

Excitement Increases For New Alton Piasa Park Redevelopment Project

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - The new Alton Piasa Park Redevelopment Project has created an abundance of energy toward the City of Alton itself, the National Scenic Byway, and tourism in the region.

The Alton Piasa Park Redevelopment Project was explained at an unveiling event at the Alton City Hall Council Chambers last week, hosted by CEO/President Cory Jobe and the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau.

The much-anticipated project calls for the redesign and redevelopment of Piasa Park – home to the painting of the Piasa Bird on the limestone bluff walls - and a new state-of-the-art Byway Discovery Center. The \$10 million project is funded by a Capital Bill Grant received by the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau to create and enhance product development along the Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic Byway in Alton and Hartford.

The Bureau also manages the 33-mile scenic byway which runs from Hartford to Pere Marquette State Park.

The new park redevelopment project will include a byway center with a main entrance, reception and gift shop, exhibit space and much more. The existing parking will be transformed into a location for tour and school buses and visitors of all types.

"We wanted to position the building, so it didn't block views," Jobe said. "We also thought it was important to not encroach the native and undisturbed area at Piasa Park."

Jobe said the project is something they have been working on in strong fashion for about a year.

"We looked at several other locations for the discovery center project, but we knew there was a need for development at Piasa Park," he said. "This will help develop and enhance the product for visitors who travel the National Scenic Byway. We worked with the City of Alton to try to find the best location and to create a new experience where the byway can be celebrated."

Jobe said Great Rivers and Routes will be working on preparing the project for bid by fall and obtaining a contractor. He said: "We hope to be turning dirt in 2024 on the project."

Jobe added there also will be work planned for improvements on the Lewis and Clark Tower in Hartford to improve the look and make it more user-friendly.

There have been multiple vandalism reports at Piasa Park, including a statue that was recently destroyed that explained the Piasa Bird legend. He said these changes should greatly improve safety in this area.

See the video from the presentation last week about the new Piasa Park Discovery Center Project here: <https://www.riverbender.com/video/details/presentation-for-the-redevelopment-of-altons-piasa-park-video-5459.cfm>

