Airport park close to takeoff

Playground expected to open in June

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The playground equipment has been ordered, and a park three years in the making will soon be open at the Greenville Downtown Airport.

It is located in front of the Runway Cafe and is set to open in mid-June, Downtown Airport officials said.

The play structures are built around an aviation theme, from the plane-shaped climbing structure to the slide topped with a miniature control tower. A Boeing 737 fuselage is currently being transformed into a handicapped-accessible park entrance.

Walking trails will be painted to look like a runway, and bright yellow data boards will show diagrams of airplanes.

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PARK

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"We're trying to encourage young people to choose aviation as a field because there's a forecast for a big shortage of pilots and aircraft mechanics," said Downtown Airport director Joe Frasher.

The park was designed with help from the city's parks and recreation department and mostly paid for with community donations. The Greenville Jet Center, a tenant at the airport, has helped, contributing one cent for every gallon of aviation fuel sold.

Greenville City Council has also appropriated $10,000 in Sunday alcohol permit contingency funds for the project, bringing the total cost to $100,000.

The Downtown Airport has long been an asset to the city, and a park where families can go and watch planes take off will add to the airport's appeal, said Councilwoman Gay Sprague.

The park project committee is applying for grants and donations to add a picnic pavilion and playground equipment for children ages 5-12. Two fundraisers in May are scheduled, including a 5K run/walk to be held on May 25.

"We're really reaching out to the community more than we ever have in the past," Frasher said.

For more information, visit greenvilledowntownairport.com.