

New tailgating area costs \$15.5 million

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Development set to be completed by August

USC has started building a new tailgating area across from Williams-Brice Stadium that will cost the university \$15.5 million.

The project, which is funded by athletic revenue bonds and began construction on Dec. 14, will be ready for fans in time for the upcoming football season.

Among the amenities for the new facility, according to Tom Quasney, USC's associate vice president for facilities: nearly 3,000 parking spots, the majority with a grassy area for "tailgating activities"; an amphitheater; and a festival walkway that Leslie Brunelli, associate vice president for finance and planning, called in an email the "Garnet Way."

The grounds will feature brick and wrought-iron fencing and light poles styled "to provide visual continuity between this portion of the athletic campus and the main campus," Quasney wrote.

Throw in restrooms and approximately 650 trees, and you've got the latest in a string of Athletics improvements and a new green space in an otherwise concrete-laden part of town. Athletics also plans to install a massive new video board in the stadium this year.

"It will soften the look of that area," said Executive Associate Athletics Director Kevin O'Connell. "It's 52 acres that will be transformed from what has been an industrial area and the old farmers market into new green space."

But the university has aspirations beyond providing fans with a spot for barbecue and revelry.

The site is set to become a "grand entry for the football team and band upon their arrival at the stadium during pregame festivities," Quasney wrote in an email response.

O'Connell also hoped the project, which is being carried out by North Carolina-based contractor NEO Corporation, would find uses beyond those during the football season.

"It's designed and intended to be a multiuse facility, so there'll be opportunities for folks to enjoy it beyond just the seven football games," he said. "I could see where you could have concerts over there; you could have opportunities for students to come in and use the facility."

The complex will be "substantially complete" around Aug. 1, wrote Quasney, but how much parking spots will cost when it is ready was not immediately clear Thursday evening.

Athletics recently conducted a study of nearby tailgating areas and will meet with the Gamecock Club to establish the price for spots the new development in February, wrote Quasney.

O'Connell declined to offer an estimate of that cost or speak to how pricing would compare to other tailgating spots near the stadium.

The facility will also cause changes to nearby traffic flow, which abuts Bluff Road, a well-traveled highway that connects many off-campus housing complexes to campus.

“Traffic patterns will be improved to include additional entrances/exits from the property,” wrote Brunelli.

Last modified on Friday, 13 January 2012 00:39

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