restaurants, they created such demand that today more than 100 restaurants are within walking distance of the Park. Pedestrian traffic counts are the highest in the City and taxes on food and beverage sales have soared. The community, for its part, came through creating a multi-million dollar endowment with gifts as small as five dollars and as large as five hundred thousand. The Park has literally paid for itself and the community has an asset that sparkles.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

The biggest obstacle to the development of the Park was the removal of the existing highway bridge that was relied upon by a large number of people. To this day Google Maps shows this bridge as a connection from one side of town to the other. Community support for removing the bridge without a substitute was less than lukewarm. It took the faith of community leaders that these drivers would find suitable alternate routes. The results were a success but this end of town, bolstered in a large part by the growth resulting from the Park, has some traffic congestion issues when simultaneous big events occur.

A secondary challenge entailed balancing the budget against the lofty ambitions of the Park and the absolute requirement that it make good connections downstream and upstream for both the Swamp Rabbit Trail and development opportunities. The Swamp Rabbit Trail quickly became the "young people's interstate" as a bicycle and walking trail across the county. The bridge over the Park had to connect streets at two levels as well as to a third lower level for the Swamp Rabbit Trail, yet still remain above the falls. The Park and bridge had to feature the urban waterfall and yet still respect antique caverns used for aging cheeses and old stairways to the former Furman University campus that abutted the site. Combining all of these, each at different elevations and in odd locations, into a cohesive, smoothly flowing park, was a particular design challenge that was met with creativity. The Park actually created a new level that has its own personality while still serving the pre-existing ones.

4. What do you consider to be the the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

The most successful aspect of the Park has been its contribution to the expansion of downtown Greenville. Until the Park was built, Greenville's core area ran only along Main Street and only to the north of the river. With the successful completion of the Park, the attractions of downtown Greenville now have expanded east and west and to the south. The Swamp Rabbit Trail had a central "home" and it reached westward, through RiverPlace and into areas that had not seen new development in ages. To the east development of tech buildings and new residential buildings were made attractive by the close proximity to the Park. And Greenville's Main Street now had something to offer walkers if they went past the river bridge. As a result of its new "closeness," the West End flourished into an arts district. And shortly after it opened, the Park itself was used as the setting for the investors to "seal the deal" for Minor League Baseball to return to Greenville, just down the street.

Another successful aspect of the Park is its ability to be many things to many people. The design, with its many level changes and out-of-the-way nooks has a feeling of having "rooms" for certain activities. Shakespeare in the Park can go on while in another "room" children swim or feed geese. In another area might be a wedding. And these many special spaces have created an invitation to connect, not just to others in the Park or to businesses fronting the Park, but for other parks too. Since the completion of this Park, one other quiet park has adjoined, another plans to start next year, and all along the Swamp Rabbit Trail people are asking for their special spots like the Park.

The Park had hoped to be able to contain or control the flooding that periodically flashes down the river. With some adjustments and a foregone area or two, the Park has managed to accommodate the flooding but not control it. There is no other way to deal with water if your activity has to take place at water level. The only other aspect of the Park development that might be considered sub-optimal is the extreme popularity it has attained. There is always demand and there is often a crowd, but it is difficult to cast this in the category of "least successful."

Falls Park

Greenville, South Carolina

Historical photo of
Reedy River Falls
circa 1880s

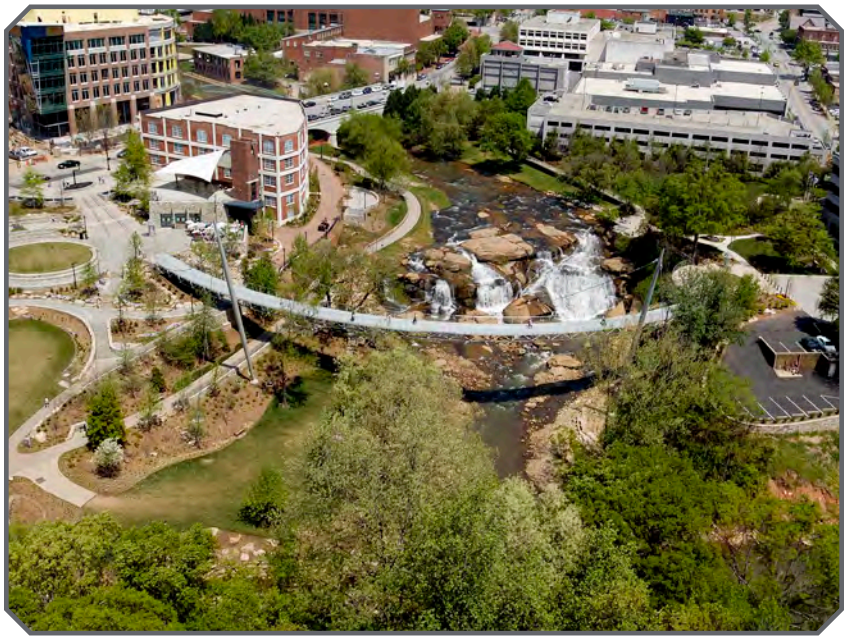
Camperdown Bridge obscuring the Reedy River Falls

