

Program Summary:

A gateway to environmental discovery where architecture, education, and the natural landscape converge to create immersive experiences for visitors of all ages.

Program Statement:

This nature center was envisioned as a gateway to environmental discovery where architecture, education, and the natural landscape converge to create immersive experiences for visitors of all ages. Designed to support the park's growing attendance while preserving the character of its 160-acre forest setting, the project expands opportunities for learning, recreation, and community engagement within one of North Louisiana's most treasured natural resources.

The 23,750-square-foot campus is composed of a nature center, event facility, aviary, and support buildings connected by pedestrian pathways that extend into the park's established trail system. Rather than competing with the landscape, the buildings are carefully integrated into the site, encouraging exploration and strengthening visitors' connection to the surrounding environment.

At the heart of the campus, the main nature center serves as a hub for environmental education and discovery. Immersive exhibits, classrooms, laboratories, and gathering spaces support hands-on learning experiences while fostering an appreciation for the region's ecology and wildlife. Complementing the educational mission, the event center provides a flexible venue for community gatherings, conferences, celebrations, and public programming, expanding the park's role as both an educational resource and civic destination.

Site planning was guided by a commitment to stewardship and preservation. Parking areas, circulation routes, and gathering spaces were thoughtfully organized to minimize their impact on the landscape while enhancing accessibility and visitor experience. The result is a cohesive campus that extends the experience of the forest, creating meaningful opportunities for education, conservation, and community connection for generations to come.

A-115.01

Building Area: (sf)
23,750 sf

Cost per Square Foot:
\$617

Construction Cost
\$14,650,433.93

Date of Completion:
January 2026



A-115.02

Set within the wooded landscape of a local park, the Nature Center establishes a strong connection between the built and natural environments. Curving roof forms and tree-inspired structural elements echo the surrounding forest canopy, creating a memorable arrival experience that reinforces the park's mission of education, conservation, and exploration.



A-115.03

The nature center's exterior expression draws inspiration from the surrounding landscape through warm natural materials, rhythmic structural elements, and sweeping roof forms. Large expanses of glass dissolve the boundary between interior and exterior, allowing the forest to become an integral part of the visitor experience.



A-115.04

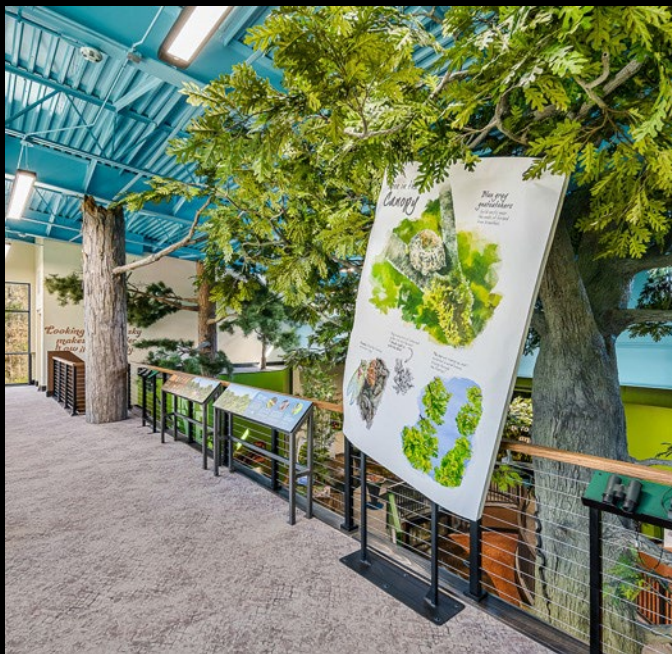
The nature center lobby serves as an immersive introduction to the park, blending orientation, exhibits, and visitor services within a light-filled gathering space. A custom terrazzo floor traces the waterways of the park, transforming the landscape into an educational and navigational element that guides visitors through the building while reinforcing their connection to the site.





