



# HARRISONBURG VA FRIENDLY BY NATURE



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(Above) Community members attend a past Community Connectors meeting at the Simms Center.

## **Input needed on goals, strategies of Northeast Neighborhood small area plan** *Meeting also to include information on North Mason Street, local drainage study and more*

HARRISONBURG, Va. – The Harrisonburg Community Connectors team is inviting people who live in the Northeast Neighborhood to come learn about and provide their input on the goals, strategies and actions that will form the basis of a small area plan focused on guiding future growth and investment in the neighborhood.

The meeting will take place Monday, June 2, from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Lucy F. Simms Center auditorium, 620 Simms Ave. Attendees will have the opportunity to review and comment on the goals, strategies and actions that are a culmination of ideas generated by hundreds of community members at a series of meetings and surveys conducted over the past year. Comments gathered at the June 2 meeting will inform potential edits to the final small area plan, which will be presented to Harrisonburg City Council for adoption this summer.

A small area plan provides the basis for future land use and transportation planning, urban design, investment decisions in capital projects and programs, development of services (such as those related to small businesses, housing, recreation and others identified through this process) and changes to zoning laws, among other areas of focus. This plan will be intended to guide community leaders, residents, institutions, community-based organizations, City staff, property owners and developers.

“Creating a small area plan to guide growth in this area is a key means for community members to be the driving force in determining what steps are taken to improve areas of need in their neighborhood and make sure they have a voice in its future,”

### MEETING TOPICS

The June 2 Community Meeting will include tables on the following topics of interest:

- Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan
- Hill Street Drainage Study
- Newtown Cemetery
- Traffic Calming
- North Mason Street temporary changes

Harrisonburg Director of Communications & Public Engagement Michael Parks said. “We’re grateful for the many community members who have come and shared their personal stories and experiences with us so we can better understand what issues they want us to address, what improvements they would like to see in their neighborhood, and what things they cherish and want to make sure are preserved and enhanced.”

This process is a culmination of the work of the Harrisonburg Community Connectors team, which includes members of City staff as well as leaders of local nonprofits the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project, the Northeast Neighborhood Association and Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance. The national Community Connectors program, organized by Smart Growth America, seeks to address harms caused by divisive infrastructure and rebuild trust between community members and the local government that serves them. The Harrisonburg team was one of only 15 selected for the effort from across the country.

For Harrisonburg, the focus of the Community Connectors project is the Northeast Neighborhood, Urban Renewal and the creation of North Mason Street as it exists today. Harrisonburg’s Northeast Neighborhood, a section of the city roughly bounded by East Market Street, Old Furnace Road, Tower Street, Washington Street, and Mason Street – grew out of the original Newtown community that had been founded by formerly enslaved people in the 1800s. Home to many in Harrisonburg’s Black community, the area was the focus of the Harrisonburg Northeast Urban Renewal Project R-4 and Project R-16 in the 1950s, which led to many Black-owned homes and businesses being taken by the City to make way for commercial development and construction on North Mason Street. The effort displaced 166 families from the area, in the process eroding trust between many in the Black community and their local government.

Areas of interest identified for inclusion in the small area plan include topics such as Gathering and Belonging, Transportation and Mobility, Housing and Public Safety, and many other discussion points. Attendees at the community meeting will get to review each of the small area plan’s 11 goals and more than 40 strategies and provide feedback on if they believe those efforts match their vision for the community moving forward.

More information on the work taken in creation of the small area plan and the history of the Northeast Neighborhood can be found at the City’s website here: <https://harrisonburgva.gov/community-connectors>.

***The City of Harrisonburg** is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 56,879 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at [www.HarrisonburgVA.gov](http://www.HarrisonburgVA.gov).*

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