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Falls Park sees its renown grow as finalist for award

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A national competition designed to find the best public open spaces that spawn surrounding redevelopment has selected Falls Park in downtown Greenville in its inaugural class of six finalists.

It's the only park in the South to make the list from among 88 applications, and the only one not situated in a major U.S. city. Other finalists are Boston, Detroit, Pittsburgh, New York and Seattle.

The Urban Land Institute will name a winner, which will receive $10,000, next month.

The institute noted a Reedy River formerly surrounded by textile mills and now home to a 26-acre park that helped spark West End development and that includes a curving suspension bridge.

The city completed the entry for Falls Park and would receive any winnings, City Manager Jim Bourey said. The prize goes to the "individual or organization most responsible" for the project.

The prize is named for Amanda M. Burden, chair of the New York City Planning Commission, director of the New York Department of City Planning and 2009 laureate of the ULI J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development.

She said in a statement that the point is about how buildings and streets contribute to "inviting" public spaces.

"Great public space is why you stay in the city," she said.

Other finalists are Bremen Street Park, which reunited an East Boston neighborhood split by an airport and highway; Campus Martius Park, which is at the heart of Detroit's downtown redevelopment; Herald and Greeley Square Parks in once-dangerous parts of New York City; Olympic Structure Park on Seattle's waterfront; and Pittsburgh's Schenley Plaza, where there was once an overgrown parking lot.

Jury members include real estate, development and urban design professionals from across the country.