Aerial shot of Camperdown Bridge

FALLS PARK

GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

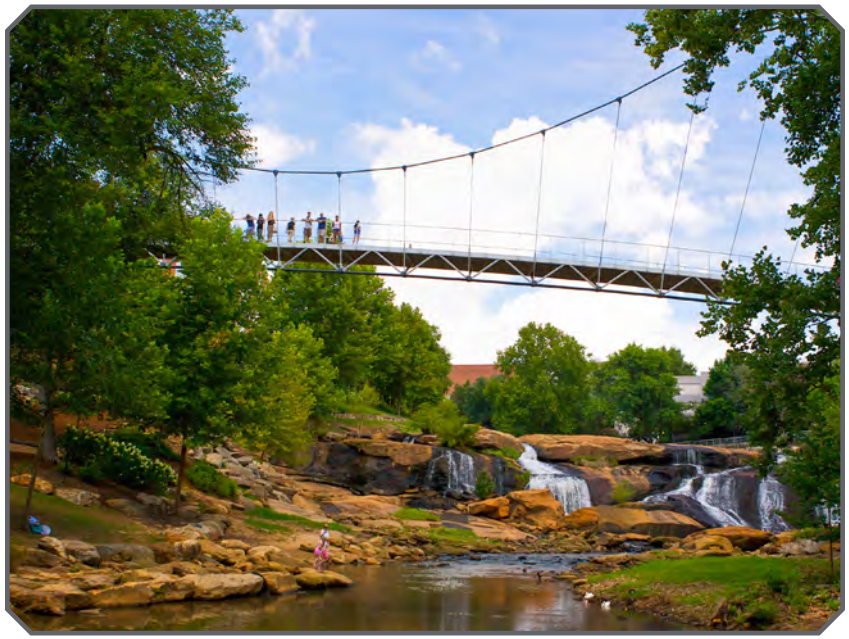
Aerial shot of construction of Liberty Bridge in 2001,
photo credit: City of Greenville



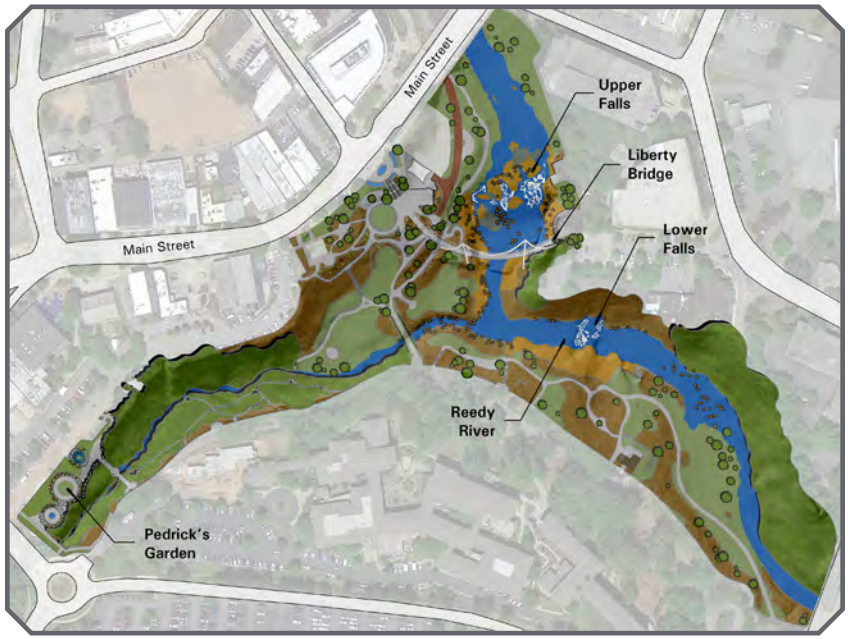
Aerial shot of completed Liberty Bridge,
photo credit: Rosales + Partners

Falls Park

Greenville, South Carolina



Liberty Bridge,
photo credit: City of Greenville



Map of Falls Park on the Reedy,
credit: City of Greenville

Falls Park

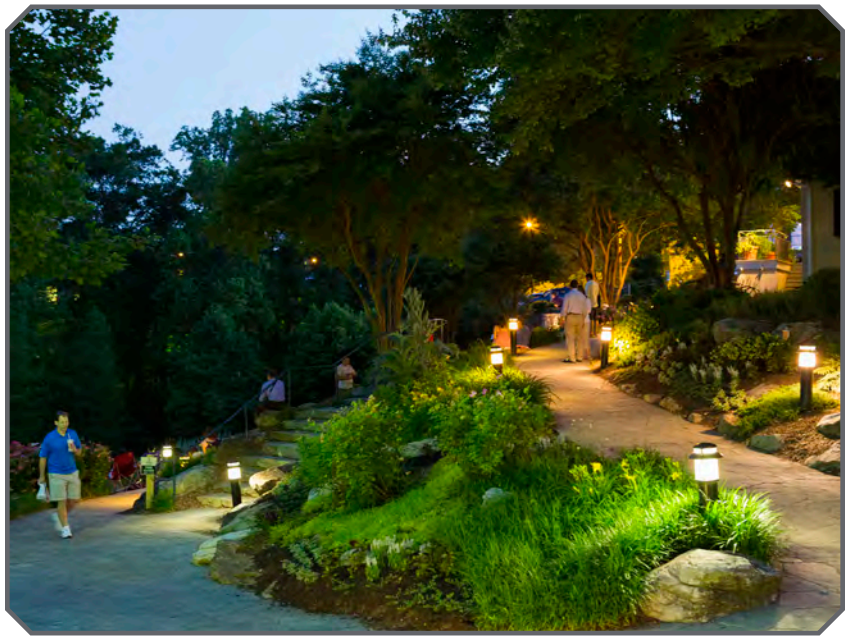
Greenville, South Carolina

Entrance to Falls Park from Main Street featuring Bryan Hunt's sculpture, Falls Lake Falls,
photo credit: City of Greenville

Passerelle Bistro, a restaurant located at Falls Park's Main Street entrance,
photo credit: City of Greenville

Falls Park

Greenville, South Carolina



Walkway near Falls Park's Main Street entrance at dusk,
photo credit: City of Greenville

