

Boise aims to build white-water park

[Associated Press](#)

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BOISE – City planners are pushing to turn a stretch of the Boise River near downtown into a white-water rafting park.

"It would be great," said Scott Van Hoff, who manages Idaho's National Flood Insurance Program. "It would be like, 'It's lunch hour; let's go have some fun.' "

If approved, the proposed Boise River Park – which would be developed in conjunction with the Esther Simplot Park project – would still be years away. The city just began its fundraising efforts and must collect about \$6.5 million in private donations to pay for Esther Simplot Park and the white-water park.

The two parks would be part of a downtown redevelopment project that's meant to take advantage of underused land along the 30th Street corridor. The next step is to hire a company to perform a land-use study on an area that takes up about 240 acres near downtown.

Turning an industrial river once surrounded by meat packing and concrete plants into a spot for outdoor recreationists will take some modifications, said Boise Parks and Recreation spokeswoman Amy Stahl.

Engineers plan to create several drops in the river to satisfy those who would come downtown looking for thrills, she said. Developers would also add new vegetation and dams to the river, creating a better environment for fish too.

"The river will be modified," Stahl said. "But in fact, it will be improved."

City planners found their inspiration for the project by developing downtown water parks across the country, like the Truckee River Kayak Park, located among the casinos of downtown Reno, Nev., Stahl said. The Truckee park brings in more than \$4 million annually.

Esther Simplot Park sits north of the Boise River, between Fairview Avenue and Veterans Parkway. When completed, the 55-acre park – which began in 2003 – will be the largest in the city and will feature fishing ponds, soccer fields and picnic grounds.