



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UG Completes Major Connector to Region's Historic Trail System

The Unified Government celebrated the completion of one of the most vital links to the historic Heritage Trail System today during a special ribbon cutting ceremony held at Kaw Point River Front Park. The newly completed bike trail will now open one of region's most historical parks to more bicycling and walking events.

"This is a very exciting day for all of us committed to a regional trail system in the Kansas City area," said Mayor/CEO Mark Holland of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas. "With the completion of this connector, our trail system in Kansas City, Kansas, is now linked to the rest of metropolitan area, giving bicyclists, runners, and walkers a convenient and safe way to cross the state line."

The Riverfront Heritage Trail system covers approximately 15 miles and connects all of the most significant and historic sites along the Kansas and Missouri rivers. The trail not only showcases the waterfront, but it also highlights our local and regional heritage.

Jeff Perry is a resident of Kansas City, Missouri and says he enjoys riding the new trail system in KCK.

"This is really a vital part of history. This is probably the most historic site in Kansas City where Lewis and Clark came through. It's the gateway to the west. That's what people want to come see here," says Perry.

When talking about the history of Kaw Point River Front Park, no one is more enthusiastic about engaging in the discussion than Mike Calwell, Chairman of the Board of Directors for Friends of Kaw Point, Inc. Dressed as Patrick Gass, a sergeant that played an important role in the Lewis and Clark Expedition from 1804 to 1806, Calwell shared his thoughts about the significance of the bike trail connector.

"This park is a tremendous asset to our community. We need to help raise the awareness of the park amongst the younger generation," he says. This will help attract volunteers that can help us improve and preserve this history landmark."

The newly completed trail connector also provides an access point to Kaw Point Park for residents using the sidewalk and bike network located on 5th Street along Jersey Creek in downtown KCK. Trail systems bring a variety of benefits to cities throughout the country. They provide safer routes for bicyclists, pedestrians and homeowners that are looking for walking and trail amenities.

“Today marks a very important milestone for bike riders, Joggers, walkers and all of us who love the outdoors,” says Commissioner Gayle Townsend. “Too many of our residents have had to travel outside of our community to experience an attractive setting for jogging, cycling and walking. However as of today, that is no longer the case!”

“I grew up in Wyandotte County and now live in Johnson County, but it’s a lot of fun for me to bring my friends over here and they see what a great place it is. We’ve ridden all over Kansas City, Kansas from Central Ave. out to the Quindaro Ruins, down to Kaw Point Park, on the trails and on the road. So this is going to enhance that experience a lot,” Susan Fischer said.

Other local benefits to investments in a trail system include economic impacts that result in increased tourism, urban redevelopment projects, health improvements due to increase physical activity and general consumer spending.

“Bike and walking trails build a sense of community and help people feel more bonded together as part of their community. So I think it’s money well spent and has a long term affect,” says bicyclist Linda Jordan.

“This project also furthers my commitment to creating an infrastructure that makes it easier for our residents to become more active and engage in healthy behaviors,” says Holland.

There was a great deal of engineering that went into the project. At a cost of \$2.6 million, the development took more than 10 years from conceptualization to construction. The trail begins at an interstate interchange, crosses the Union Pacific Railroad on a four lane bridge, twisting down between an interstate on-ramp bridge, then crossing under a four lane bridge that crosses over an Army Corps of Engineers flood-wall, and connecting to Kaw Point Park with minimal disturbance to the area.

The UG partnered with multiple agencies on the project which included the Kansas Department of Transportation, City of Kansas City, Mo., Kansas City River Trails, Inc., Kaw Valley Drainage District, TranSystems, the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, and the US Army Corp of Engineers.

Construction of the trail began early 2016 and this connection is not the final piece of the trail. The new trail system actually makes room for additional trail development along the Kansas River to the north of the park. The trail is also accessible to visitors with disabilities.

“Our hope is that the presence of the connector trail will help make Kaw Point Park a destination of choice for all lovers of the outdoors,” says Commissioner Townsend.

Today's event also provided an opportunity to highlight the installation of a metal artwork of Lewis and Clark on the new state-of-the-art Kaw Point Industrial Park office building.

The metal artwork was part of the development agreement with NorthPoint Development and the Unified Government as part of a way to give back to the community. The mural provides a nice silhouette of the mural at night when it illuminates. This makes the artwork easily visible from I-70, which provides a locator for people to find their way to the park.

Construction of the mural was \$35,000.

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