

FOR IMMEDIATE **RELEASE**

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**Nature Discovery Center Park Transformation:  
Gateway Project Complete, More Park Improvements Announced**

BELLAIRE (3/2/17) The Nature Discovery Center is pleased to announce that the final phase of our major capital renovation, the Gateway Project, is complete. The Gateway Project represents a \$1.26 million capital initiative to improve the historic Henshaw House (Phase One) and Russ Pitman Park (Phase Two), both of which are managed by the Center.

The public/private capital funding included a \$500,000 City of Bellaire bond referendum as well as \$760,000 from foundations and private citizens. The Nature Discovery Center is a hub for community gatherings and nature education. And, it now boasts new features such as an outdoor restroom, a revamped pavilion area, pathway lighting, and an outdoor restroom.

But we're not done! Additional improvements to Russ Pitman Park are under way. As part of the park's master plan, additional work is planned to enhance the park's usability for both everyday visitors and school groups. This work is made possible through a key partnership with Resource Environmental Solutions (RES) -- the largest habitat restoration company in the country. RES is donating services to enhance the 4 habitat zones in the park through pond restoration, nonnative plant removal, and native plantings throughout the park. "The RES team is delighted to contribute to enhancements at the nature park. We have already witnessed the transformative effects of the Gateway Project renovations. Such initiatives will help to accommodate the growing crowds at the nature park and assure that this greenspace is preserved for generations to come," said Elliott Bouillion, RES president and CEO.

The park's current center path is flood prone and will be replaced with a Porous Pave nature trail made from recycled rubber, saving 750 tires from the landfill. The new center trail will be porous, allowing water to flow through and allowing visitors to enjoy the park after a rain. The new path will feature a gentle curve through the middle of the park, creating a more natural experience and highlighting our mature pecan trees, Pocket Prairie, and other native plants.

A raised wooden boardwalk with a bench will be built through the Prairie Wetland. This boardwalk will complete our ADA accessible trail loop and provide a dry seating area for birdwatchers and photographers. A new teaching deck will be installed at Cypress Pond, allowing our staff naturalists to teach hands-on classes focused on pond life. Finally, professionally designed, custom interpretive signage will be installed throughout the nature park to ensure all Russ Pitman Park visitors have an opportunity to learn about its unique habitats.

On Saturday May 6, 2017 the Nature Discovery Center will reveal our completed renovations at the free event, *Gateway to Nature: Experience our Park Transformation*. We will have a short ceremony at 10:00 am to thank donors and contributors. Afterwards, our education team will lead a series of family-centered activities throughout the renovated nature park, highlighting the various improvements.

For more information about the Nature Discovery Center and its ongoing programs for children and families, and for Gateway Project updates, visit [www.naturediscoverycenter.org](http://www.naturediscoverycenter.org).

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#### ABOUT THE HANA AND ARTHUR GINZBARG NATURE DISCOVERY CENTER

Founded in 1988, the Hana and Arthur Ginzburg Nature Discovery Center sparks interest in nature and science through high-quality educational programming and its four-acre outdoor classroom, the Russ Pitman Park. The 501(c)(3) organization aims to stimulate a desire to explore, discover, learn, nourish the inquiring mind, and keep a sense of wonder alive for all ages.

Image 1: NDC Gateway Education Space Rendering

Suggested caption: The Center's new outdoor animal enclosures will be showcased around an open, inviting outdoor education space, providing greater visibility of the animals and increasing opportunities for learning.

Image 2: NDC Gateway Plaza Rendering

Suggested caption: The redesigned and resurfaced pavilion area behind the Nature Center will feature a new sensory garden.

Image 3: NEW MAP

Suggested caption: The redesigned Russ Pitman Park map highlights the four habitat zones and many destinations to discover in the nature park.