A-115.05

The exhibit hall transforms learning into exploration, guiding visitors through a series of immersive environments inspired by the pages of a naturalist's journal. Beginning with a life-sized journal entry in the lobby, the experience unfolds through interactive exhibits, live animal habitats, realistic sounds, and tactile elements that recreate the ecosystems of North Louisiana. Multi-level pathways allow visitors to journey from the forest floor to the canopy above, fostering curiosity, discovery, and a deeper appreciation for the natural world.



A-205.06

Education is central to the mission of the nature center. Flexible classrooms and learning spaces accommodate school field trips, environmental workshops, summer camps, and community programming throughout the year. Large windows connect occupants to the surrounding forest, while adaptable layouts allow the spaces to transform seamlessly from intimate learning environments to larger gathering spaces that support public events and educational outreach.





A-115.07

Beyond the public exhibit spaces, the nature center includes dedicated areas for research, education, and program development. Resource libraries, collaborative workspaces, and administrative offices support the staff, educators, and volunteers who bring the park's mission to life, ensuring that environmental stewardship and community engagement extend far beyond the exhibit hall.



A-115.08

Designed as a flexible gathering space, the Event Center extends the mission of the nature park beyond exhibits and education programs by providing a venue for community events, meetings, celebrations, and special programming. The building's sweeping curved roofline and natural material palette create a distinctive architectural identity while maintaining a strong connection to the surrounding landscape.

Inside, the large open hall accommodates a variety of event configurations, from banquets and receptions to conferences, presentations, and community gatherings. Floor-to-ceiling windows frame views of the forest and bring natural light deep into the space, while integrated audiovisual systems, support spaces, and a commercial catering kitchen provide the functionality needed for events of all sizes.

By creating a destination for both educational and social gatherings, the Event Center expands the park's role as a year-round community resource and strengthens its connection to visitors throughout the region.



A-115.09

The Birds of Prey Aviary provides visitors with an up-close look at native raptors while supporting the nature center's mission of education, conservation, and wildlife stewardship. Located along the park's trail system, the exhibit offers opportunities to learn about the important role these birds play in Louisiana's ecosystems.

Designed to complement the architecture of the main facility, the circular aviary features natural materials and forms that blend into the surrounding landscape. The habitat provides a safe environment for its avian residents while creating an engaging outdoor experience that connects visitors directly to the natural world.