Falls Park hosting Artisphere, a popular art festival,
photo credit: City of Greenville

Falls Park

Greenville, South Carolina

Shakespeare in the Park,
photo credit: City of Greenville

Falls Park hosting an Artisphere event,
photo credit: City of Greenville

Falls Park

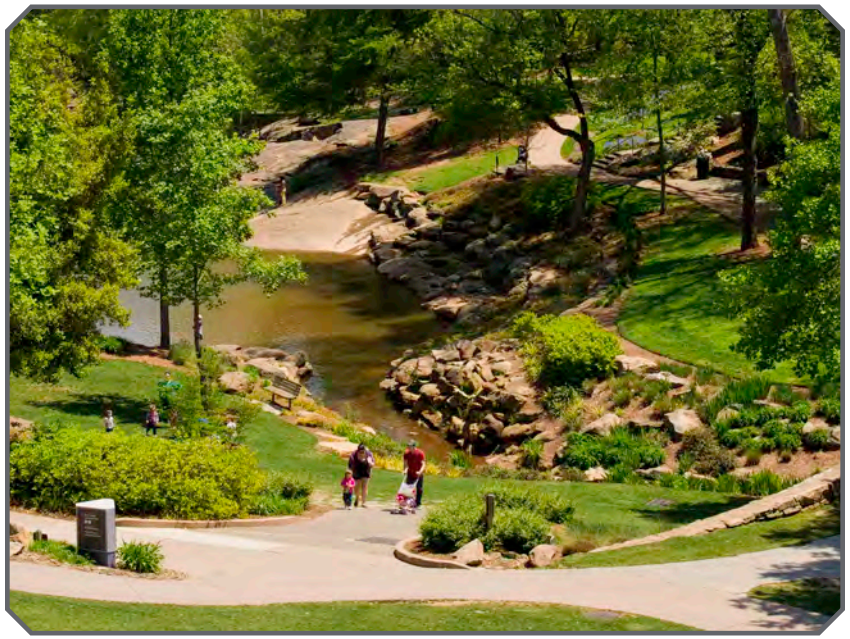
Greenville, South Carolina

Moonlight Movies in the Park,
photo credit: City of Greenville

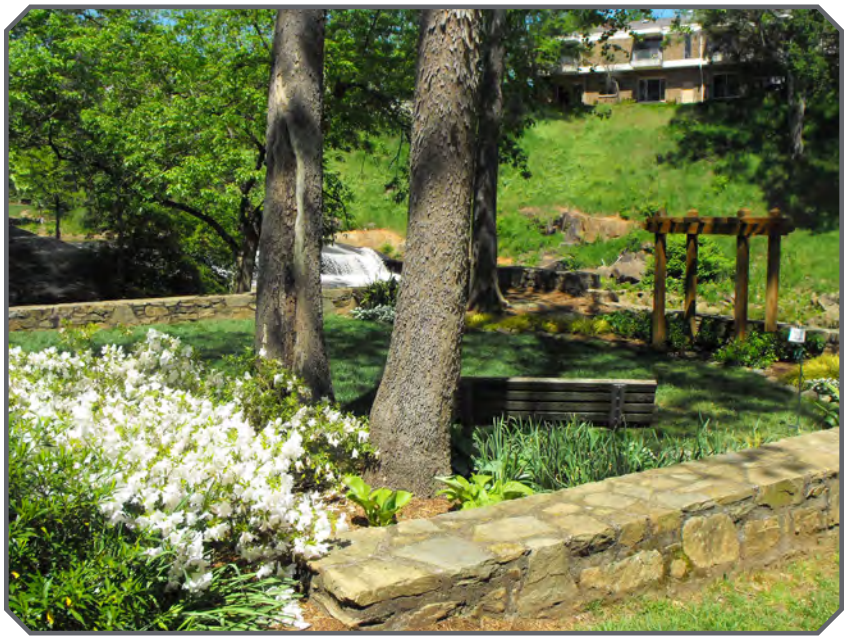
Falls Park visitors enjoying springtime,
photo credit: City of Greenville

Falls Park

Greenville, South Carolina



Falls Park vista toward the lower Reedy River Falls,
photo credit: City of Greenville



View of the lower Reedy River Falls,
photo credit: City of Greenville

Falls Park

Greenville, South Carolina

Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities behind the Park's iconic American Beech Tree,
photo credit: City of Greenville

Pedrick's Garden,
photo credit: City of Greenville

Falls Park

Greenville, South Carolina

Photo of Mary's Cottage (before it was repurposed as a popular Park restaurant) and stone staircase leading to Falls Park

After photo of Mary's Cottage,
photo credit: City of Greenvillea

Falls Park

Greenville, South Carolina

Before photo of the RiverPlace Development, which adjoins the Park's north side.

After photo of the RiverPlace Development,
photo credit: City of Greenville

Falls Park

Greenville, South Carolina

View of Falls Park gazing toward RiverPlace Development,
photo credit: City of Greenville

Liberty Bridge at Night,
photo credit: Rosales + Partners

Optional Supplementary Pages
Falls Park on the Reedy
Submitted by the City of Greenville for the Rudy Bruner Award, 2015

Media Mentions

Falls Park Chosen Among Top Parks in United States
Trip Advisor, June 2014
Falls Park joins the ranks of the nation's finest parks, chosen as number 10 of the country's best parks by the 2014 Travelers' Choice Trip Advisor awards.

Passerelle Bistro Among Top Dining Spots in United States
FOX News, June 3, 2014
Located just above the Liberty Bridge in Falls Park, Passerelle Bistro was in the top 100 of OpenTable users nationwide. The list is based on more than 5 million verified diner reviews submitted for more than 19,000 restaurants across the country.

