

Harriet Island Improvements Cap Off Decade-Long Project Restoring Popular Destination. Mayor Coleman unveils phase II projects that complete renovation of park on Mississippi River.

While millions of residents and visitors have had a taste of Harriet Island since renovations began in 1998, it was not until Tuesday that projects at the popular Saint Paul park were complete.

The spot on the Mississippi River for Taste of Minnesota, Irish Fair of Minnesota, outdoor concerts and other festivals now features trail connections, a new picnic pavilion, extension of the formal promenade and more than 4,000 native grasses and perennials that make the regional park an intimate and more natural setting.

“Saint Paul features one of the best park systems in the nation, and with the improvements to Harriet Island complete, we have a jewel in our park system that shines on the banks of the Mississippi River,” Mayor Chris Coleman said. “The improvements to Harriet Island return the park to its original purpose, a natural gathering spot for families and regional events. Together with new housing on the Upper Landing, our other new and renovated parks, and the replacement of the coal-burning power plant, we are reclaiming the river as the lifeblood of Saint Paul.”

The land, which is located just west of the Wabasha Street Bridge, began undergoing renovations in 1998 after the nearly century-old park had been reduced to little more than a parking lot and rundown pavilion ravaged by floods. The \$14.4 million phase I project created the festival grounds with the Target Performance Stage; restored the Wiggington Pavilion; expanded the plaza; reconnected the West Side to the riverfront with a pedestrian gateway through the levy; restored extensive shoreline; and added ticket and restroom structures along with multiple other cosmetic improvements.

With the park reopened following the phase I renovations, the city was able to secure \$2.2 million in federal, state and local funds to continue with the phase II renovations. Construction began last year to add a new picnic pavilion west of the Wiggington Pavilion as well as extend the riverfront promenade; created new paths and walkways west of the festival grounds; plant more than 4,000 native grasses and perennials as well as more than 130 trees; and landscape the area with paving patterns and rocks to improve stormwater circulation and create a more intimate, outdoor setting for picnics and gatherings.

Recent Metropolitan Council statistics estimated nearly one million visits to the regional park in 2008, 350,000 of which was for special events including Padelford Boat excursions, festivals, and events like weddings and corporate picnics.