

Spraygrounds

Public Art Project

A privately-funded proposal
for adding splashes of art
to this community-friendly space!

The Proposal

The 6,000-square-foot Spraygrounds at Ralph Sampson Park opened July 1, 2025, with 36 spray features and interactive elements designed for various ages.

Last fall, Harrisonburg residents Steve and Chris Carpenter offered to provide \$100,000 for design and installation of three Spraygrounds public artworks, to be completed in phases during 2026.

Upon completion, ownership of the artworks will be conveyed to the City of Harrisonburg.



Meet the Donors

Steve and Chris Carpenter have lived in Harrisonburg for 23 years, actively attending church on the 400 Kelley Street site of the City's historic segregated pool; and learning of the trauma the Northeast Neighborhood community experienced during 1950s-1960s Urban Renewal.

Their exuberant experience of public art during their travels led the Carpenters to propose a collaboration designed to add an extra touch of creativity and joy to the new Spraygrounds, while also recognizing the area's complicated history.



Project Background

- The Carpenters are working with Arts Council of the Valley (ACV), City of Harrisonburg, and Northeast Neighborhood representatives regarding artwork placement, style, themes, and content.
- A November 20, 2025, meeting in the Northeast Neighborhood introduced the project to community members, generating ideas for the new works of art and preferred locations. To ensure participation, this gathering was scheduled in conjunction with a Small Area Plan Community Connectors meeting.
- The project committee (the Carpenters, with representatives from the City, ACV, and Northeast Neighborhood) used feedback from the meeting to select three locations and develop content themes.

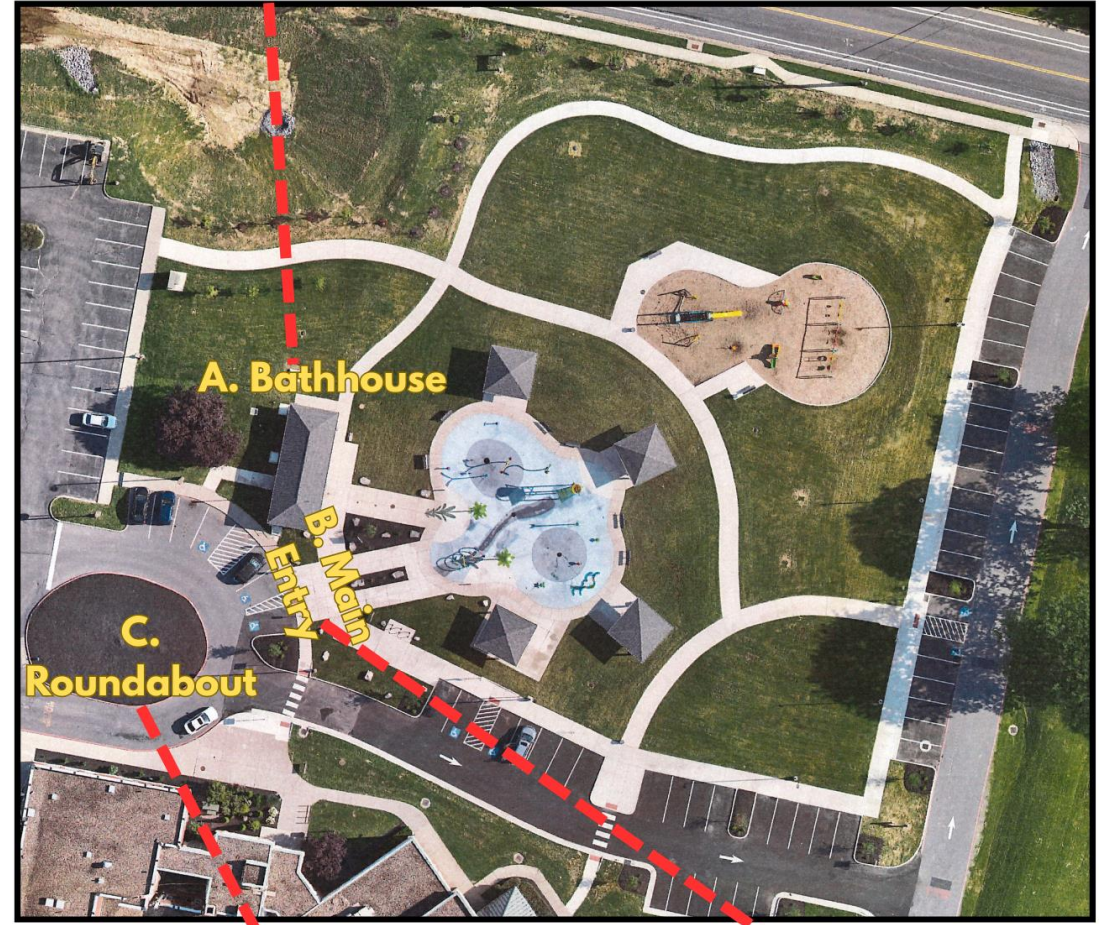
Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan

- Although the Northeast Neighborhood comprises just 1.7% of the City's total footprint, its historical significance is profound. During Urban Renewal in the 1950s and 1960s, major infrastructure projects fractured the Neighborhood's cultural and physical assets, disrupting a thriving Black community and leaving lasting scars.
- The Small Area Plan lays out a path toward healing past injustices and building a more equitable future. The plan reflects the City's commitment to prioritizing the Northeast Neighborhood for meaningful investment and improvement, and to holding the City

Artwork Locations

Three Spraygrounds locations are proposed for this project:

- A) East exterior wall of the bathhouse/pumphouse, facing the Spraygrounds, for a mosaic installation.
- B) Main entry to the Spraygrounds, to provide a welcoming archway over the sidewalk, similar to arches at A Dream Come True playground and the new Kids Castle.
- C) Roundabout near the entrance to the Spraygrounds, for sculptural work(s) depicting children at



Artwork Style & Safety

Commissioned artwork will be designed to complement the bright primary colors embodied in Spraygrounds water features.

In addition - from the call for artists through the design, fabrication, and installation process - each piece of artwork will be designed with a focus on safety and in consultation with appropriate City departments.



Artwork Themes

Spraygrounds features include a frog, snail, turtle, snake, tree, and flower. The bright color scheme was selected by Parks and Recreation based on youth preferences for "brightness and color pop" expressed during a public input meeting.

Artists will be encouraged to consider the designs and primary colors incorporated into the Spraygrounds; the history of the Northeast Neighborhood; and the joyful nature of children at play.

2026 Project Timeline

- Jan 16 - Issue calls for artists
- Mar 1 - Submission deadline
- Mar 24 - Present design recommendations to City Council for approval
- Mar 25 - Contracts with artists
- Apr 15 - Final safety review by City
- May 22 - Mosaic installation completed
- Aug 28 - Main entry and roundabout artwork installations completed
- Sept 4-7 - Community Celebration during Labor Day Weekend (TBD)

Questions?