

National Building Museum ready to open BIG Maze on July 4

By Christina Barron June 27

The National Building Museum has an a-mazing new attraction. It's a maze, like the corn mazes that appear around Halloween. But this one is made of wood. And it has a modern-looking sloped shape.

"It's a beautiful design," said Cathy Frankel, the museum's vice president for exhibitions and collections. Once you arrive at the center, "there's a reveal of where you came from."



That's because the maze's plywood walls rise 18 feet at the perimeter of the structure but just 31 / 2 feet in the middle.

The Danish architectural company Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) designed the maze, which is under construction in the museum's Great Hall. You can check out the construction process at www.nationalbuilding.workzonecam.com.

"We were trying to create something that really works with our building," Frankel said. "You can get above it and see people in the maze."

The maze will open Friday. Museum officials estimate that it will take visitors 20 to 30 minutes to find the center and then navigate their way out. Frankel said museum officials wanted the maze to be for all ages but didn't want it to be too easy.

"We will have guards in there," she said. "We want to make sure people don't get too lost."

The attraction includes a history of mazes, which date to ancient times. There's also an explanation of how a maze is different from a labyrinth. (Hint: A maze is more of a puzzle.)

The project is a follow-up to the mini-golf attraction that the Building Museum installed for the past two summers.

"Creating these fun experiences are a great way to get new audiences in here," Frankel said. It wasn't possible to bring back mini-golf because the gallery it occupied is home to "Designing for Disaster." (Read KidsPost's review of that exhibit at wapo.st/1p42qMr.)

Frankel said she doesn't think the maze will be back for a second summer. "It's probably a one-time deal," she said. But Frankel promised that the museum aims to come up with something just as exciting for next summer.