A-115.10

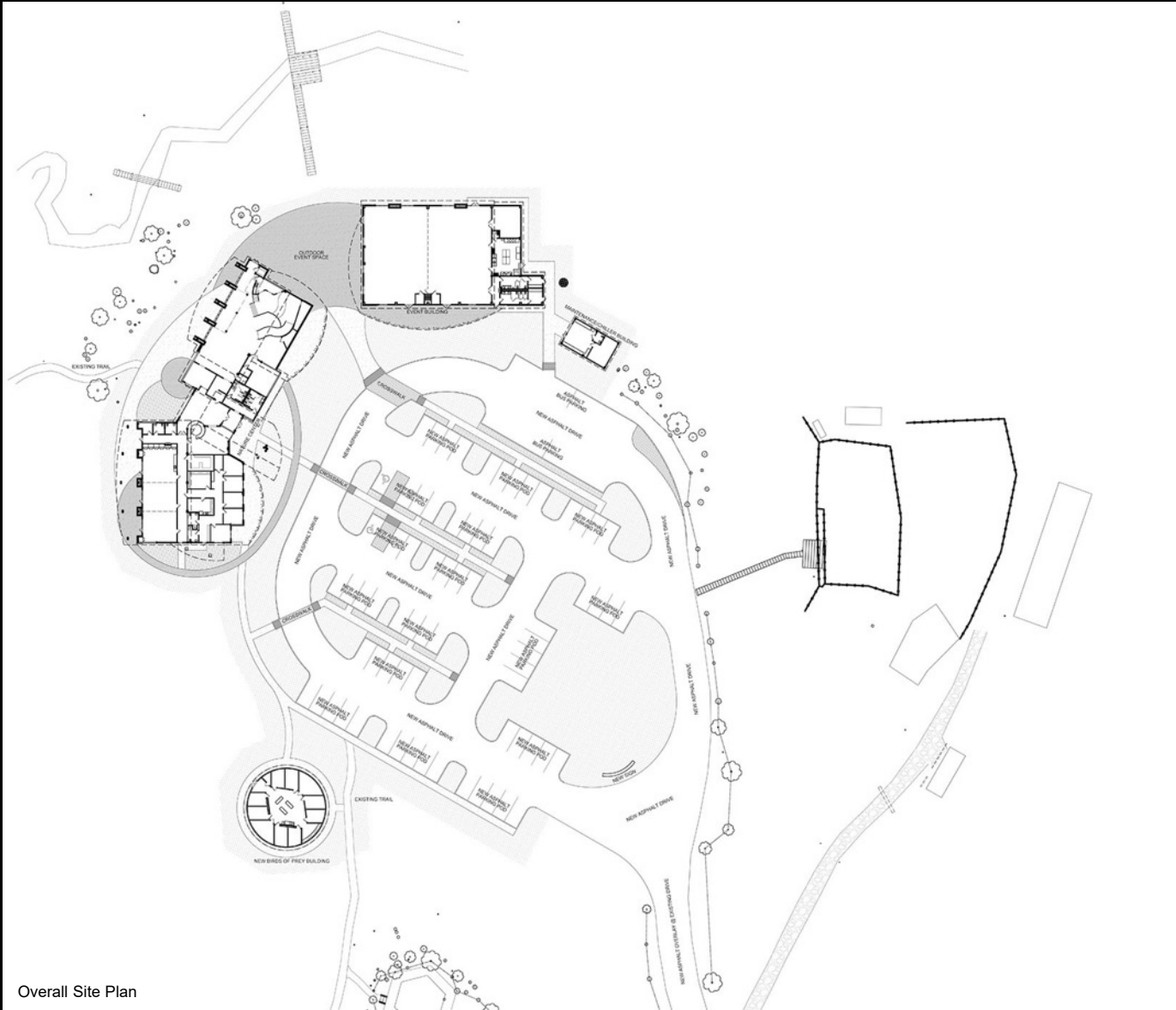
Nestled within the natural beauty of the park, the nature center was designed as a collection of interconnected buildings that work together to support education, exploration, conservation, and community engagement. The campus includes immersive exhibit spaces, classrooms, learning labs, administrative offices, a Birds of Prey Aviary, and a flexible Event Center, all connected by outdoor gathering spaces and trails that encourage visitors to engage with the surrounding environment.

The site plan carefully integrates architecture with the existing landscape, preserving the character of the forest while creating a welcoming destination for visitors of all ages. From hands-on exhibits and educational programming to community events and wildlife encounters, the campus serves as a gateway to the park and a year-round resource for environmental learning and stewardship.