On River's Edge: A Special Report
INC News Now, May 1, 2014
In a special report, "On River's Edge," the Indiana News Channel ventured to Greenville South Carolina, a community that took a risk with its river and won.

Birth Announcements... Greenville, South Carolina
Food Arts Magazine, October 2013
Passerelle Bistro, located in Falls Park, received kudos from Food Arts magazine for its casual continental cuisine.

How A Park Helped One Town Weather The Recession
National Public Radio, July 29, 2011
NPR's Julie Rose writes, "During the worst of the recession, new development ground to a halt and small businesses closed their doors on many Main Streets throughout the country. That wasn't the case in Greenville, S.C. And while it seems improbable that a city would thrive during the recession, Greenville's mayor credits a mix of good luck and good fundamentals."

A City's Signature Centerpiece
U.S. DOT, Federal Highway Administration, Public Roads, May/June, 2011
Writers Jessica Hekter and Leslie Fletcher report on how a one-of-a-kind curved pedestrian bridge drew attention to a downtown waterfall and capped off the rebirth of Greenville, SC, into an exemplary livable community.

Kudos to Carolina Foothills Garden Club for Park Development
The Garden Club of America Bulletin, June-July 2007
The bulletin covered the awards ceremony in June 2007, where Mayor Knox White received the American Horticultural Society's Urban Beautification Award.

Media Mentions continued

Urban Beautification Award
The American Gardner, March-April 2007
An article in the magazine of the American Horticultural Society covers the Urban Beautification Award given to Carolina Foothills Garden Club, for its work in preserving and renovating Falls Park.

Greenville Rising
Charleston Magazine, March 2007
On the Road writer and photographer John Marshall spent a weekend in Greenville, and found a community amid an urban renewal renaissance. He found a Falls Park full of kids, couples, families and friends enjoying summer in the city.

Refurbished Falls Park Returns Greenville's Soul
Charlston Post and Courier, March 7, 2005
Writer Robert Behre discusses the wonder of discovering the waterfull hidden beneath the old Camperdown Way bridge. He recalls a how the community created a park, and helped save a watershed.

The Reedy's Grand Awakening
Sandlapper, Spring 2005
Writer Chris Worthy takes a visit to the reopened Reedy River Falls, and finds a community who rallied to save its most distinctive feature.

Forget All Your Troubles, Forget All Your Cares
South Carolina Smiles 2005
From the delicate lines that create the illusion of a floating Liberty Bridge to beauty of the spring gardens, this feature article touts Falls Park as the best reason yet to head to downtown Greenville.

Falls Park: The $13 Million Garden
Recreation and Parks Magazine, Fall 2004
This cover feature offers a detailed history of Falls Park's transformation, from the Liberty Bridge to 20 acres of gardens to the funding that made it all happen.

Reedy River Falls Historic Park
Construction Magazine, March 8, 2004
This two-page report in the trade publication Construction discusses the scope of work and progress made by Triangle Construction Company in the creation of Falls Park.

Awards and Accolades

Falls Park and The Liberty Bridge have received national and international recognition for excellence from the following organizations:

Urban Land Institute Urban Open Space Award Finalist. In 2010, Falls Park on the Reedy was chosen as a top six finalist from more than 80 entries nationwide. The award celebrates successful, vibrant open spaces that have enriched and revitalized its surrounding community.

YWCA Amy Kay Stubbs Women of Achievement Award. In 2009, this award was presented to Carolina Foothill Garden Club members, Anna Kate Hipp and Pedrick Lowery, for their work on the Falls Park Endowment Campaign.

Virginia Hand Callaway Award. Awarded to Falls Park in 2009 by the Southeastern Horticultural Society.

Waterfront Center Excellence on Waterfront Awards. In 2008, Falls Park on the Reedy and the Liberty Bridge won the prestigious Excellence on the Waterfront Award in the Park/Walkway/Recreational category from The Waterfront Center. The Waterfront Center is a non-profit organization formed in 1981 "to assist communities and the professions in making the wisest and best long-term uses of waterfront resources for maximum public benefit."

Urban Beautification Award. Awarded to the Carolina Foothills Garden Club in 2007 by the American Horticultural Society.

The Arthur G. Hayden Medal. In 2005, the Arthur G. Hayden Medal was awarded to the Liberty Bridge for 'a single recent outstanding achievement in bridge engineering demonstrating innovation in special use bridges such as pedestrian, people-mover, or non-traditional structures'.

TRAVEL

Opening the Gate to a Vibrant Main Street in Greenville, S.C.

DEC. 3, 2014

Falls Park in Greenville. Mike Belleme for The New York Times

Surfacing

By ALEX CREVAR

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Back in 1998, few could have imagined Greenville's transformation when Mayor Knox White began selling the idea of a park on Main Street incorporating the Reedy River's 40-foot waterfall. Falls Park became a spark for a pedestrian-friendly city center when it opened in 2004. Last year, the newly erected One building — located at 1 Main Street — provided yet another stamp of validation and a new home for high-end retailers to complement an already dense selection of restaurants, cafes and shops. "Main Street was not an attractive destination," the mayor said. "Today, it's the most vibrant place in the region."

Traveling Chic Boutique

Vogue meets bohemian in this well-curated boutique. A rotating raft of affordable designer threads (most items are under $100) such as SOLD Design Lab and Yumi Kim fills the racks. A bricks-and-mortar version of the shop's trunk-show concept, it also carries jewelry and handbags.

