

A block-long section of Riverside Drive between Jefferson and Court will close for more than three-months beginning Monday as the Downtown Memphis street gives way to a so-called pop-up park.

“RiverPlay,” as the temporary park is known, will feature a roller-skating rink, three basketball courts, table tennis and other games, as well as space for food trucks. It will be located on the portion of Riverside immediately east of Mississippi River Park, formerly known as Jefferson Davis Park.

As city traffic-engineering officials noted in an announcement, the closure for the pop-up park will “partially overlap with the typical closures on Riverside Drive associated with Memphis In May (International Festival) activities.” Through the month-long run of the festival, a portion of Riverside south of Beale periodically closes for specific events.

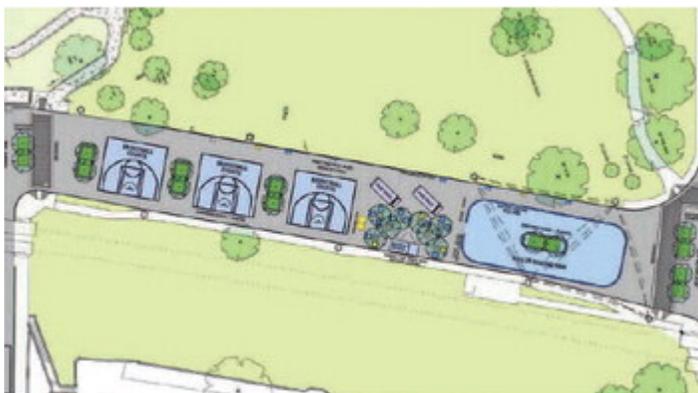
RiverPlay is a collaborative effort involving the city, the Riverfront Development Corp. and the Downtown Memphis Commission. It’s part of a larger initiative known as the Fourth Bluff project, which is aimed at revitalizing public spaces along a four-block area of Downtown. Memphis was one of five cities chosen to receive private grant funds as part of a still-larger initiative known as Reimagining the Civic Commons.

The park will open in early to mid-May and operate through at least Aug. 1, said Kerry Hayes, spokesman for the Fourth Bluff project.

RDC President Benny Lendermon said the pop-up park is intended to test ways to attract more people to the riverfront. “It’s really being done as a prototype of an activity to see how successful it would be.”

In addition to the pop-up park, RDC also plans to revamp Mississippi River Park with improvements that include playing fields, tree houses and other children’s climbing equipment, a meadow and a booth for food vendors.

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Rendering of RiverPlay, part of the Fourth Bluff project in Downtown Memphis