

Barnhart: Inclusive park entering final phases

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ALTON - Coming soon: an all-inclusive play area for all children at Gordon Moore Park.

An all-inclusive play area has been in development at Gordon Moore Park for months. The play area will feature playground equipment, surfacing and benches, which will be accessible for children of all abilities. The idea was championed by Alton Parks and

Recreation Director Michael Haynes, who said it would be the only play area of its kind within about 30 miles, and would be an excellent spot for Alton - a city in which as many as 10 percent of children have a disability.

On Tuesday, Alton Public Works Director Bob Barnhart said the play area was only days away from being completed, but lamented at heavy rainfall from Monday night into Tuesday morning, saying it may have delayed the work by about a day. Barnhart said a contractor is still scheduled to place rubberized surfacing over graded rock Wednesday, but emphasized the work was still weather-permitting.

"Most of the structure has been installed, and the rock has been graded to allow for a new surface to be placed on top," Barnhart said. "It will be similar to a rubberized mat."

After that protective fall surfacing is placed, Barnhart said and ADA-compliant sidewalk will be installed as well as fencing surrounding the perimeter. He said the playground equipment, such as swings and slides, has already been installed.

When asked for a potential first date the area will be open for play, Barnhart said he hoped it would be completed within a week.

"It's very difficult to coordinate these projects with lots of entities involved," he said.

A lot of the work, such as structure installation, has been done through volunteer work. Barnhart said local construction firm, JUN Construction, has also contributed to the work by volunteering some time rock grading.

After that work is completed, Barnhart said an ADA-compliant parking area with as many as a dozen stalls would be installed as well as some benches.

Following the completion of the inclusive play area, Barnhart said phase two will begin, which would break ground on the concession stand development. Barnhart said he expected that work to begin within a month.