122 North Main Street; 864-365-5501; travelingchicboutique.com

Trout at Passerelle Bistro. Mike Belleme for The New York Times

Passerelle Bistro

This French restaurant, opened in June 2013, embodies Greenville's nouvel esprit. Swinging Parisian jazz is piped through the cozy dining room, which opens onto a patio overlooking Falls Park. Behind a marble bar, the open kitchen serves favorite dishes like garlic-crusted mountain trout, duck confit, and mussels with saffron and espelette peppers.

601 South Main Street; 864-509-0142; passerelleinthepark.com

Coffee Underground

There is more to this basement cafe, a community anchor since 1995, than just beans roasted on site and from-scratch pastries, cakes and pies. The labyrinthine interior — packed with mismatched, overstuffed furniture — hides an Arabian-themed "red room" for cocktails and a theater equipped with church pews for comedy, poetry, acoustic and film nights.

1 East Coffee Street; 864-298-0494; coffeeunderground.info

Rush Wilson Limited

Greenville is Southern to the bone. And no place speaks Southern as elegantly as Rush Wilson, an Old World men's shop specializing in polished, tailored fashions like those of the designers Samuelsohn, Coppley and Robert Talbott since 1959.

23 West North Street; 864-232-2761; rushwilson.com

Sip, a rooftop wine lounge. Mike Belleme for The New York Times

Sip

At this rooftop wine lounge, opened in April 2013, strings of white lights, wine-barrel cocktail tables, and couches intimately scattered beneath the stars set the mood. Patrons come to taste from a catalog of about 200 wine labels and savor Greenville's leafy, low-rise skyline.

103 North Main Street; 864-552-1916; highstreethospitality.com/sip-rooftop-lounge

Correction: December 4, 2014

An earlier version of a picture caption with this article misidentified a park and mixed-use development in Greenville. The photo showed Riverplace, not Falls Park, which is situated nearby.

A version of this article appears in print on December 7, 2014, on page TR11 of the New York edition with the headline: Opening the Gate to a Vibrant Main Street. Order Reprints | Today's Paper | Subscribe

Editorial: Celebrate Greenville's Falls Park

4:41 p.m. EDT October 9, 2014

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(Photo: Heidi Heilbrunn , Staff)

Imagine, if you can, what downtown Greenville would look like without Falls Park and its signature Liberty Bridge. It's hard to do, even if you've lived in the area much more than a decade and have forgotten that you had never set eyes on the rushing falls below the concrete monster known as Camperdown Way Bridge until 10 years ago.

One thing is certain: Without Falls Park and the Liberty Bridge, downtown Greenville's redevelopment would have been stunted. The city's revitalization most likely would have stalled around the Peace Center. The friendly walk between the heart of Main Street and the now bustling West End would not seem like such a natural part of life. Picnics and wedding proposals and plays and casual get-togethers would not regularly take place near the Reedy.

Every now and then, people need to stop and celebrate what has been accomplished. Slightly more than 10 years ago, Mayor Knox White and other civic and business leaders were inviting everyone back to the city's birthplace for a homecoming. The falls had been freed. A park that held much promise and gardens still being planted now surrounded the Reedy River. The technological marvel that's the much-loved Liberty Bridge offered a spectacular view of the place that centuries ago this community's founders realized was as enchanting as it was utilitarian.

"Can we stop every now and then and celebrate what we've done?" White asked Sunday at a brunch commemorating the 10th anniversary of Falls Park. He said he was quoting the question that occasionally had been asked by Chandra Dillard, a state representative who served on Greenville City Council when it took a courageous vote to tear down the Camperdown Way Bridge and replace it with what White has called "the crown jewel of one of the finest parks in America."

For more than a generation, the falls had been forgotten, Mayor White reminded Greenville this past weekend. Tons of concrete and steel covered Greenville's birthplace, and people zipped over this hidden treasure as they made their way into and out of the downtown area.

In the 1980s, a cry was heard that seemed downright crazy to most people at the time. "Free the Falls" had started being whispered by some who loved the city, and the words even were painted on the side of a building near the Reedy River.

Ten years ago Falls Park was officially opened to a curious public. The names of groups and individuals behind the vision of this outdoor venue were introduced to the audience standing at the gateway of this new park. Much credit went to the Carolina Foothills Garden Club for its dream and determination. Even back in the late 1960s, garden club members saw what the future could hold for the land around the Reedy. First Harriett Wyche and her contemporaries such as Minor Mickel worked to reclaim the acres of land near the river, and a bit later Pedrick Lowrey and others such as

Anna Kate Hipp helped fulfill the dream and fill in the gardens.

Three of the people most instrumental in Falls Park — Wyche, Lowrey and Tom Keith, a Greenville landscape architect with Arbor Engineering — have died over the past decade. They were recognized Sunday for breathing life into Falls Park.

Long after others had deserted the Reedy River, Carolina Foothills Garden Club and the city worked on a master plan for its redevelopment. Public-private partnerships have been vital to everything that has saved downtown Greenville and propelled it to a greatness many never thought possible. Private money helped revitalize the area on and now beyond Main Street with RiverPlace, with Bob Hughes as the lead developer, being the cornerstone of the effort that continued the earlier work of Max Heller, Tommy Wyche, Buck Mickel and others.

