

Flood memorial in downtown Alton nearly ready for unveiling

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - A new **flood memorial** coming to the intersection of Landmarks and Broadway will continue the beautification process of Downtown Alton, according to **Mayor Brant Walker**.

The memorial will be unveiled June 30, and stands not only as a narrative of two massive floods, but as a reminder of the resilience and community spirit of Altonians. According to **Greg Caffey**, Alton's director of economic development and housing, the memorial will be able to convey the “pulse” of Altonians who have weathered two major floods as well as several approaching such status.

“We wanted to give the stories of the two largest historic floods of 1993 and 1973,” Caffey said. “We also wanted to convey the town. We respond collectively as a community to respond to challenges.”

The flood memorial will include a serpentine-style landscape plaza, much like the landscaping around the Liberty Bank Riverfront Amphitheater, to represent the confluence of the Illinois, Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Limestone benches will also be placed near the memorial, which will consist of a narrative as well as interpretive signage.

Caffey said the memorial is the focal point of beautification projects, which began with a federal Scenic Byway grant in 2008. Since that grant, the City of Alton has received three additional grants from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), totaling approximately \$1.5 million.

Consistent signage and overall improvements on Landmarks Boulevard were completed in the summer of 2013, Caffey said. He and Walker agree the projects are continuing the recent renaissance of Downtown Alton as well as the Riverfront.

“Back in the 1970s, the riverfront wasn't nearly as beautiful as it is today, or utilized the way it is now,” Walker said. “When people come across that bridge in their cars, our town will look more appealing. This will be a huge pick-up for us. People will be hard-pressed to find a better-looking downtown than ours in the entire St. Louis area.”

The idea for the flood memorial was created through a committee consisting of several local organizations, including Alton Main Street, the Riverbend Growth Association and Downtown Alton, Inc. Several original ideas, including a large art feature, were scraped for a smaller-scale plaza featuring a narrative.

“We worked with IDOT to approve the scope,” Caffey said. “We wanted to focus on a smaller-scale narration, and the project evolved in that fashion.”

A ceremonial ribbon-cutting will accompany the unveiling of the memorial in June.

