

Wed, Feb 27, 2013

Military Park Poised for a Makeover of Epic Proportion

BY INAWORDFAB



Military Park's "Wars of America" sculpture by Gutzon Borglum, who also created Mount Rushmore

In keeping with Newark's current building boom, Military Park is next up for a whopping \$3.25 million makeover at the hands of urban parks expert, Daniel Biederman. And as someone who has walked alone (very swiftly, mind you) through that park after dark on numerous occasions, can I get a collective "HALLELOO!" Why the focus on Military Park? Nearly triangular and situated right downtown between Park Place, Rector Street and

Broad Street, Military Park is directly adjacent to some of the more popular spots in the city, including NJPAC and Prudential's world headquarters. In fact, Prudential is gearing up to build a brand new \$440 million tower directly opposite the park where the abandoned S. Klein department store sits. And construction has already begun at the future site of Panasonic's North American headquarters, just a block away.

The plan is to replace dying trees, plant an acre of flowers, construct a cafe and public restroom, repair the lampposts, create improved seating areas and install custom-designed trash receptacles. (Fancy!) And if you've ever parked underground at Military Parking Garage, you know that the most important task will be to transform those scary concrete enclosures that house the stairwells into something more...palatable. Thankfully, they plan to turn the stairwell heads to glass and aluminum structures that are far less intimidating.

Biederman and his firm, Biederman Redevelopment Ventures, have put their stamp on parks in cities like Boston, Buffalo, Dallas and Pittsburgh, and were responsible for revamping New York City's Bryant Park twenty years ago. Ultimately, the goal is for Military Park, like Bryant Park, to be self-sustaining and infused with programming like chess, yoga, lectures, concerts and film screenings. Groundbreaking on the project begins this