

2026 Spraygrounds Public Art Project Harrisonburg, VA

Call for Mosaic Artists

Deadline for Entries: March 15, 2026, 11:59 pm ET

Call for Artists:

Arts Council of the Valley (ACV), in collaboration with the City of Harrisonburg (City), Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA), and two private project donors (Donors), is seeking original, non-AI-generated artistic design submissions for a mosaic inspired by a historic photograph (see Attachments, below). The mosaic is to be installed on the east exterior wall of the pumphouse located in the Spraygrounds at Ralph Sampson Park, 620 Simms Avenue, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

Project Description:

One artist will be selected to design and install a mosaic (approximate size: 7 feet wide by 4 feet tall) depiction of the attached historic photograph, which may also be viewed at valleyarts.org/public-art-spraygrounds-project. The mosaic is one element of a public art project that involves design and installation of a sculptural work in the Spraygrounds roundabout, and an archway at the main entrance to the Spraygrounds.

For information only: The completed mosaic work will be accompanied by explanatory signage addressing the history of the segregated pool where the photograph was taken; identifying the photographer, diver, and others pictured; and including a reproduction of the original photograph.

Location:

The mosaic will be located in the Spraygrounds at Ralph Sampson Park, 620 Simms Avenue, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, on the east exterior wall of the pumphouse, facing the Spraygrounds. A map of the site is attached, and may also be viewed at valleyarts.org/public-art-spraygrounds-project.

Ralph Sampson Park is a City park located in the City of Harrisonburg's Northeast Neighborhood, which includes the Newtown community originally settled by formerly enslaved people in 1869 and later grew into a thriving African American community. On the site of Ralph Sampson Park was the former plantation Hilltop. Within Ralph Sampson Park and immediately adjacent to the Spraygrounds is the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center. The two-story brick school was built between 1938–1939 to serve African-American students, and named for Lucy F. Simms, an African American teacher born into slavery in 1855 on the very land where

the school stands. The Lucy F. Simms School served as the center of the Newtown community, and education went beyond academics and extended to athletics, music, and citizenship. The Spraygrounds were constructed on the school's former baseball field. A history of the Lucy F. Simms School is available at: <https://omeka.lib.jmu.edu/simms/>.

Beginning in the 1950s, the Newtown community experienced significant loss due to urban renewal. Starting in 1959, the newly created Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority seized homes and property in Newtown through eminent domain to raze the land and sell it for redevelopment into commercial property. In the name of commercialization and "slum clearance," 144 families – 111 of which were African-American – lost their homes and African-American owned businesses were forced to close, most permanently.

By 1965 when the Simms School permanently closed due to integration of the public education system, the formerly vibrant Newtown community had been grievously injured. The closure of Simms was just one more harm to the heart of Harrisonburg's African-American community. And while the school stands as a historic reminder of the educational inequalities preceding the civil rights movement, it serves just as meaningfully as a monument to the community that once surrounded it, a memorial to enlighten a changed and changing neighborhood about the heartache and loss discrimination has sown there.

In 2001 the ownership of the Simms School transferred from the City Schools to the City of Harrisonburg, and became officially operated by the Harrisonburg Department Parks and Recreation. The Simms School was added to the Virginia Landmarks Register in 2003 and the National Register of Historic Places in 2004, protecting it for generations to come. After extensive renovations in 2005, the Lucy F. Simms School reopened as the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center. Today, the Lucy F. Simms Center serves as a community center valuable to residents of the surrounding Northeast Neighborhood and the entire city, and is the main hub of both the Boys and Girls Club of Harrisonburg and Rockingham and the Arc of Harrisonburg and Rockingham.

In 2025 the City's Community Connectors Project composed of City staff and community leaders from the Northeast Neighborhood developed the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan after extensive community engagement and visioning with the residents of the Northeast on the hopes and dreams for the future of the neighborhood. The Community Connectors Project aims to rebuild trust between Northeast Neighborhood residents and the City, repair past harms, and reconnect today's Northeast Neighborhood to downtown, while prioritizing the needs and wants of the Northeast Neighborhood. Learn more about the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area plan at https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/sites/default/files/city-manager/Northeast%20Neighborhood_Small%20Area%20Plan_8-26-25.pdf

Style of Submitted Work:

The style of the mosaic must be appropriate to display in a public space, with no overtly religious, commercial, or political depictions; no nudity.

Artists are encouraged to consider the designs and primary colors incorporated into the Spraygrounds, as well as the joyful nature of children at play.

Artist Eligibility and Selection Criteria:

This invitation is extended to all mosaic artists age 18 and older without regard to place of residency. Artists of color are encouraged to apply.

Artists are reminded that submitted art must speak to a large group of people of all ages from various cultural backgrounds, and must be appropriate to display in an outdoor public space.

The successful Artist will have:

- Demonstrated success in engaging multicultural and diverse populations through art.
- Experience in authentically engaging people of diverse backgrounds through art.
- An understanding of the complexities and nuances of African American experiences.

Artist Selection:

A juried panel will review all entries and make a recommendation to City Council prior to the selection of one mosaic artist for the project. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance status on or before April 22, 2026. All decisions by the panel are final.

