

RIVERWALK REPAIRS UNDER WAY ON HUTCHINSON ISLAND

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Just as things were starting to quiet down on Hutchinson Island, construction work begins again. This time, crews are working on the island's irksome riverwalk.

Construction workers from TIC -- The Industrial Co. -- have begun repairing the walkway, which has twice cracked and collapsed. Work began just after Thanksgiving to fix the pathways and is slated to end sometime in January.

Even though \$6 million in taxpayer funds were used to construct the red-brick walkway on Hutchinson Island that runs along the Savannah River, from the Savannah International Trade & Convention Center to the Westin Savannah Harbor Resort, Chatham County is not directly involved in the project.

Assistant County Manager Pat Monahan said Zurich Insurance is picking up the tab on the work as part of its builders risk insurance policy, taken out during all county-funded construction projects. National Insurance Services is acting as a consulting engineer on the project and is the entity that hired TIC to do the construction work.

In late September, a 5-foot section of the walkway collapsed, sending a 10-year-old boy tumbling into a waist-high hole. The boy escaped with only scrapes and bruises. Before that, in April a 30-foot section of the riverwalk collapsed when underground support beams snapped along Slip 2. No pedestrians were present at the time.

Chatham County officials blamed the crumbling on soft, silty soil trapped behind the riverwalk's bulkheads, which caused the pavers to shift. Charles George, project manager from Thomas & Hutton Engineers, said questionable soil quality is one of the hazards of building on Hutchinson Island.

"It's basically a mud island ... it's just one of the pitfalls of building on that kind of island," George said.

Thomas & Hutton Engineers, a Savannah-based civil, structural, marine engineering company, was hired to do the design work for the repairs. Saussy Engineering Inc. did the original work.

The project is divided into two portions. The first leg of the reconstruction -- and the most extensive -- is along the west side of the Westin Savannah Harbor Resort.

The area in question is 140 feet long and 16 feet wide. George said the west side, the area closest to the trade center, will have its existing paver, or brick, system and support system removed and replaced by pre-cast concrete slabs. New pilings are going in as well. The upgrade will improve and re-establish the base support for the paver system.

On the east side, workers will remove the existing paver system and install a concrete floating slab along a 200-foot-long, 10-foot-wide pathway. The east side work is expected to get under way next week.

Once complete, the pathway shouldn't look any different than before, Monahan said.

"For someone walking along the riverwalk, they'll get the same view, they see the same pavers, everything will be the same. All the work is going on underneath," he said.

Jim Hogg,, director of rooms for the Westin, said the construction work hasn't interfered with business at the hotel.

"They've taken all the precautions so it meets the best time to do the work," Hogg said.

"They've done quite a bit to make sure not to be disruptive at all."

Business reporter Tasha Gatlin can be reached at 652-0358 or at tgatlin@savannahnow.com

John Carrington/Savannah Morning News A 75-foot long piling is driven into the ground as part of the riverwalk repair at the Westin Savannah Harbor Resort on Hutchinson Island. More than 30 pilings will be required to complete the repair.

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