The Blue Line as the Color Line: A Historical Account of Post-Urban Water Infrastructure, Development, and Social Equity.

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THESIS

In Denver, access to water has contributed to racial and social inequality, making the metropolis the epicenter of some of the most intense and insidious resistance to racial justice and integration.
Population Denver Metropolitan Area  
Source: US Census Bureau

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Adams</th>
<th>Arapahoe</th>
<th>Boulder</th>
<th>Denver</th>
<th>Douglas</th>
<th>Jefferson</th>
<th>Metro Denver Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>22,481</td>
<td>32,150</td>
<td>37,438</td>
<td>322,412</td>
<td>3,496</td>
<td>30,725</td>
<td>448,702</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>40,234</td>
<td>52,125</td>
<td>48,296</td>
<td>415,786</td>
<td>3,507</td>
<td>55,687</td>
<td>615,635</td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>120,296</td>
<td>113,426</td>
<td>74,254</td>
<td>493,887</td>
<td>4,816</td>
<td>127,520</td>
<td>934,199</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>185,789</td>
<td>162,142</td>
<td>131,889</td>
<td>514,678</td>
<td>8,407</td>
<td>235,368</td>
<td>1,238,273</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>245,944</td>
<td>293,292</td>
<td>189,625</td>
<td>492,694</td>
<td>25,153</td>
<td>371,753</td>
<td>1,618,461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>265,038</td>
<td>391,511</td>
<td>225,339</td>
<td>467,610</td>
<td>60,391</td>
<td>438,430</td>
<td>1,848,319</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>348,618</td>
<td>487,967</td>
<td>269,814</td>
<td>554,636</td>
<td>175,766</td>
<td>525,507</td>
<td>2,400,580</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010*</td>
<td>441,000</td>
<td>566,000</td>
<td>304,000</td>
<td>611,000</td>
<td>289,000</td>
<td>537,0000</td>
<td>2,800,000</td>
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“IMAGINE A GREAT CITY”  
DENVER’S ROLE IN UNDERSTANDING THE LEGAL, POLICY, AND HUMAN CHALLENGES POSED BY THE GLOBAL GROWTH OF MEGACITIES.

*2010 are estimates
What the Project Means to Metropolitan Denver

Realization that no human ingenuity could enable Denver to grow without a reasonable water supply makes it apparent that the project is well worth the cost. Through Government grants and cooperation, the City gains a $9,000,000 project at a cost of $5,400,000. Denver's water problem is being solved because the necessary greater supply now is in sight. Future development may be planned from this time forward with absolute water security. The pioneer spirit lives and leads on to new achievements.

The water that comes from the Western Slope is soft water, much softer than that from the South Platte River. It is clear, clean and cold. It will eliminate high level pumping in the Ashland district. Next year, the remaining half of the present transmountain diversion will be complete, with an added supply of purified water of first quality flowing into City faucets. The mountain barriers which brought death and destruction to many who sought to subdue them, will bring life-giving water to Denver and the arid eastern plains.

Denver now ranks high by every standard of water value—unusual purity, crystal clarity, refreshing coolness, priceless healthfulness, and now a more abundant supply. All these make Denver a better place in which to live, to invest, to make one's home. They enhance business and enrich life.

Good water truly is a wonderful asset!

Your Cooperation Is Appreciated and Necessary.

“Five years of drought dropped water reserves to new lows and spurred efforts...that would be independent of the already over-appropriated South Platte River rights...Denver reached the point where...Only a few months supply remained.”

The Moffat Water Tunnel Project: An Achievement in Denver's Metropolitan Development Program (1936).
Water System of the Denver Water Board circa 1950s

An independent agency of the City and County of Denver.

Supported by user charges and directed by a Board appointed to six-year terms by the Mayor of Denver.

Largest supplier of water in the Metropolitan area.
Proposed Water Development
Arapahoe County Water and Wastewater Authority, Circa 2010
Racial Population
City and County of Denver

![Graph showing racial population changes over time in the City and County of Denver, from 1940 to 2000. The graph indicates changes in the percentage of the population for American Indian, APA, Latino, Black, and White races through time.]
THE RACIAL COLOR LINE
The New York Times: Mapping Every City, Every Block
based on 2006-2009 census data
It is the public policy of the State of Colorado to recognize that “a person who owns a tract of land . . . may prefer to have as neighbors persons of the [W]hite, or Caucasian race.”

-Chandler v. Ziegler et al, 291 P. 822 (Colo. 1930)
McCulloch, Clayton, Berger and Ashley, Crestmoor, Bonnie Brae, Chaffe Park, Illiff’s University Additions, Regis Heights, and Clingers Gardens all had racially restrictive covenants in 1947.
...And the distribution of water resources and infrastructure throughout the metropolitan area.
Water Delivery System in Denver Metropolitan Area circa 1958
Water Conduits and Water Mains size 10” and larger

Source: Preliminary Report, Sites for Low-Cost Housing Projects

Land Use and Valuation Map

Source: Preliminary Report, Sites for Low-Cost Housing Projects

## Rates for Metered Water Service Inside and Outside Corporate Limits of City and County of Denver, 1952-1958


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Usage/Gallons</th>
<th>Inside City</th>
<th>Outside City</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>$1.51</td>
<td>$2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>$2.66</td>
<td>$4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>$5.71</td>
<td>$8.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>$19.96</td>
<td>$31.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>$82.46</td>
<td>$133.04</td>
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THE DENVER WATER BOARD “BLUE” AND “BROWN” LINE CIRCA 1950

Source: Urbanized Denver and the Metropolitan Area: A Basis For Our Policy Decision on our Utilities, Major Streets, and Annexation

“Here could lie a potentially great city!”

Memo to Denver Business and Industrial Community (undated)

From Denver Chamber of Commerce

Anti-Defamation League Collection, University of Denver Archives Box 17, FF 9
THE “BLUE” AND “BROWN” LINES TODAY
The Metropolitan Color Line: Revisited
Conclusion

- A need to pay close attention to the social and human dimensions of water development.
- Color-consciousness, rather than color-blindness in water planning.
- Understanding the relationship between racial segregation and social inequality to existing and emerging water infrastructure.
Resources