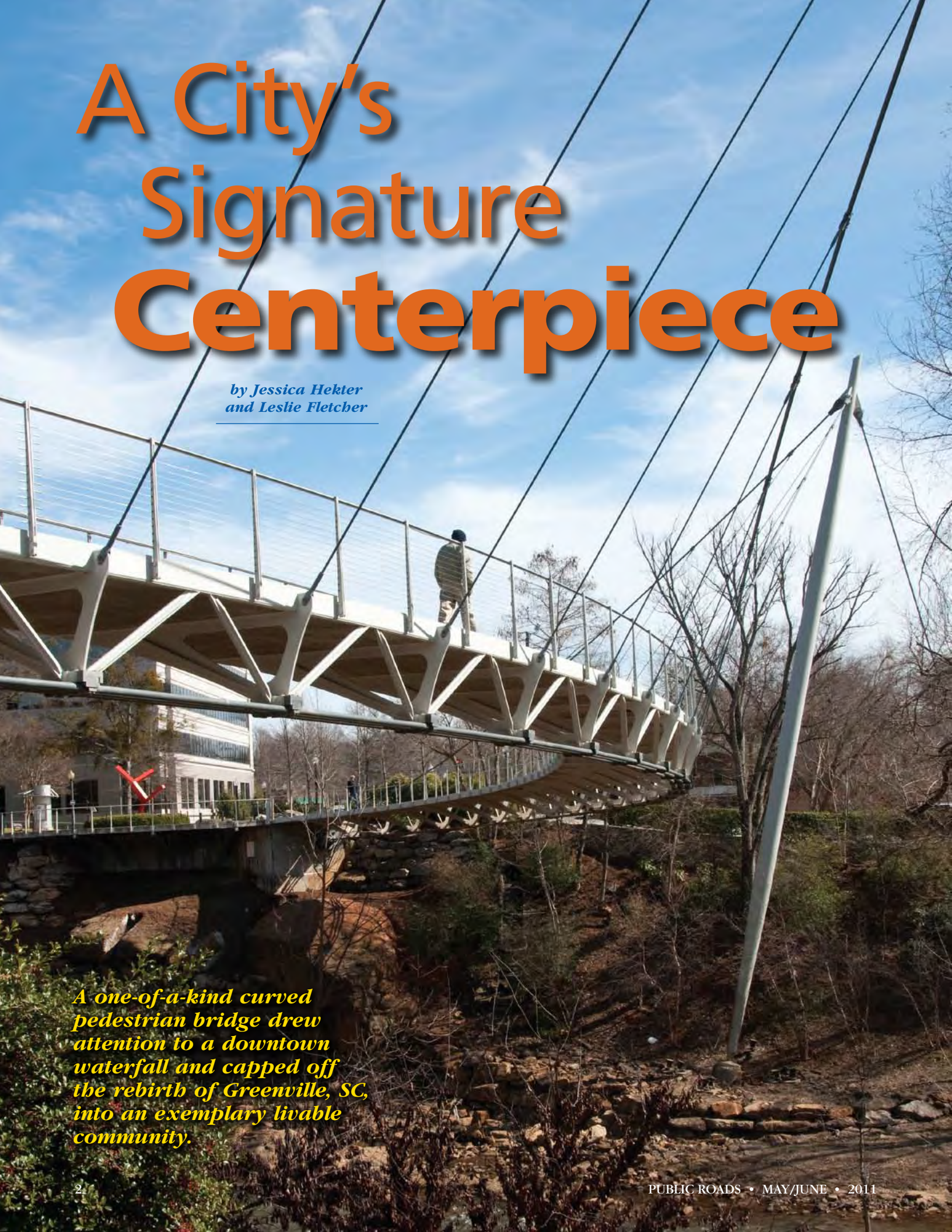
Individuals, businesses and foundations donated to Falls Park and Liberty Bridge, and the city spent $13 million from hospitality tax money for its park. White proudly pointed out in recent days that for a $13 million investment from the city, more than $100 million in private investment popped up in the area within two years.

The Liberty Bridge has become the most recognized landmark in Greenville, and its image is found on everything from T-shirts to coffee mugs. The curved bridge, suspended by a cable, spans 345 feet over the river. Its designer, Miguel Rosales of Boston, said Sunday that his challenge was to “merge technology with nature.” The bridge allows people to get close to the river and interact with the waterfalls, and the curved design ensures that every view along the bridge offers a unique perspective.

Civic and business leaders had a bold vision more than a decade ago. A courageous Greenville City Council took a vote to tear down Camperdown Way Bridge and free the falls below it. In White’s words, Falls Park “let loose an amazing transformation,” and that, indeed, is something to celebrate

A City's Signature Centerpiece

by Jessica Hekter and Leslie Fletcher



A one-of-a-kind curved pedestrian bridge drew attention to a downtown waterfall and capped off the rebirth of Greenville, SC, into an exemplary livable community.

Simply put, downtown Greenville, SC, is a striking success story of how a community reinvented itself. A key component of the transformation was the replacement of a highway overpass with a dramatic pedestrian bridge. Here is the story of decay and rebirth and how the city accomplished its transformation to a sustainable community.

In the mid-20th century, Greenville's downtown along Reedy River experienced a severe decline. As was the case in many communities throughout the country, the downtown no longer was the city's major retail hub, and even though Greenville was thriving, Main Street was not participating in that growth. Walking down Main Street today, it is hard to believe that this tree-lined avenue, bustling with activity, was once mostly vacant.

The community had turned its back on the riverfront and its unusual waterfall, which cascades through a wooded valley in the heart of town. The water was polluted and the riverbanks littered with debris and trash. In 1960, a four-lane highway overpass, the Camperdown Way Bridge, was built across the waterfall, obstructing the view of the picturesque falls and creating a barrier to public access.

Clearly, action was needed. Faced with the slowly declining business district, Greenville leaders chose to partner with private developers to recreate the downtown in a model of sustainable redevelopment. In doing so, they created a livable city with a range of amenities rarely found in a community of 60,000 people. In short, Greenville set out to remake Main Street and create an atmosphere that would be conducive to entertainment and the arts, and attract offices, residential condominiums, and specialty retail businesses. Greenville's award-winning downtown affords a bricks-and-mortar testament to innovation.