Submission of Final Artwork by Selected Artist

The selected artist will collaborate with ACV regarding any necessary design modifications; and work with the City Parks & Recreation Department to ensure the appropriateness and safety of materials chosen for the mosaic.

Installation:

When the artwork design and proposed materials have been approved by the City, the selected artist is responsible for installing the mosaic at the designated location in close coordination with the City Parks and Recreation Department. The finished artwork - upon completion of an agreement with the City of Harrisonburg - will be considered property of the City.

Following installation of the mosaic, the selected artist will be invited/expected to attend a dedication event (tentatively during Labor Day weekend, September 4-7, 2026, date/time to be determined) at the Spraygrounds.

Budget

The selected mosaic artist will receive total compensation of \$10,000.00, to include all design, materials, site preparation, installation, assistants, insurance, and travel. The artist will provide a maintenance plan for the work as part of the final submission. The artist will sign an agreement with ACV reflecting the total amount of compensation and the payment terms. The artist will provide ACV with a completed IRS W-9 form and submit an invoice prior to payment. The artist will sign a separate agreement with the City, granting full legal rights to publicly display and reproduce the art to the City.

The award will be paid in two installments of \$5,000.00 each. The first payment of \$5,000.00 will be made by ACV to the artist within 30 days after receipt/acceptance of the Artist Agreement and completed IRS W-9 form; and upon receipt of invoice from the artist. The final payment of \$5,000.00 will be made by ACV to the artist within 30 days following project completion and upon receipt of a maintenance plan for the artwork and final invoice from the artist.

Entry Procedures:

There is no entry fee.

Each artist may submit one design for consideration.

Submission Requirements

The deadline for the online submittal is Sunday, March 15, 2026, 11:59 pm ET

To apply, complete the online [Spraygrounds Mosaic application form](#) and provide/attach all required materials:

- Artist Contact Information
- Brief bio
- Resume/CV
- Artist(s) Statement, explaining your artistic practice and background, as well as what interests you in this project (150 word maximum)
- Budget. Detail in table format (i.e. Excel, see sample below) anticipated project expenses.

Item	Quantity	Cost	Vendor	Notes

- Work Samples (5-10) that relate to this project, including:
 - Completed mosaic artwork
 - Experience with public art projects of a similar budget size and scope
 - Evidence of working with other collaborators or collaborative teams
- Annotated Work Sample List: An annotated work sample list that includes the title, media, year completed, dimensions, location (if site-specific), project budget (if applicable) and client or commissioning entity for each corresponding image.
- Up to five digital images (including details, if appropriate) of your mosaic design. *Images should be clearly labeled with artist name, title of work, and image number (if applicable).*
- Two professional references of people who can speak to your ability to complete this type of project. Include name, relationship, email, phone number, mailing address.

Timeline:

Jan 20, 2026	Request for Proposals opens
Mar 15, 2026, 11:59 pm ET	Application deadline
by Apr 22, 2026	Artists notified
by Jul 16, 2026	Artist completes coordination with City on technical limitations of site, safety of design and materials; selects fabricator/installer (if needed)
Jul 17, 2026	Final safety review by City of Harrisonburg
Aug 7, 2026	Complete site preparation
Aug 28, 2026	Artwork installed; landscaping (if any) completed
Sep 4-7, 2026 (TBD)	Celebration event (tentatively Labor Day Weekend 2026)

Selection Process:

A panel of individuals representing diverse interests and expertise will review submissions and determine final designs. The following criteria will be used:

- Artistic merit of the submitted design.
- Appropriateness of artwork for public display.
- Creativity; use of color and design that appeals to the eye.
- The degree to which the artist's past work relates to the goals and parameters of the Spraygrounds Mosaic Public Art Project.
- Evidence that artist's existing public artworks have maintained an appropriate level of quality and integrity over time.
- A two-pronged evaluation of the proposed budget, including its feasibility for the nature and scope of the project, and an analysis of whether the artist has done appropriate research and obtained viable cost estimates from subcontractors and suppliers.
- Professional references that attest to the artist's ability to undertake public art projects of this size and scope.
- Other criteria not outlined above may be considered as well.

Selected artist will be asked to agree to the following:

- Assistants. The selected artist must provide a list of any assistants anticipated to be on-site during installation. List must include names and contact information. All assistants must be at least 21 years of age.
- Insurance. The artist *may* need to carry insurance during the installation period, which will be determined by the City after a review of the proposal. The cost of required insurance may be included as part of the proposed budget; the City will be required to be listed as additionally insured during the installation period, with a Certificate of Liability Insurance presented to the City by July 17, 2026.
- Ownership of Materials. The artist will be required to execute a formal contract which includes a waiver of any rights under the Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA) and a warranty that the design is the artist's original work.
- Artist agrees to being photographed and/or filmed as part of the design and installation process for project documentation and publicity purposes.
- Artist will be required to waive their rights of integrity to commissioned artwork as pertains to its removal or repair.
- All artwork materials must have a minimum lifespan of five (5) years.
- Artist must provide a maintenance plan (including a recommended time frame) for properly cleaning and maintaining the work. ACV must receive this plan, along with a final invoice, before processing the final installment of the artist's compensation for the project.

