



The LeFleur's Bluff Complex Announced Master Plan for Top-Tier Recreation and Entertainment Facility

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Jackson, Miss. – The LeFleur's Bluff Complex, the shared campus between the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks' (MDWFP) Museum of Natural Science (MMNS) and the Mississippi Children's Museum (MCM), announced Tuesday at a media conference at MCM the master plan for another top-tier recreation and entertainment facility for the Jackson area.



The first phase of the project opened a new state-of-the-art playground in December 2021, The LeFleur's Bluff Playground, which has welcomed more than 60,000 guests since opening. Construction has begun on the second phase of the project, which will include an adventure trail connecting both museums and an outdoor pavilion. The overall master plan includes a new and unique golf experience, Otter Creek Golf Park, along with several outdoor amenities for children and adults of all ages to enjoy. This visionary plan will create one of the best urban parks in the country, which will bring together four award-winning museums and countless outdoor amenities and experiences for locals and tourist, alike.

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Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hosemann, Speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives Philip Gunn, Chairman and Master Architect Robert Trent Jones II, Principal and Golf Course Architect Nathan Crace, Mississippi Children's Museum President Susan Garrard, and Acting Executive Director of MDWFP Lynn Posey made remarks at the media conference.

"The pandemic really emphasized how much people value the outdoors and Mississippi has so much to offer. As a result of this planned expansion, LeFleur's Bluff promises to be one of our state's premier outdoor spaces, with attractions for children and adults. This is the kind of project, which is critical to retaining working professionals and families, bringing in tourists, and attracting new citizens to the Capital City and the metro area," said Lt. Governor Delbert Hosemann.

Otter Creek Golf Park will be a unique golf experience unlike any other in the state, with design influence from Robert Trent Jones II, world-renowned golf architect, and Nathan Crace, Mississippi based golf architect. The course will feature a 10-hole, par-3, walkable course with holes ranging from 70-150 yards, a state-of-the-art driving range, 18-hole putting course, separate putting green, a new clubhouse, and will be accessible for nighttime play.

"I'm thrilled for many reasons to be part of the team creating Otter Creek Golf Park," said Robert Trent Jones, Jr., Chairman and Master Architect, Robert Trent Jones II Golf Course Architects. "Not only will it be the centerpiece of a master plan that preserves urban green space in Mississippi's biggest city, but it also creates an opportunity for a permanent home for the First Tee of Central Mississippi, introducing golf to a new generation. The country—and the world—needs more projects like this."

"To have the opportunity to help create a permanent home for First Tee and support all of the work they and the Children's Museum continue to do for the children of the Jackson Metro

area is a blessing," said Nathan Crace. "But to be able to do so while collaborating with Bobby--and make this new golf experience a reality in my adopted home state--makes it a very special project for me on a personal level!"

The Mississippi Children's Museum and MDWFP's Museum of Natural Science are collaborating on this project to bring together the four museums in the LeFleur Museum District, as well as preserve urban green space, and provide an enriching experience for children, families, and adults of all ages. In addition to the entertainment experience Otter Creek will provide, it will also serve as an educational venue for MCM's after school students to continue their weekly programs with First Tee of Central Mississippi.

"The master plan of the LeFleur's Bluff Complex is based on a passionate vision to preserve urban green space, promote youth golf and provide outdoor recreational amenities for families, as well as enhance the LeFleur Museum District experience as a whole," said Susan Garrard, MCM President.

"The LeFleur's Bluff Complex is exciting not only for the Jackson area, but the entire state. This is a major step in achieving our goal to make LeFleur's Bluff State Park the best urban park in the country. We are thankful for the support of the state legislature on this project and others in our state park system," said Lynn Posey, acting Executive Director of MDWFP.

"Since opening the new Lefleur's Bluff playground, we have averaged more than 2,000 visitors each weekend," said Angel Rohnke, Director of the LeFleur's Bluff Complex. "We are confident that when this additional resource is added, the LeFleur's Bluff Complex and Museum District will be a premier destination spot in Mississippi."

Federal funding has allocated \$1 million to the concept and design of a biking and pedestrian bridge over Lakeland Drive, which will connect all four LMD museums. The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation is the signature sponsor of the LeFleur's Bluff Playground, Outdoor Pavilion and Museum Trail.

About the MDWFP's Museum of Natural Science

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks' Museum of Natural Science is located in Jackson, tucked within historic LeFleur's Bluff State Park. The museum overlooks a 300-acre natural landscape, an open-air amphitheater, and 2.5 miles of nature trails. Inside, enjoy face to face encounters with more than 200 species of live fish, turtles, alligators, and other animals in a 100,000-gallon aquarium network of underwater habitats. Explore 73,000 square feet of exhibits featuring natural Mississippi settings filled with native plants and wildlife including deer, waterfowl, fossils, and Mississippi's endangered species. For nearly 90 years, the museum has thrilled and entertained visitors while pursuing its mission to promote understanding and appreciation of Mississippi's biological diversity through collections, research, scientific databases, education, and exhibits; and to inspire the people of our state to respect the environment and to preserve natural Mississippi. The museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is a member of the Association of Science - Technology Centers. Please visit www.mdwfp.com/museum for more information.

About the Mississippi Children's Museum

The Mississippi Children's Museum (MCM) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a mission of creating unparalleled experiences to inspire excellence and a lifelong joy of learning in all children. MCM's two museums, located in Jackson and Meridian, are designed around five primary initiatives, with correlating exhibits, programs, and outreach efforts. These initiatives include: Literacy, STEAM, Health and Nutrition, Cultural Arts, and Mississippi Heritage – the keys to helping our children mature into healthy and productive adult learners. In response to community needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MCM shifted operating and programming priorities to best serve Mississippi's children and combat learning loss through facilitating virtual schooling and creating online educational enrichment – services that continue today through a robust, daily afterschool program and an online platform for teacher professional development.

In 2021, MCM celebrated a monumental year by receiving an Institute of Museum and Library Services National Medal, the nation's highest honor for museums, and through opening its first satellite museum, MCM-Meridian, which received the 2021 Governor's Award for Travel Attraction of the Year. For more information visit: www.mschildrensmuseum.org.