

## Park advocates to report progress

### Work begins soon on marina, infrastructure along Lewes canal, but further help needed

By PATRICIA V. RIVERA

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Nothing was certain about the future of the historic Lewes boatyard except in Gavin B. Braithwaite's mind. He knew he didn't want a block of concrete in the place where the seaport's forefathers launched their ships.

That's how, in 1999, he and others convinced some 550 local citizens to raise \$500,000 and purchase the land rather than allow developers to erect a busy complex with condominiums and shops. Their idea was that one day the barren land could become a green park that would beckon visitors to celebrate Lewes' quaint relationship with the sea.

That day is quickly approaching. "I'm thrilled. We're greater than 90 percent there," said Braithwaite, a shop owner.

The public can receive a full report on the progress at 7 p.m. Wednesday in the Lewes Public Library.

The Friends of the Lewes Canalfront Park will hold a question-and-answer session and distribute a "Mid-Campaign Report" on the \$4.9 million project.

The three-phase park will include 22 new boat slips, a canalfront promenade, thousands of native, salt-tolerant plantings, and a circular pavilion for small group performances and presentations. The first phase encompassed the removal of the old boat piers and boardwalk and was completed in 2005. The canal bottom was also dredged to improve access.

James L. Ford III said this month contractors will start to work on the marina, then move to the park infrastructure. Completion of that phase is expected by early July.

"A lot of people have opened their hearts and wallets, and they're anxious to see activity take place at the site," he said. "Soon we'll see a lot."

Local residents and city officials donated almost half of the project costs, with other government agencies and private organizations paying for the remainder.

The park, in addition to having aesthetic appeal, will reduce storm runoff into the canal by 75 percent.

Mike Rawl, campaign manager of Friends of the Lewes Canalfront Park, said an additional \$1 million is needed to finish and maintain the property.

"We still need everyone's help," he said.

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