

MIDTOWN RALEIGH NEWS APRIL 20, 2014

North Hills to open one-acre, \$10.5 million Midtown Park and amphitheater

HIGHLIGHTS

The North Hills development will unveil its latest addition on Saturday: A one-acre park and amphitheater that can accommodate up to 12,000 people for summer concerts.



Gregory Alexander Martinez, 2, runs through Midtown Park, a new park on the east side of North Hills in Raleigh, on Friday. "It's really nice," said Gregory's mother, Mira Martinez. "This is a great field to run around in." | jhknight@newsobserver.com

BY COLIN CAMPBELL - CCAMPBELL@NEWSOBSERVER.COM

The North Hills development will unveil its latest addition on Saturday: A 1-acre park and amphitheater that can accommodate as many as 12,000 people for summer concerts.

Developer John Kane – who’s spent the past decade turning an old mall into a massive mixed-use community on Six Forks Road – will open Midtown Park this weekend with two days of live music. Privately owned parks are an unusual model, but Kane said the new amenity is what North Hills needs as it continues to add office workers, residents and retail destinations.

“The urban density is great, but you’ve got to have gathering places,” Kane said. “We’ll have lots of options to do new things.”

The \$10.5 million park is located in the newest section of North Hills, on the east side of Six Forks close to the Interstate 440 Beltline. It’s between Chuy’s Mexican restaurant and the new Midtown Green apartment complex, which is slated to open in August.

The park and apartment complex comes amid a post-recession building boom at North Hills. Kisco Senior Living will break ground Tuesday on The Cardinal, a 225-unit retirement community adjacent to the Park & Market apartments. And construction will begin this summer on a new 18-story office tower.

In addition to the opening weekend festivities, Midtown Park will host a monthly series of Sunday bluegrass concerts this summer. North Hills events manager Dawn Baker describes it as “a laid-back concert option that appeals to both young and old alike.”

The popular Thursday night beach music series will remain near the Regal Cinemas on the opposite side of Six Forks. “It works well there,” Kane said.

The park and amphitheater were designed by Thomas Sayre and Fred Belledin of the firm Clearscapes. Sayre is the sculptor who designed the Cree Shimmer Wall on the side of the Raleigh Convention Center.

The pair said they wanted to design an amphitheater that stands out even when the stage is empty.

“It’s just as important as a green park space, as a space for people to hang out in,” Sayre said. “We knew that if we can make this a cool place for kids, it would almost guarantee its use for all seasons.”

Kids can climb on walls and stones around the amphitheater or play around the water fountain.

The amphitheater is designed to be a distinctive piece of architecture in its own right – whether it’s seen from the audience lawn or an apartment window several stories high. “We wanted the stage and all the infrastructure that is required by that ... to be interesting as a space,” Sayre said. “That led to this very sculptural, swirling design where everything is an accelerating curve, kind of like a natural shell.”

The stage is large enough to host a symphony yet intimate enough for a small folk music show, Sayre said. And the canopy can flip down and serve as a movie screen.

“People will remember this space,” he said. “It’s not your typical developer green space.”



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