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Newpark Amphitheater prepares for grand opening

Band of Heathens headlines plays July 31

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It doesn't look like much more than a dirt field today, but the end of the month, Newpark Amphitheater in the eponymous residential, commercial and office development near Kimball Junction hopes to host as many as 1,000 standing-room only concertgoers when Band of Heathens plays there July 31 for the stage's grand opening.

Organizers say the 50,000 square-foot amphitheater will feature outdoor patios where diners can eat, drink and enjoy free concerts. The venue's size puts it somewhere between smaller stages on Main Street and Quarry Village and larger stages at Deer Valley and The Canyons resort.

The homeowners association decided to pay Park City Concerts, a nonprofit, to stage free concerts every Thursday from 6 -8 p.m. for the summer. The series has been running for two weeks on a temporary stage in the amphitheater. About 200 people attended Two Buck Tux and Brandi Frampton last week, organizers say, and about 20 people rode bikes.

"We were very pleased," said Toby Martin of Park City Concerts. "It was just a terrific way to open things up."

The Lauderdale and Mesa Drive perform July 24 and the week after that features the nationally known group Band of Heathens.

Planners say the amphitheater will be the green center to an urban development that they hope will resemble the Gateway in Salt Lake City.

Newpark spokesman Chris Retzer said one of the keys for the development was to create a community core that meets office, residential and entertainment

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needs. "Land is expensive and the community puts a premium on open space," he said. "When you have a mixed-use development you're minimizing your footprint. You're going vertical instead of sprawling."

The Newpark Town Center covers more than 38 acres and abuts the Redstone development. Retzer said developers donated land to the Swanner Nature Preserve and EcoCenter and built a paved trail that runs alongside portions of the open space. A network of trails connects the mixed-use development with the Glenwilde Loop and allows visitors from Park City proper to ride bikes to shop and play in the area.

"A plan of this size and magnitude is rare in this country," said Chris Eggleton, who is the general manager of the Newpark Hotel and Resort. "The setting is pretty remarkable. It brings together shopping, dining, recreation and condos."

The Sun Plaza is another unique aspect of the development. Visitors will be able to use a sun calendar including a 40-foot obelisk and markers on the ground to determine the time and date.

The project has been in its planning stages for 10 years and building started in 2003. Builders started pouring concrete for the amphitheater in March. About half the retail space in the development is completed and it will eventually feature a Best Buy superstore. Newpark lists Rossignol, Skullcandy, Wachovia Securities and Café Rio among its current tenants.

One of the keys for approval from the Summit County Planning Commission was to have outdoor public space that has energy and facilitates interaction. Denise Hytonen has been the lead planner of the Newpark Project since the winter of 2006. She said the development is zoned to be a town center. "One of the goals of the Newpark project was for it to be a gathering place for the community," she said. "The project on the whole, the design and implementation, has been really successful."

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