

Board OKs \$6 million for park events, improvements in '09

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Great Park visitors can expect a larger and more active preview park next year, with board members earmarking \$2 million for community events and more than \$4 million for construction projects around the orange balloon ride.

Officials hope to top the success of this year's Festival of Flight and Night Flight's concert series, which they say brought more than 40,000 visitors.

While the Great Park events began midsummer with the unveiling of the preview park, this year's entertainment series will span the year. It kicks off on Valentine's Day, with the arrival of a temporary ice rink.

In spring, the park will host the Imagination Celebration and a series of movies on the lawn, followed by a Great Park anniversary event and a series of dances and concerts in the summer, and an El Toro heritage and pumpkin harvest event in the fall.

The events will remain free to the public, with city leaders hoping to draw 77,000 people this year. That means the city would essentially pay about \$26 for each attendee, although park officials said they are seeking corporate sponsorships to help defer costs.

Some Great Park board members have suggested a parking fee, although the proposal has yet to gain majority support. Board member Walkie Ray argued that charging for parking could convince people to take advantage of mass transit when visiting the park.

Park officials will juggle the entertainment events with \$4.2 million in construction projects, including new lawn and shade areas, a playground, more lighting and power sources and restrooms.

Councilman Steven Choi worried that the city is wasting money on temporary facilities such as the restrooms. Staff members said the restrooms could be resold or simply moved to other areas, noting that Lennar is expected to begin work on permanent electrical and sewer projects next year.