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Ormond puts final touches on 'nicest park in Florida'

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Published: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 at 3:37 p.m.

ORMOND BEACH — Hassan Saboungi is already planning on a barbecue with his family this summer at Ormond Beach's sparkling new beachfront park.

"It's the nicest beachfront park in all of Florida," Saboungi said boldly. "Without a doubt."

Construction crews on Wednesday were putting the finishing touches on Andy Romano Beachfront Park, which will open to the public at 10:30 a.m. Saturday after a ribbon-cutting ceremony.



News-Journal / Steven Notaras

Construction crews on Wednesday were putting the finishing touches on Andy Romano Beachfront Park, which will open to the public at 10:30 a.m. Saturday.

"Everything is essentially done," he said. "We're just working on a couple of punch list items, just taking care of the aesthetics."

Saboungi, who co-owns Saboungi Construction Inc., the company that carried out the construction of the 4.5-acre park, said it will be something the community can be proud of.

When the park is opened, residents and tourists will have access to nearly 200 beachfront parking spaces as well as several amenities, which overall cost about \$8.2 million. Construction of the park is estimated at \$2.7 million and the parcel of land was bought by the city in 2010 for \$5.5 million. The park is named after Andy Romano, who helped establish the first lifeguard team in Ormond Beach and was known for renting out chairs, umbrellas and boogie boards on the beach.

Some other features of the park are a 112-spout splash pad for kids during the hot summer days. The park also has a concession stand, showers, eight bathrooms, dozens of picnic tables, pavilions and a playground.

Also, when lightning is in the area, a detection system will turn off the splash pad and warn beachgoers of inclement weather.

While the park is officially closed until Saturday, Saboungi said it is already drawing a lot of interest.

"Everybody's impressed," he said. "People are coming off from the beach or driving around."

People at the beach were marveling at the new addition.

Greg and Bridget Sheehan of Ontario, Canada, said they passed it on their way to Bonefish Grill and their curiosity was sparked.

"I think a lot of the locals will go there," he said. "It looks really nice."

Brad Perry of upstate New York said he liked the look of the park but was concerned about the city's desire to ban traffic from the beach in front of the park. On Tuesday night, the city sent a letter to Volusia County requesting the beach area in front of the park be free of traffic.

"I'm sure the people here with kids are going to think it's great," Perry said. "I'll take my grandson there and check it all out."

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