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Three new parks in the works in Miami

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The future site of Flatiron Park, currently under construction, is near Mary Brickell Village along South Miami Avenue at 11 Street, Saturday, Oct. 1, 2011.

The park-starved city of Miami is getting three new neighborhood green spaces — one of them a garden in west Brickell designed by a famed landscape architect.

Dubbed Flatiron Park., it will sit on a 9,000-square-foot, vacant triangle where the real-estate collapse halted plans for a condo tower. On a section of the property, the developer is building a public park at his own expense. Designed pro bono by Miami's Raymond Jungles, it features native shade trees, palms and oolite rock benches. The property is bordered by Southeast First Avenue and South Miami Avenue and 10th and 11th streets.

It's one of three small parks now under development in the city, which has one of the lowest amounts of park acreage per resident among major U.S. cities.

The others are:

- An as-yet unnamed park at 1814 Brickell Ave., a vacant lot purchased by the city for \$2.6 million, with a contribution of about \$274,000 in cash and services from the Tibor Hollo and Sheila Hollo Trust.

Construction, expected to cost around \$1 million and to be covered by a parks bond issue, started in June. The 35,500-square-foot park should be completed by the end of November and includes a children's play area. The park, where remains of Native Americans were uncovered, is also a designated archeological site.

- Manatee Bend Park, on the Little River between 457 and 485 NE 77th Street Rd. near the northern edge of the city. The city has an agreement to purchase the 1.2-acre property for \$590,000 from artist and former Biscayne Boulevard Times publisher Skip Van Cel.

Most of the money to buy, design and build a park at the site will come from state sources — a \$117,000 grant from the Florida Inland Navigation District and \$482,500 from the Biscayne Bay/Miami River Land Acquisition Trust Fund. Miami Commissioner Marc Sarnoff will contribute \$5,000 from his salary.

Plans include facilities for kayaking and other boating activities.

Sarnoff, who is running for re-election, coordinated city efforts to acquire and develop the park properties, all three of which are in his district. One goal, he said, was to defray the cost to city taxpayers by attracting funding from private and state sources.

Brickell residents have been vocal about demanding new park space as numerous new high-rise condo and apartment towers have brought an influx of thousands of residents, including children, into the dense urban district just south of downtown.

“There a lot more families that reside here and they deserve and welcome the creation of 1814 Brickell Avenue and Flatiron,” said Brickell Homeowners Association President Ernesto Cuesta. “Brickell provides about 64 percent of the city’s revenue and has long filled the financial gaps of the rest of Miami, yet our residents’ needs are often dismissed.”

Of the three park deals, the Flatiron was perhaps the most elaborate.

The developer, Brickell Flatiron LLC, agreed to pay \$300,000 for the design and construction of the park as a condition for approval of a development permit, said William Plasencia, an aide to Sarnoff.

The park should be ready by the end of the year, Brickell Flatiron managing member Mallory Kauderer said. In the park will be a large Madagascar Kapok tree, live oaks, Sabal Palms, and Silk Floss trees, among others.

“Brickell Flatiron LLC is proud and honored to be a part of such a valuable program to the residents of the City of Miami,” Kauderer said.