

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| Agenda Date:     | June 17, 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Action Required: | Approval of the Program Year 2023-24 ADA Accessibility Enhancements Program at Johnson Elementary Playground to support important ADA accessibility enhancements by the Department of Public Works at one or more community playgrounds and the reprogramming of associated Community Development Block Grant funds available to commit from prior program years, in the approximate amount of \$46,000 |
| Presenter:       | Anthony Warn, Grants Analyst, Alexander Ikefuna, Director, Office of Community Solutions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Staff Contacts:  | Anthony Warn, Grants Analyst<br>Michael Goddard, Facilities Development Manager<br>Taylor Harvey-Ryan, Grants Program Manager                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Title:           | <b>Resolution to reprogram prior year CDBG funds to support ADA accessibility enhancements at a community playground, Minor Budget Amendment of approximately \$46,000 (2nd reading)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

**Background**

The City of Charlottesville (the City) is an Entitlement Community (EC) as designated by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and, as such, is the recipient of annual allocations of federal funds through the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) program. The City has used these funds over the years to support numerous projects designed to strengthen our community's ability to foster high quality living environments and housing and to expand economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents.

In addition, in recent years both HUD and the City have strengthened their commitments to the use of CDBG funds to facilitate the removal of barriers to access as an important outcome to work towards.

**Discussion**

Providing young children full and unfettered access to high quality playground equipment and play spaces, regardless of economic circumstances or physical mobility limitations, is an important goal in the work of community planning & development associated with the city's CDBG program. In recent years, city staff have become aware of several situations in which physical barriers impede such access and the CDBG program can be a valuable tool in facilitating the removal of these barriers. One such instance can be seen at a much-used community playground located on the grounds of Johnson Elementary in the heart of the City's historic Fifeville neighborhood.

Specifically, several physical barriers exist that the City's Department of Public Works has proposed addressing, including:

- Trip hazards, such as broken and/or uneven surfaces in the current concrete apron on the exterior of a much-used doorway that students use several times a day when school is in session
- Significant barriers to accessing the playground from the parking lot with the designated accessible parking spaces that complicate navigating into the play area for persons experiencing mobility challenges
- Replacement of sinking areas of sidewalk leading to the playground with new supported slabs and/or paved walkway
- Rehabilitative landscaping as needed to repair construction impacts and to enhance adjacent play areas and green spaces, and related enhancements

Public Works has outlined a Scope of Work that conforms to HUD guidance for CDBG programs and with Council approval can begin implementation of this work mid-to-late June or early July, with work to be completed shortly thereafter, well ahead of the start of the new school year.

### **Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan**

The work of this proposal is closely aligned to City Council's vision of the City of Charlottesville as a place where everyone thrives. This alignment stems in part from the remediation of persistent and significant obstacles to access at an important community gathering space but also from contributing to an improved **Educational** setting, in that the playground sits on a much-used and much-beloved elementary school campus in the heart of the Fifeville neighborhood.

This project also strengthens the City's commitment to **Equity and Inclusion** by demonstrating a public commitment by the City to taking the steps necessary to ensure equitable and inclusive access to public amenities for all, regardless of economic circumstances and/or physical impairments. This project similarly strengthens the City's commitment to high quality opportunities for **Recreation** by delivering significant improvements to much used playspaces and greenspace for young children and their families.

This project also promises the added benefit of providing an avenue for enhancing **Organizational Excellence** and strengthening **Partnerships** between and among various city departments and offices by creating space for positive conversations about how these kinds of crosscutting projects can most efficiently be approached going forward.

### **Community Engagement**

This proposal benefits from a high degree of community engagement, including through multiple opportunities for community input and feedback through public hearings before City Council, among others. In addition, this program fits squarely within the framework established by the 2023-27 5-Year Consolidate Plan as approved by both City Council and HUD and the City's 2023 Comprehensive Plan, both of which benefitted from extensive periods of public engagement and opportunities for feedback.

### **Budgetary Impact**

As the funds proposed here are federal funds allocated to the City by HUD to support community-benefit activities, and, as such, do not draw from the city's General Fund, no adverse impacts to the City's budget are anticipated. Rather, use of these funds as recommended here will instead serve to address important and pressing community need(s) while at the same time supporting the city's continued eligibility for allocations of entitlement funds in future years by supporting the timely expenditure of CDBG funds.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the anticipated benefits of the current proposal to the Charlottesville community, specifically in that enhancing the opportunities for students with physical and mobility impairments to have full and unfettered access to playgrounds with their friends and families is a goal of immense public value, staff recommends that Council approve the proposal presented here as well as the associated appropriation of funds within the CDBG Fund as needed to fully implement the proposed program, to be enacted as a Minor Amendment to the CDBG Annual Action Plan currently underway for Program Year 2023-24.

Suggested motion:

***I move that Council approve the RESOLUTION now before us for the 2024 ADA Accessibility Enhancements Program at Johnson Elementary Playground and to appropriate associated Community Development Block Grant funds as needed to implement the proposal presented here before us today.***

### **Alternatives**

Given that these funds are provided by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development to the City of Charlottesville for the execution of meaningful community-benefit activities and, as such, are not drawn from the city's General Fund, no alternatives courses of action are considered. Council, could, of course, decide not to provide approval for this proposal and could instead direct staff to explore other options for expenditure of these funds.

### **Attachments**

1. CDBG PY23+ Public Works ADA at Johnson Elementary - Resolution to Approve & to Appropriate Funds
2. CDBG PY23+ Public Works ADA at Johnson Elementary - Slide Deck