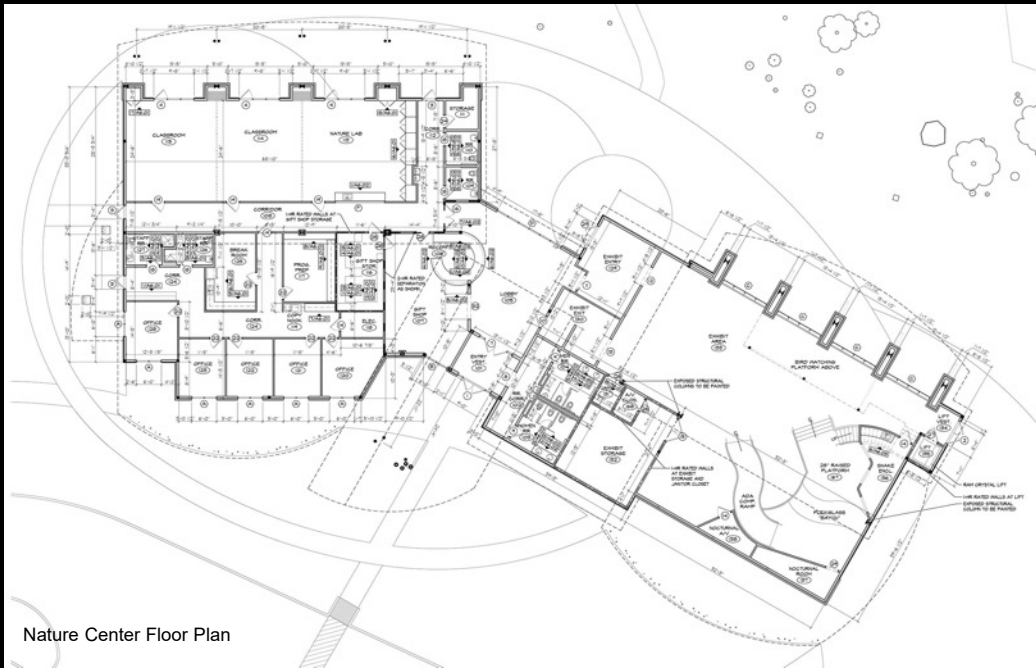


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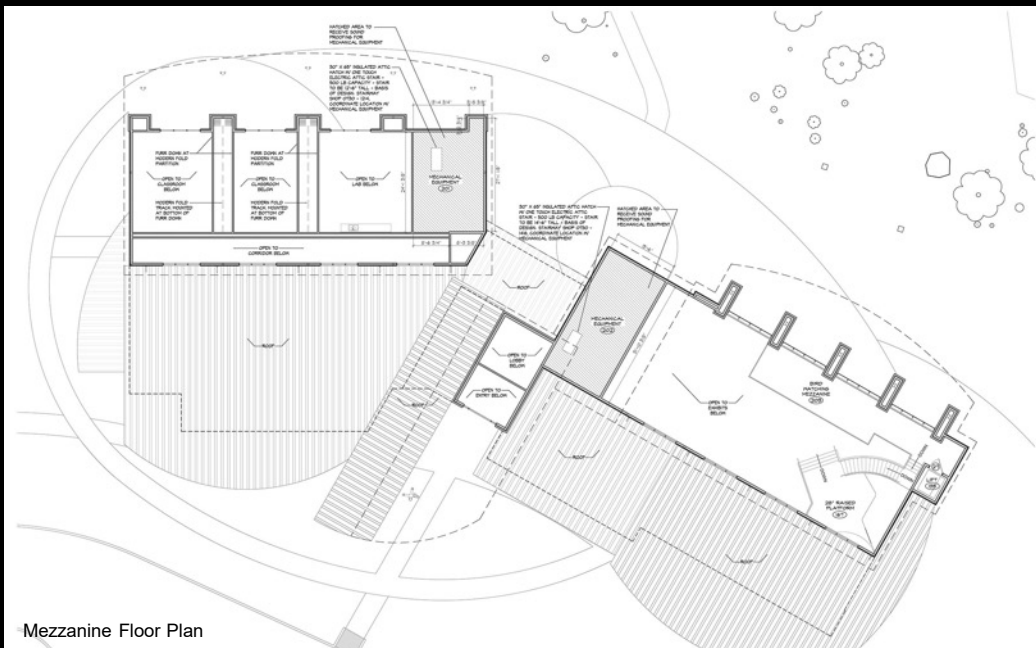
Site plan illustrating the overall organization of the park campus, including the Nature Center, Event Center, Birds of Prey Aviary, parking areas, pedestrian connections, and integration with the surrounding natural landscape. The campus was designed to create a cohesive visitor experience while preserving and celebrating the unique character of the park.



