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Bluffs park design honored

By Tim Rohwer
WORLD-HERALD NEWS SERVICE

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COUNCIL BLUFFS — The planned River's Edge park project along the Missouri River will be in an elite class.

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The American Institute of Architects Central States Region has honored the master plan and design of the 90-acre park taking shape at the foot of the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, which links Omaha and Council Bluffs. The park was among just 11 projects honored for excellence in design and construction from more than 300 entries.

"Obviously, we are thrilled to have our community's vision recognized by the AIA, and receiving this honor is a great way to kick off construction on the park," Mayor Tom Hanafan said.

Local contractor MFT Construction is to begin construction this winter on the \$11.1 million first phase of the park.

The new park will stretch from the pedestrian bridge to Harrah's Casino & Hotel on the south and to the flood protection levee on the east. The park will feature a six-acre green space dubbed the Great Lawn, a sandy area, pavilions and a paved walking-biking trail. Future phases will extend the park north.

The park will not only provide improved public amenities and maximum green space, but it also will protect and enhance the adjacent woodlands and wetlands and address flood-related concerns, said Michael Potter, a spokesman for the Sasaki Associates, which designed the park.

Ecologically sensitive areas north and south of the pedestrian bridge will be reinforced with new trees and will be accessed by trails, Potter said.

Because these improvements lie at the foot of a levee, they have been designed to withstand occasional flooding, he said.

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