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The power of imagination is thriving in Gainesville's Depot Park and its bright and shiny anchor, the Cade Museum

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GAINESVILLE, FLA.—Since opening in 2016, Gainesville's Depot Park has sprung to life. The idyllic patch of land teems with picnicking families, joggers, cyclists, couples playing catch with their dogs, life-size chess matches and other boisterous outdoor activities.

Sidewalks weave around ponds surrounded by wispy grasses and wildflowers, luring shorebirds, turtles, butterflies and other wildlife to the centrally located patch of land. They join the flocks of humans of all ages attending special events, movie nights, food truck rallies and art festivals.

A 20-foot-wide promenade wraps around the park's main pond, where visitors can get a closer view of the wildlife on one of the overlooks or take it all in by relaxing on a nearby bench.

Blending seamlessly with Depot Park's family-friendly vibe, the Cade Museum for Creativity and Invention opened at the park three years ago and features fun, seasonal themes focused on innovations that have changed the way we live today, appealing to kids (and kids at heart) of all ages.

Named in honor of Dr. James Robert Cade—the UF-based physician who, in 1965, led the team that formulated Gatorade—the museum entertains and informs with colorful exhibits, two labs full of experiments and hands-on activities, and diverse, upbeat programming that embodies the inventive spirit of its namesake. Dr. Cade, after all, lived life to the fullest as a scientist, poet, musician, polymath and collector of violins and Studebakers.

The Cade's appeal to children and families blends seamlessly with the atmosphere of Depot Park, where a playground cajoles kids into cavorting and climbing safely and easily with inclusive and accessible equipment. Swings and ramps lead to jungle gyms, and a panel with plastic spinning gears encourages sensory play. Spinning seats and a slide with rollers keep hands and feet busy.

On Saturday mornings, you can take your little ones to a crafting and story hour in the museum and a trip to the playground before grabbing lunch at one of the many venues located along Depot Park. In a rehabilitated train depot are Parkside Subs & Shop for hot and cold sandwiches and craft sodas; Goldie's Burgers, serving up Florida-grown beef patties, Po' Boys and vegan options; Humble Wood Fire presenting craft pizzas; and Boxcar Beer & Wine Garden to help parents and other grown-ups unwind with Chardonnay, Merlot and craft brews. On the other side of Depot Park is First Magnitude Brewing, offering craft beers, ciders and sodas and live music and trivia nights.

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The City of Gainesville presents an array of activities in Depot Park to dazzle and inspire crowds from holiday light shows and DJ dance parties to pop-ups by local museums, story time with Alachua County Librarians, and free, weekly 5K runs. Depot Park is also a launching point for bicycle rides through the miles of trails connected to the park.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Depot Park celebrates Gainesville's mid-19th century train station, which presided over a track connecting Florida's east and west coasts. In 2012, the Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency rehabilitated the Old Gainesville Depot, and today, informative displays detail the area's rich history while hungry and thirsty visitors belly up to the depot's bars and cafes for much-needed refreshments.

Depot Park was literally overhauled from the ground up -- and down. Gas, cement and other industrial operations anchored the area in its previous life. In 1997, a federal grant helped the City of Gainesville remediate the site. The "Big Dig" included removing more than 147,000 tons of contaminated soil.

When Dr. Cade and the museum's co-founders started the Cade Museum Foundation in 2004 to build the Cade Museum (which opened in 2018), they chose Depot Park as the location because they believed in what the once industrial site could become. Today, the Cade and Depot Park work together to inspire visitors with both natural beauty and the spirit of invention.

About the Cade Museum

The Cade Museum's mission is to transform communities by inspiring and equipping future inventors, entrepreneurs, and visionaries. In 2004, Dr. James Robert Cade and his family established the Cade Museum Foundation to build the Cade Museum for Creativity & Invention on Depot Park in Gainesville, Florida. Dr. Cade, a physician and professor of medicine at the University of Florida, was best known as the lead inventor of Gatorade in 1965. The Cade offers unique hands-on programming designed to spark imagination and inspire creativity, not only in the museum building but also out in the community. The Cade's programs help to build bridges to the innovation economy for those without access, low-income families, underserved communities, and those needing assistance to access education and start on the career paths available to them to fulfill their dreams.

Hours of Operation: Thursday-Friday, 12pm-5pm; Saturday-Sunday, 10am-5pm

Location: 811 S. Main, Gainesville, FL 32601

Visit CadeMuseum.org for more information.

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CADE
museum
for creativity & invention

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About Depot Park

Depot Park is the crown jewel of the City of Gainesville's municipal parks, home to 32-acres of trails, tree canopy and wetlands. Since opening in 2016, Depot Park has become a popular place for walking, cycling, and splashing in our one of a kind play area with custom splash pad. This signature greenspace celebrates the history of Gainesville as a mid-19th century stop along the Florida Railroad connecting Florida's east and west coasts from Fernandina to Cedar Key. In 2012, the Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) rehabilitated the Old Gainesville Depot, a historic train station listed on national register. Today, visitors to the park can learn more about the area's historic past while picking up refreshments at any of the shops within the station.

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