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Contract bidding opens for 27-acre Great Park 'preview'

Construction is to begin in May.

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Bidding has opened for construction on the 27-acre "preview park" at the Great Park, and work is expected to begin the first week of May.

The tethered balloon, which is now grounded, will be inaccessible during construction. The balloon will be flying again by July, said Marsha Burgess, spokeswoman for the Great Park Corp.

The Great Park is planning programs in July for the area around the balloon. A "Festival of Flight" will include musical performances and exhibits. An open field will replace the planned soccer field.

Other plans include an area for public performance, the beginning of a walkway lined with palm trees, and improvements to the windows in the hangar.

The city is planning to work with the Irvine Barclay Theater to provide performances and music over the summer.

The Great Park has adopted themes, including Festival of Flight for its July anniversary, a visual arts theme of Elements: Photographs of the OC Great Park and Night Flights as a performing arts theme.

From August to September the Great Park plans to have its Hangar Café open and is planning performances and dances for Friday and Saturday evenings. Family events are planned for October, including an Oral History participant's reunion in the hangar, and pumpkin decorating for children.

The Great Park balloon was grounded for an investigation by the FAA and an investigator hired by the city after a former co-pilot alleged safety violations were committed during flights.

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