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After two years of construction, downtown Napa's new river front is slowly being unveiled after a steel river wall was recently removed.

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W I T H T H E

# WALL

## A first look at Napa River promenade

By **KEVIN COURTNEY**  
*Register Staff Writer*

After two years of construction, a partial unveiling of downtown Napa's new river front is occurring south of Third Street.

A barge-mounted crane is slowly removing the steel cofferdam that has shrouded the west bank of the Napa River during construction of a flood wall and promenade between Third and Sixth streets.

"I think people will be stunned" said Jim Brandt, owner of Napa General Store at Napa Mill. "It's changing the whole face of the river downtown."

The public won't be allowed on the promenade until early next year. For now, the best views are from the south side of the Third Street Bridge, Soscol Avenue across the river and from the area next to Angele restaurant.

Napa Mill, which hosts restaurants and the Napa River Inn, is now surrounded by a 12-foot pathway cantilevered over the water. The promenade sweeps around Riverbend Plaza, Napa General Store and Angele, extending an existing walkway further to the south.

R.L. Brosamer Inc., under contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is wrapping up flood and recreation features south of Third, while work goes full tilt north of Third, from Veteran's Memorial Park nearly to First Street.

Brosamer needs to get its construction equipment out of the river by Oct. 15 in preparation for the rainy season, said Julie Lucido, the engineer for the Napa County Flood Control District.

Mostly "cosmetic" work remains to be done at Napa Mill, said Guy Cuip, Brosamer's construction superintendent. The bulk of construction activity is now at Veteran's Park, which is being reconfigured into an amphitheater with flood walls.

With the wrapping up of construction at Napa Mill, the public will be able to appreciate how the new river front will function as both flood protection and public recreation, Lucido said.

Brosamer won a \$24 million federal contract to transform nearly a third of a mile of river front between First and Sixth Streets into a focal point for outdoor activity. This promenade will ultimately be part of a six-mile river trail bisecting the city from Trancas Street south to Kennedy Park. Long-term plans are also in the works to extend the trail from Kennedy Park south to American Canyon.

The downtown trail sections at Napa Mill and at Veteran's Park will be



Contractors install a drainage system for the future river promenade in front of the Napa Mill earlier this year. *Register file photo*

completed by January, but work will still be needed south of Third, where the \$72 million Riverfront mixed-use development is under construction.

The river's edge along the Riverfront project will have both a lower and an upper promenade. The upper level won't be completed until late 2008, when the buildings containing stores, restaurants, office and residential condominiums are finished.

A flotilla of barges arrived last week to begin removing the cofferdam composed of interlocking steel panels that formed a temporary dam, allowing construction of the flood wall.

Because some of the brick walls at Napa Mill are more than a century old, Brosamer is using a low-vibration machine from Japan to gently extract the 40-foot sheet piles that are buried 20 feet into the river bottom.

The federal contract for work between Napa Mill and First Street was awarded to Brosamer in August 2005 with the expectation that the project would be done in late 2007.

Because of federal funding delays, the Corps of Engineers slowed down the project. When it resumed, the cost of the work had escalated from \$19 million to \$24 million. The new completion date is January 2008.

While the project was in a slow mode, Harry Price, developer of Napa Mill, persuaded the Corps of Engineers to revise its plan for the Promenade around Napa Mill.

The original plan called for a break in the promenade, with pedestrians forced to take a detour through Napa Mill to get back to the river.

Price advocated suspending a portion of the trail over the water to make an uninterrupted walkway possible. When Brosamer agreed with the alternative design, the Corps of Engineers signed on, too.

Because of other design changes suggested by Price, the continuous river trail is being built for no more money than the original design.