Terms, Conditions and Reservation of Rights:

This Call to Artists does not commit the Donors, ACV, or City to enter into an agreement with any artist and is not an offer for contract. At its sole discretion, the selection committee may reject any and all applications, may modify or terminate the application or selection processes without prior notice. The applicant certifies that the information contained in the application is true and correct to the best of his/ her/ their knowledge, and that the submitted artwork is the artist's original creation, without the use of AI technology. The Donors, ACV, and the City are not responsible for damage or loss of materials submitted. Failure to comply with all the

requirements of this call to artists will constitute an invalid application. The Donors, ACV, and the City reserve the right at any time to supplement, amend or otherwise modify this solicitation and to request additional information from any participating artists for any reason without prior notice. In addition, the Donors, ACV, and the City reserve the right to accept or reject at any time prior to the commissioning of a work, any or all proposals; to waive any defect or technicality; and to solicit additional artists.

Please complete the online [Spraygrounds Mosaic application form](#) and submit - with all required attachments - by 11:59 pm ET March 15, 2026.

Questions?

For more information, contact ACV Executive Director Jenny Burden at acvdirector@gmail.com or 540.801.8779.

ATTACHMENTS:

PHOTO OF SPRAYGROUNDS SITE

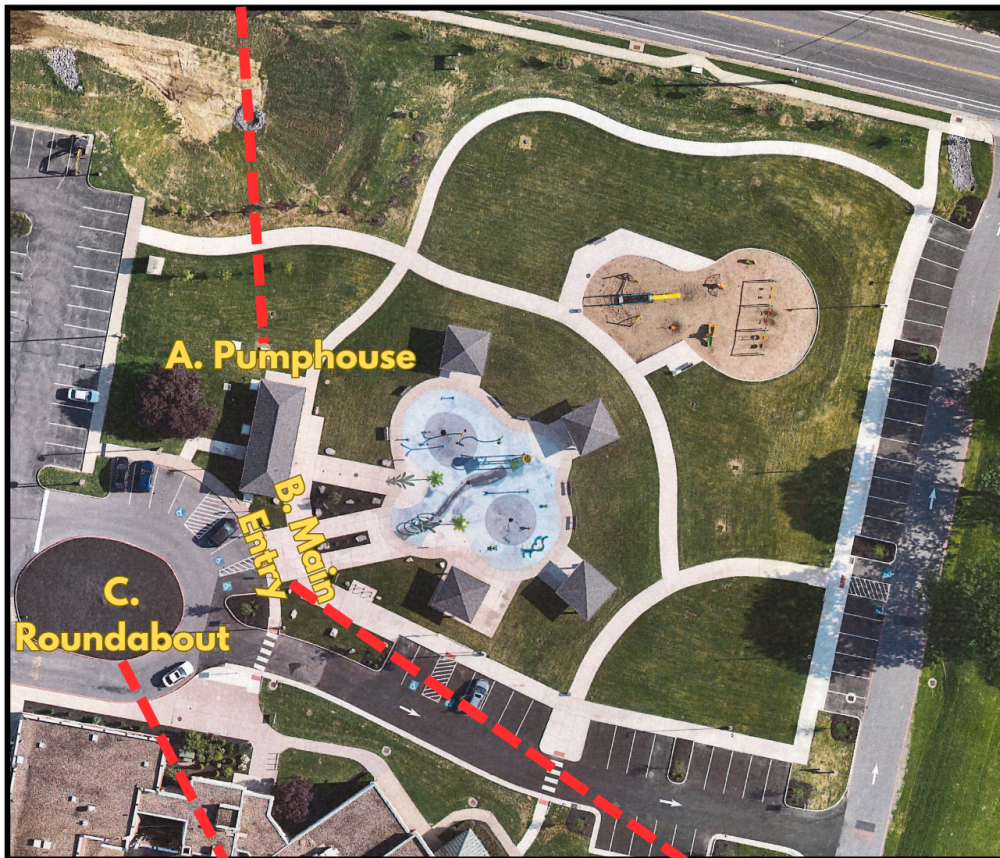


MAP OF SPRAYGROUNDS ARTWORK LOCATIONS

- A. MOSAIC ON EAST EXTERIOR WALL OF PUMPHOUSE/BATH HOUSE
- B. ARCHWAY AT MAIN ENTRY
- C. SCULPTURAL ELEMENT(S) AT ROUNDABOUT



A.



C.



B.



PHOTO OF EAST SIDE OF SPRAYGROUNDS PUMPHOUSE, WHERE MOSAIC IS TO BE LOCATED.



A I

DIVER AT SEGREGATED HARRIS POOL (PHOTOGRAPH BY HOWARD CURRY).
IDEA-STARTER FOR MOSAIC TO BE INSTALLED ON EAST EXTERIOR WALL OF
SPRAYGROUNDS PUMPHOUSE. (*"Diving into Harris Pool," Celebrating Simms, accessed January 21, 2026, <https://omeka.lib.jmu.edu/simms/items/show/1548>.*)

