

## Children's museum gets new home

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Tulane alumna Julia Bland is the CEO of the Louisiana Children's Museum. The museum's New Orleans City Park location will maintain some of the most beloved attractions from the original Julia Street facility, including the grocery store and bubble-making station. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

In late 2018, the [Louisiana Children's Museum](#) will close the iconic blue doors of its downtown New Orleans location and introduce a new state-of-the-art complex in the heart of [New Orleans City Park](#). By striking partnerships with local organizations and building new facilities — including an event lawn, a literacy center and an exhibit recreating the flow of the Mississippi River, the space will serve as a local child development resource hub for parents and kids alike.

“The beautiful space will accommodate a variety of needs and a variety of community partnerships,” said Julia Bland, CEO of the Louisiana Children’s Museum.

A graduate of the [Tulane University School of Liberal Arts](#), Bland noted that initial planning for the new facility began 11 years ago.

“In 2005, we did a series of focus groups to be more engaged and invested in the broader community around issues important to our children,” she said.

A plan to revamp the museum was adopted but then halted by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

“The post-Katrina period was a time to think bolder and a time for greater visibility around the importance of early learning and early experiences,” said Bland. “We moved that early concept to a new, beautiful location that was familiar and accessible.”

The museum’s move will foster the growth of current local partnerships and cultivate new connections.

“We have worked with the [Tulane Institute of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health](#) for 15 years now,” said Bland.

The revamped organization will also work with longtime partner [Tulane Pediatrics](#) to shape educational programs for parents and caregivers, such as classes focusing on brain development, breastfeeding, car seat safety and nutrition.

The museum additionally aims to have [Liberty’s Kitchen](#), a nonprofit restaurant focused on at-risk youth, operate a full-service cafe while Tulane affiliate [Grow Dat Youth Farm](#) provides educational programs at the site’s vegetable garden.

“We’re close neighbors with shared goals. We can get produce from (Grow Dat Youth Farm) for the cafe, and we will save compost for them,” said Bland. “There are so many resources available for early learning now, and we want to share them in a child-focused, family-friendly environment.”

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