"Greenville embraced the concept of redevelopment, making the city one of the early pioneers in reclaiming the prominence of its downtown," says Division Administrator Bob Lee of the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) South Carolina Division Office, "In the process, the city replaced a highway overpass with a landmark suspension bridge for pedestrians. Liberty Bridge curves in a sweeping arc just downstream from a waterfall, taking advantage of a unique natural feature."

Rosales + Partners

In this wooded valley in the heart of town, now called Falls Park, visitors stroll through multilevel terraces to the stunning Liberty Bridge just downstream from the waterfall (center of photo).

Creating the City's Image

While some cities work to maintain their distinct identity, Greenville had to work to uncover its uniqueness. In 1967, the Carolina Foothills Garden Club, with support from the city and Furman University, set out to bring the falls back to life. Furman University donated 6 acres (2.4 hectares) surrounding the falls, and in return the city agreed to create and maintain a park. The downtown took another turn for the better in the mid-1980s when the garden club and the city adopted a master plan for Falls Park, designed to restore the beauty of the area and provide a safe and welcoming public gathering spot.

Meanwhile, the Main Street streetscape project, completed in 1981, marked the first physical improvement. Through what would be considered a "road diet" today, the designers reduced Main Street from four lanes to two and widened the sidewalks for easier walking and outdoor dining.

Street trees were planted to further enhance the pedestrian experience, and parallel parking was replaced with free angled parking. The trees, which are now a signature element of Main Street, made it appealing to pedestrians and also screened some of the vacant and unattractive buildings. Further planning laid the groundwork for investments in plazas and public spaces and focused on highlighting one of the most spectacular features of Greenville's downtown—the Reedy River with its impressive series of natural waterfalls.

The Next Steps

With its new image in place, the city recognized the need for the public sector to step forward to provide the impetus for private investment. In 1982, the Greenville Commons/Hyatt Regency project created the city's first luxury convention hotel located directly on Main Street. Funded through a public-private partnership, it became a visible manifestation of Greenville's faith in the future of the downtown.

In 1990, The Peace Center for the Performing Arts, located on the banks of the Reedy River, opened as a result of a joint partnership of the city, county, and State governments. The arts complex not only stabilized a less-than-desirable part of town, but also triggered redevelopment on the south end of Main Street and linked downtown to its hidden assets—the river, park, and waterfall.

Around that time, the city established an ad hoc task force to review the impact of removing the Camperdown Bridge. In the

(Left) Arguably the most photographed landmark in Greenville, the pedestrian Liberty Bridge is the keystone of Falls Park and the downtown redevelopment. *Photo: Rob Thompson, SCDOT.*

These pedestrians are strolling Main Street during one of Greenville's frequent arts and crafts fairs. *Photo: Jacki Davies Meli.*

mid-1990s, the city and the Carolina Foothills Garden Club commissioned Washington, DC, landscape architect, Andrea Mains, to create a redevelopment plan for the park. Introducing the concept of transforming Falls Park into a regional attraction, her plan involved turning the passive green space into a major public garden. The plan presented the natural beauty of the falls and a world-class pedestrian bridge as critical components of the design. Support for the plan was confirmed in the 1999 *Reedy River Corridor Master Plan*.

Closing Down the Camperdown Bridge

At the time, the Camperdown Bridge was structurally adequate and in reasonably good condition but carried very little highway traffic (5,600 vehicles daily). Early on, the city approached FHWA and the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) with a request to allow demolition of the federally funded structure. As the project champion, the city commissioned a transportation study evaluating the need for the bridge. After reviewing projected travel demand and the age of the structure, and taking Greenville's livability vision into consideration, FHWA agreed to support the project if the local government and metropolitan planning organization (MPO) could vote to support removal of the bridge. As with many metropolitan areas, the MPO provides a roundtable for transportation discussions and decisionmaking in the Greenville

Camperdown Bridge, shown here before its demolition, shaded the waterfall through most of the day so that many Greenville residents were unaware of their city's hidden asset. *Photo: City of Greenville.*

To reach the suspension bridge and view the scenic waterfall, these pedestrians walked down from Main Street through 20 acres (8 hectares) of terraced gardens and flowerbeds. *Photo: Rosales + Partners.*

area. Having been involved in a support role during the project development, the MPO passed a resolution supporting demolition.

Subsequently, in 2001, the Greenville City Council, working with SCDOT and FHWA's South Carolina Division Office, agreed to close a portion of the adjacent street to make way for removal of Camperdown Bridge as a prerequisite to the park redevelopment.

Funding and Designing Liberty Bridge

In 2003, Mayor Knox White announced a funding campaign for Falls Park. The fund was to provide a source of revenue for ongoing enhancements and programs, and the interest earnings were to be used for park expenditures above and beyond the city's normal park operating budget. At that time, individuals and corporations had already pledged $2 million to the endowment, with the most significant naming rights going to a new curved suspension bridge. The city announced that the bridge would be called the Liberty Bridge, in honor of The Liberty Corporation founder W. Frank Hipp and his children for their commitment and contributions to the Greenville community.

The city's hospitality tax, levied on prepared meals and beverages sold in Greenville, funded the $4.5 million structure. By South Carolina law, the hospitality tax must be used for tourism-related activities and improvements.

Bridge architect Miguel Rosales, AIA, president of Rosales + Partners of Boston, MA, designed the bridge; Schlaich Bergermann and Partner did the engineering; and Taylor & Murphy Construction Company, Inc., built the bridge. The park's different levels step down through gardens to provide various access points to the bridge. The architect designed the structure to create a dramatic aerial platform for viewing the falls and gardens. Local soil conditions and topography played an important role because the architect wanted the design to fit seamlessly into the landscape.