Overall Site Plan



Nature Center Floor Plan



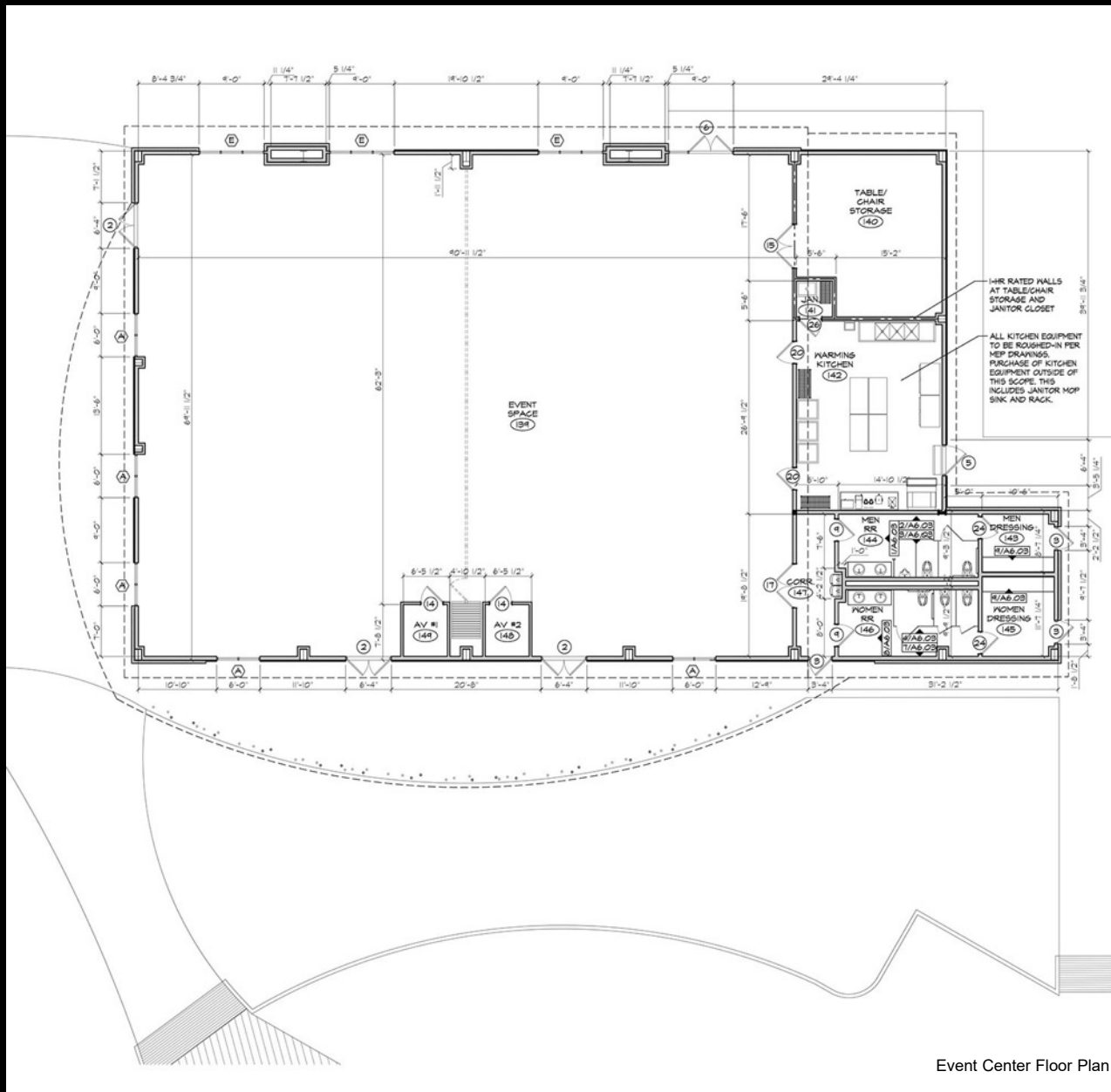
Mezzanine Floor Plan

A-115.12

First floor and mezzanine plans illustrating the organization of the Nature Center's public, educational, and support spaces. The first level houses the lobby, gift shop, exhibit hall, classrooms, learning labs, administrative offices, and support areas, while the mezzanine provides elevated exhibit spaces that immerse visitors in the forest canopy experience. Together, the two levels create a cohesive journey through Louisiana's ecosystems, offering opportunities for exploration, education, and discovery from ground level to treetop.

A-115.13

The Event Center floor plan demonstrates the facility's adaptability as a year-round community destination. Designed to host everything from educational workshops and public events to weddings and conferences, the building combines flexible assembly spaces, support amenities, and outdoor gathering areas to create a venue that expands the Nature Park's role as both an educational resource and civic gathering place.



Event Center Floor Plan