



# A Groundbreaking Ceremony Will Kick Off Construction on a New Joint Entrance at the LeFleur's Bluff Complex



## MEDIA CONTACTS

**Angela Mitchell**  
Director of External Affairs,  
Mississippi Children's Museum  
angela@mcm.ms  
P: 601.709.8354

**Jennifer Shows**  
Mississippi Department of  
Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks  
jennifer.shows@wfp.ms.gov  
P: 601.432.2172

*The LeFleur's Bluff Education and Tourism Complex (LBC), located at the LeFleur's Bluff State Park, is 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).*

## PRESS RELEASE • FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Jackson, Miss.** – A Groundbreaking Ceremony to kick off construction on a new joint entrance at the LeFleur's Bluff Complex (LBC) will be held on Tuesday, February 7 at 10:00 a.m.

The new entrance at LeFleur's Bluff Complex will soon provide convenient accessibility to all amenities in the LBC. This joint entrance will improve the flow of traffic and boast a beautifully designed and architecturally unique structure that will be visible from the state's busiest interstate, I-55. During construction, the entrance for the LeFleur's Bluff Playground and MMNS will be temporarily closed and all traffic will enter through MCM's entrance.

During this phase, Spotter's Adventure Trail will receive new landscaping featuring a scenic path of Magnolia trees and other native plant species, as well as decorative park benches along the trail. The Den will receive a visual enhancement featuring a metal mural designed by Wier Boerner Allin Architecture and installed by Mitchell Signs. Additional parking and a picnic area are also new amenities guests can look forward to in future phases.

The economic impact of this project can be seen in increased visitor traffic and spending to the area. In a recent study by the University of Southern Mississippi, the LeFleur Museum District sees an average of 369,455 visitors annually and contributes \$6 million in visitor spending.

This phase of the project is estimated to cost 2.5 million, with a current investment exceeding \$10 million. These funds will be returned to Mississippi's economy and workforce by partnering with talented Mississippi companies who will execute the vision of this advantageous masterplan. Project partners include Alliant Construction, Wier Boerner Allin Architecture, Christian Preus Landscape Architecture, and Mitchell Signs.

"The vision of the masterplan for the LeFleur's Bluff Complex and surrounding area will provide numerous recreational and educational opportunities to attract visitors to our state and city, as well as increasing the well-being of our local community. Tourism is a major economic driver for our state and the collaboration between MCM, MDWFP, MMNS and the MDWFP Foundation has resulted in inspirational state-of-the-art amenities, which are leading the way in our state for destination development," said Susan Garrard, President of MCM.

The LeFleur's Bluff Complex has welcomed world-class amenities to the capital city over the last 18 months. The LeFleur's Bluff Playground, which opened in December of 2021, has welcomed over 120,000 guests. An adventure trail and outdoor pavilion opened in October of 2022, and has been a useful addition for joint events such as the Complex's collaborative Park After Dark event. The overall masterplan includes 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 tourists, alike.

“We are excited to break ground on this phase of the LeFleur’s Bluff Education & Tourism Complex located at LeFleur’s Bluff State Park. The new entrance, landscaping, and art will further enhance the visitor’s experience at this popular attraction,” said MDWFP Executive Director Lynn Posey. “We are proud of the progress at LeFleur’s Bluff State Park; the playground was named the 2022 Best New Addition to Jackson by the *Jackson Free Press* and is currently nominated for the Best Park in the *Mississippi Magazine* and Best Attraction of the Year by Visit Jackson.”

Plans to develop a new Bike & Pedestrian Bridge over Lakeland Drive are underway. The bridge will connect the multi-use museum trail south and north of Lakeland Drive and the four museums in the LeFleur Museum District. The existing trail route includes the Mississippi’s Civil Rights Museum, Museum of Mississippi History, MDWFP’s Museum of Natural Science, Mississippi Children’s Museum, and The Mississippi Farmers Market.

The new bridge will allow access to the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum, Smith-Wills Stadium, Jamie Fowler Boyll Park, Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame and Museum and The Eastover Trail. Future connections could include the Fondren Area, Natchez Trace Parkway trails, and the Ross Barnett Reservoir’s multiple public parks.

The Bike & Pedestrian bridge over Lakeland Drive will help ensure the safety of adults and children seeking to cross one of the area’s most heavily trafficked corridors, as well as fuel further investment in the area. The bridge’s decorative design will make an aesthetically pleasing landmark to welcome visitors to the LeFleur Museum District and the state’s capital city.

#### **About the MDWFP’s Mississippi Natural Science Museum**

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](http://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](http://www.mschildrensmuseum.org).

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