

## Heritage Happenings

### ■ Main Street Reopens

The new "convertible" Main Street reopened to traffic in late March 2007 for the first time in nearly 40 years. The Yuma Visitors Bureau hosted a "Welcome Back" party over the weekend of March 30-31, with bands, a parade, and a dedication ceremony. Congressman Raul Grijalva, who secured a \$960,000 federal grant for the project, joined Mayor Larry Nelson for the opening ceremony.



▲ Above photo: Mayor Larry Nelson and Congressman Raul Grijalva at the Main Street Reopening Ceremony.

▼ Below photo: A sight unseen for nearly 40 years, cars travel down Main Street after its reopening in March.



### ■ Arizona Welcome Center

In 2006, the Arizona legislature committed \$2 million as a first installment to the construction of a \$4 million tourism center to be constructed on the west side of 4th Avenue north of 1st Street. Indications are strong that the remaining funding will be included in the 2007 state budget. Design has begun, with the hope that construction can begin in the second half of 2008.

### ■ Hilton Garden Inn Under Construction Set to Open in late 2008

Clark-Lankford LLC began construction on the \$32 million riverfront development in the spring of 2007. The project includes a 150-room Hilton Garden Inn and a 18,000-square-foot conference center. This is the first phase of an overall \$100 million private investment, including new residential, office and retail development. Opening of the new riverfront hotel is expected in fall 2008.

At the same time, the Heritage Area is working on a plan to tell the story of the Yuma Crossing at "Pivot Point". Plans include the relocation of the 1907 Baldwin locomotive and an interpretive overlook to relate the history of the rail, rope ferry, and bridge crossings.



▲ The Riverfront Redevelopment Plan will include nearly \$100 million in private investment, including a hotel (above) and a conference center.

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## The Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area Corporation: Who We Are...

The Board, staff and volunteers of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area share the responsibility to implement the plan to improve Yuma's downtown and riverfront. The City of Yuma has provided staff and operational support as the local match for federal funding. The Board of Directors represents a broad cross-section of community members who volunteer their time without compensation to make these projects happen.

Board members and staff who are working hard to make our dream a reality:  
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# River Currents

News From the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area

Summer 2007

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## Yuma's Riverfront Comes to Life

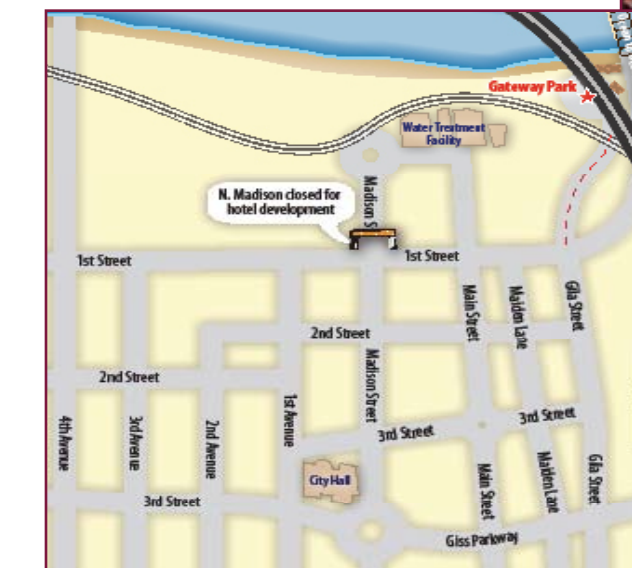


## Gateway Park Now Open

The new downtown riverfront park opened in May 2007 in time for the busy summer season.



▲ Photo above: Guests at the dedication of Gateway Park enjoyed a barbaque under the new ramadas near the river's edge.



◀ Map left: If you haven't been to the park yet, access is gained by taking the new Gila Street Extension north (just before the Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge).

## Hilton Garden Inn Under Construction

The \$32 million private investment is under construction and slated to open in late 2008.



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# The Stewart Vincent Wolfe Memorial Playground Opens at West Wetlands Park

The Stewart Vincent Wolfe Creative Playground is a one-of-a-kind experience for children and their families. The unique components throughout the playground came from the imaginations of over 5,000 local school children. It is custom designed with many art features, bursts of color, and musical elements throughout. The playground contains separate areas and swings for both tots and school-aged children, is wheelchair accessible, and includes a variety of play features for special-needs children as well.

Ron and Stephanie Martin, who made the initial \$100,000 donation, requested the West Wetlands Park for the playground site to honor a dear friend of theirs, the late Stewart Vincent Wolfe, who loved that park. The Caballeros de Yuma contributed \$50,000 and between the two, they led the way to nearly \$400,000 raised through community contributions. Additionally, hundreds of dollars in in-kind goods and services were donated!