From conception to detailed construction documents took about 3 years, including an extensive review process by city officials and residents. Construction took about 14 months and was completed in 2004.

The New Bridge's Vital Statistics

Liberty Bridge is 345 feet (105 meters) long and 12 feet (3.7 meters) wide with an 8-inch (20-centimeter)-thick, concrete-reinforced deck supported by a single suspension cable. The deck's distinctive long sweeping curve has a radius of 214 feet (65

A clear span of 345 feet (105 meters) between the abutments makes the bridge appear to float above the landscape, a dramatic effect accentuated at night by specially designed lighting. *Photo: Rosales + Partners.*

meters) and is cantilevered toward the waterfall from the supporting cables on the outside of the curve to allow unobstructed views of the falls. The deck is a ramp that rises 12 feet (3.7 meters) or 3 percent from east to west as it crosses the river.

Three primary cable systems work with and against each other to support the bridge and hold its position in space. Underneath the deck are three 3-inch (80-millimeter)-diameter ring cables that support the deck and also place it into compression in the horizontal plane. Working against the ring cables in the horizontal direction, but with them in the vertical, are 1.18-inch (30-millimeter) hanger cables. The hanger cables are set from 35 degrees to 60 degrees from vertical and are supported by the catenary or main cable. The main cable is actually three separate 3.15-inch (80-millimeter) cables—two spanning from the abutment blocks to the steel mast and one spanning from mast to mast in the center of the span.

Two 90-foot (27-meter)-tall masts weigh more than 28 tons (25 metric tons) each and incline away from the bridge at a 15-degree angle. Two 3-inch (80-millimeter) backstay cables hold the masts in position. Steel piles and rock anchors, some 70 feet (21 meters) deep into bedrock, transfer the bridge loads to the ground at the abutments, mast, and backstay foundations. The architect concedes that the diameter or cross section of the steel towers could be a bit smaller, but in general he is satisfied with the end result.

The bridge is mostly steel, with smaller and more slender members than most bridges. The engineering firm conducted a detailed study of the characteristics and performance of the cables to find the best configuration and to balance aesthetics and functional considerations.

The elegant curve required extensive calculations and analysis to ensure balance of the forces between the cable above the deck and the three ring cables under the deck that connect to the steel truss. The stiff steel truss helps stabilize the structure during use. The bridge does vibrate and sway slightly, but not uncomfortably; in fact, it moves more when fewer people are using it. About 1,300 can stand on the bridge at a time safely, according to the architect. "We used high levels of safety standards well beyond the actual physical live load capacity that the bridge can accommodate," Rosales says. "All possible live and dead loads needed to be considered, because small vehicles such as bicycles also can use the bridge."

The bridge's soft blue lighting is integral to the experience of

Liberty Bridge Awards

- One of five finalists for the 2006 Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement Award from the American Society of Civil Engineers
- 2005 Award for Excellence in Hot-Dip Galvanizing Recreation and Entertainment from American Galvanizers Association
- 2006 Pinnacle Award for Best Highway-Heavy Project from Carolinas Associated General Contractors
- 2005 Arthur G. Hayden Medal for outstanding achievement in bridge engineering demonstrating innovation in special use bridges
- 2005 Prize Bridge Award for special purpose bridges from The National Steel Bridge Alliance
- 2005 International Footbridge Award in the aesthetics category (medium span), awarded in Venice, Italy

crossing the bridge at night. "The light transforms the appearance of the concrete walking surface, making it appear much softer and more delicate," says Rosales.

The Bridge's Impact

"Although bridges with similar structural concepts have been built in Germany and Spain, the Liberty Bridge is distinct in its geometry," says Rosales. "There is nothing like it elsewhere in the United States."

The bridge serves as the park's focal point, overlooking Reedy River Falls where Richard Pearis, Greenville's first European settler, established his trading post around 1770. The beauty of the waterfalls and gardens is enhanced by the bridge's graceful lines and the appealing stonework used throughout the park.

Enthusiastic crowds gathered in downtown Greenville on September 10, 2004, to celebrate completion of the $13.4 million renovation of the park and landmark pedestrian bridge. "Falls Park and the beautiful Reedy River Falls have regained their rightful place of prominence in our city," said Mayor White at the dedication ceremony. "I invite everyone to visit the park, take a walk on the bridge, and enjoy this spot that is the birthplace of Greenville."

Falls Park and the Liberty Bridge did for South Main Street what the convention center and streetscaping did for North Main Street, accelerating development along the river. The park and bridge sparked a $65 million development, RiverPlace, completed in 2005 and marking the city's largest public-private partnership to date. Located on the banks of Reedy River, the development consists of condominiums, offices, retail shops, artist studios, restaurants, and a hotel. A garage is located beneath the building, and public walkways and plazas link RiverPlace to Falls Park. "RiverPlace is environmentally sensitive to the site and established a design standard for the community," says Nancy Whitworth, director of the city's Economic & Community Development Department.

Falls Park and Liberty Bridge serve as a major tourist destination and Greenville's signature postcard setting. The city estimates a minimum of 1 million visitors have enjoyed Falls Park since it opened, and potential private investment in the immediate area could reach 10 to 20 times the public investment.

"The success of Main Street and downtown Greenville is a result of 30 years of hard work and strong partnerships between the public and private sectors," says Whitworth. "Greenville has focused on creating a vibrant downtown that is authentic, sustainable, and most important, designed for people. Together, the city and community have been able to realize Greenville's potential and capitalize on its uniqueness."

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Reedy River Falls is now accessible to visitors and residents alike, making for a water experience unusual in the heart of a city. *Photo: Rosales + Partners.*