

Myriad Gardens transformation adds new tourist attraction to downtown Oklahoma City

Saturday's "grand reopening" celebration at the Myriad Gardens in Oklahoma City showed visitors how the park will connect with residents throughout the year, and how it is now downtown's newest tourist attraction.

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Myriad Gardens always was on the list of downtown tourism destinations, and the garden's Crystal Bridge certainly appeared in many postcards and photos snapped by visitors.

But let's be honest; the Myriad Gardens never quite reached its potential as a top tourist attraction. Could anyone have suggested a trip downtown just to see the Myriad Gardens?

Saturday's "Festival on the Green," the stunning "reopening" celebration changes everything. In one day the gardens' top backer, Devon Energy Corp., provided visitors with dozens of examples of how this wasn't the same park people visited as part of their annual trek to the spring Festival of the Arts.

The Crystal Bridge, with its waterfalls and exotic plants, remains the jewel of the park, but it now is spiffed up and boasting colorful LED exterior lighting at night. For some odd reason, the Crystal Bridge never had a grand entrance; that, too, has changed.

Visitors on Saturday flocked to a new "children's fountain" nearby that provides an incredible show of simulated rainstorms, fog, combined with incredible lighting and the voice of nature itself.

Visitors were shown how a pavilion could be turned into a farmers' market, or how the new grand lawn might be the perfect spot for Saturday morning Zumba (a class that combines exercise and dancing).

They also enjoyed a first glimpse of a restaurant and outdoor ice skating rink added on the east side of the park.

Maybe the gardens could be home to weekly flower sales or an autumn pumpkin patch. The children's play area, which kept my son occupied for two hours, has the potential to host regular musical performances and storytelling.

The future for the Myriad Gardens has yet to be written, though Devon Energy certainly provided a hint at what's possible. Saturday's celebration shows how the Myriad Gardens will connect with residents throughout the year.

And, have no doubt, downtown Oklahoma City has a major new tourist attraction as it continues what is now an almost two-decade-long transformation.



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