The City of Yuma provided the site for the playground at the West Wetlands Park, funding for Leathers and Associates, (the consulting firm that guided the playground planning, design and "build"



process), and donated the time of several city employees for the management of the project. Partnerships with Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area and BetterYuma.org were formed and proved critical to the success of this massive undertaking.

The planning process was accomplished over several months and was led by more than 50 volunteers participating on nine different committees. They worked diligently to organize various facets of the project, which culminated in the playground build that took place on Feb. 8-12 and 15-19, 2007.

The playground was built entirely by community members, young and old, working side by side in just 10 days time, similar to an old-fashioned "barn raising". Volunteers worked during three shifts a day with free meals and childcare provided for all the workers. At the end of the build, more than 8,000 individuals had volunteered their time to the project, and each walked away with a feeling that he or she had contributed to the future of Yuma's children with many memorable experiences and stories to share.

At more than three acres in size, the playground is the largest in Yuma and is valued at three times its actual cost because the labor was provided by volunteers. The playground build offered an opportunity for citizens to collectively give back to the community and enjoy a shared sense of pride.



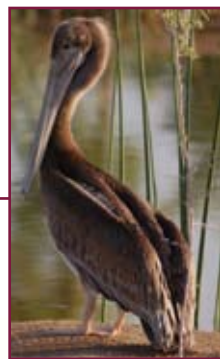
▲ Above: Children enjoy the Dragon Tower.  
 ▼ Below Left: Overview of the Castle.

To visit the Stewart Vincent Wolfe Creative Playground, take 1st Street to 12th Avenue and head north (towards the Colorado River). Go up over the railroad tracks and you're there! Turn left at the roundabout for playground parking.

**Stewart Vincent Wolfe Grand Opening**

On Feb. 19, 2007, the Stewart Vincent Wolfe Creative Playground's Grand Opening Celebration took place at the West Wetlands Park. Hundreds of excited Yuma kids waiting outside the Playground chanted along with City Administrator Mark Watson during the final countdown, "10...9...8...7...6...5..." at this point, the kids could hold back no longer, so with a rushed "4, 3, 2, 1" the kids flooded into the playground, with most families staying to play for hours. Since then, the playground has been packed with hundreds of visitors every day.

# Yuma's Riverfront Comes Alive



## Gateway Park Opens

The City of Yuma recently completed construction of a \$4.4 million project to greatly expand and improve the access to Yuma's downtown riverfront. Gateway Park improves vehicular access to the river by extending Gila Street. In addition, the new park adds amenities lacking at the old Madison Beach park: lighting, paved parking, picnic ramadas, new beach, handicapped accessibility, restrooms, and fishing piers. The park opened in late May in time for the busy summer season.

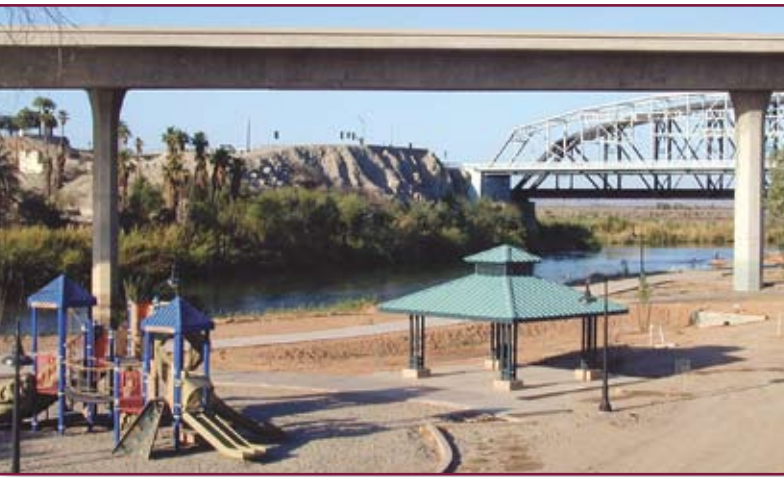


Photo left: Gateway Park ramada and playground

## East Wetlands

Clearing and restoration continues at a brisk pace. More than 100 additional acres have been cleared of non-native vegetation so far in 2007. A braided back channel is being added to the South Channel, and more than 70 acres has been irrigated and planted with cottonwoods, willows, and mesquites. But the most amazing progress can be

charted by the return of waterfowl and wildlife. Bird abundance has doubled in just one year, while bird diversity has increased by 60%. Numbers aside, recent photos of birds returning to the Yuma East Wetlands are the best way to show the progress being made there.



"The project would not have been possible without grants from the Bureau of Reclamation and the State of Arizona"

East Wetlands photos courtesy of Fred Phillips. Park photos courtesy City of Yuma.