



Everything New Orleans

The Times-Picayune

'A JEWEL OF NEW ORLEANS'

Hurricane-battered park returning to full flower

Saturday, March 07, 2009

By C.J. Lin

West Bank bureau

For the past year, Brechtel Park in Algiers has been making a quiet comeback as dead trees strewn about by Hurricane Katrina are cleaned up, invasive species are tackled, new trees are planted and construction on its golf course nears completion.

The park, which is currently open only on Saturdays and Sundays due to a staffing shortage, also will open on Fridays and Mondays beginning this month, according to Ann Macdonald, director of the city's Department of Parks and Parkways.

"This is an ongoing project," Macdonald said. "We just want to get the park open and have the park open for citizens to enjoy. It would mean a great deal for the community and the region, the city, to have Brechtel Park back online. It's one of the few places in the city where you can go to escape. You forget you're in an urban environment."

▼ Advertisement

[CONTINUE STORY](#)

HUMANA
Guidance when you need it most

Attention People with Medicare

"One of the great advantages of having SilverSneakers is your access to a health club... I take yoga!"

Charles W. Humana Gold Plus®
Louisiana Member

Click Here
for more information

M0006_GHA0478HH_3W

The 120-acre park, which closed to the public after extensive damage from several hurricanes, is being renovated by three groups: the city of New Orleans, the grassroots organization Friends of Brechtel Park and the nonprofit Westbank Redevelopment Corp.

--- Who's fixing what ---

The city is spending a total of \$4.2 million in cleanup of the grounds, repairing infrastructure, dredging the lagoon, removing invasive species and fixing the golf course clubhouse. A bid to

upgrade bathrooms, fix electrical systems and the sewer lift station and build new picnic shelters and benches recently was awarded to Russo Construction, but a contract has not yet been signed. Macdonald estimates that the construction should be completed in six to seven months.

Friends of Brechtel Park has raised more than \$10,000 to focus on restoring the park's lagoon. Water levels are currently four to six feet below normal because of a damaged weir. There are some carp and perch in the lagoon, but once the city finishes dredging and expanding the lake and fixing seepage problems, the organization will restock the water with more species of fish and hold fishing tournaments for children. Any remaining money may be used for playground equipment.

"There's a lot of people that really love this park. It's a bedrock of our community," said Aylin Maklansky, president of the organization. "The community is ready to have basic city services back and that includes the park."

The Westbank Redevelopment Corp. has financed a \$25,000 study of the park's ecosystems to develop a plan to restore its natural habitats. Officials are hoping to turn Brechtel into an attraction for nature enthusiasts.

"This park has a very high conservation value," said Paul Richard, president of the corporation. "It's a jewel of New Orleans and as we rebuild this habitat, it will likely attract eco-tourists."

CONTINUED 1 | [2 Next](#)