

CITY OF CHARLOTTE PLACEMAKING GRANT GUIDE

**Transforming Charlotte's Infrastructure
Into Vibrant and Active Community Spaces**

January 2024

Photo Credit: Deon Brown of Lo'Vonia Parks



**CHARLOTTE
URBAN DESIGN
CENTER**



2022 Placemaking Grant Awardee Hasheem Halim

CITY OF CHARLOTTE PLACEMAKING PROGRAM

The City of Charlotte’s Placemaking Program launched in 2018 with the mission of using urban design and placemaking to transform underutilized public spaces into vibrant places for people. The Urban Design Center in the City of Charlotte’s Planning, Design, and Development department is leading the effort with their own projects while creating opportunities for neighborhoods to use placemaking to promote community collaboration and accomplish public space goals.

- Charlotte’s Placemaking Project Grant Program provides project funding and technical support to residents to create and enhance community vibrancy, safety, and creative identity through:
- Activation of leftover and/or underutilized spaces
 - Streetscape improvements
 - Art and beautification efforts
 - Creation of community gathering spaces

Select project how-to guides can be found at www.charlottenc.gov/placemakinghub

“Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community.”

-Project for Public Spaces

CITY OF CHARLOTTE PLACEMAKING PROJECT GRANT OBJECTIVES

1. Provide opportunities for neighborhoods, individuals, and businesses to define the character and identity of their communities.
2. Provide opportunities for residents and business owners to better leverage public and private land for community use in Charlotte.
3. Provide opportunities for local artists to work with communities and enhance the city’s public realm.
4. Activate our public spaces and infrastructure to create safer, more vibrant, and unique character to Charlotte’s neighborhoods.

“Everyone has the right to live in a great place. More importantly, everyone has the right to contribute to making the place where they already live great.”

-Fred Kent



2023 Placemaking Grant Awardee Anne Low



QUICK TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Here are some quick definitions for terms used in this document and the Placemaking Project grant application.

Placemaking	<p>According to Project to Public Spaces, placemaking is a hands-on process that inspires people to reinvent and reimagine their public spaces in a way that contributes to their health, happiness, and well being.</p> <p>Spaces should be vibrant and active, serving the needs, wants, and hopes of the communities where they live. The Charlotte Urban Design Center sees placemaking as a collaborative process to better connect community members to the spaces and people around them.</p>
Public Realm and Public Space	Publicly-owned spaces that anyone can enter for free including streets, sidewalks, parking spaces, right-of-ways, alleys, plazas, greenways, odd-shaped “leftover” land, floodplains, buffers, etc.
Streetscapes	Everything that you can see on a street including the actual road, the fronts of buildings, sidewalks, benches, trees, medians, and plantings that combine to form a sense of place.
Community Character	The elements, buildings, plants, and people that define a place and combine to give it a “identity.”
Built Environment	The constructed elements that create the places where we live, learn, work, and play from buildings to curbs and roadways, and everything in-between. The quality of the built environment can influence health, safety, and economic opportunity within a community.
Right-of-Way	Transportation easements that encompasses all the land that sits between private property. Typically this includes a roadway and sidewalks, but sometimes can extend several yards past the sidewalk.

HOW CAN PLACEMAKING IMPACT THE COMMUNITY?

Small projects can have a big social impact, like making fresh food more accessible with community gardens, improving comfort with bus stop benches, or preserving culture through celebrating community stories. What broader opportunities or issues do you see in your daily life where placemaking can help?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There is a lot of community-based work being done in Charlotte that innovative placemaking can support. Here are some examples to bolster your potential placemaking project. You are not required to add or quote these resources in your grant application, but you can take inspiration and look to them for demographic data, social context, potential partners, and reporting mechanisms.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Explorer	The Explorer features community variables that reflect the places people live and work.
Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization	Read how transportation impacts are measured as indicators of environmental justice.
Age Friendly Mecklenburg County	A research-based collective planning initiative and action plan aimed at improving the quality of life for older adults.
Charlotte Department of Transportation’s Vision Zero Program	Consult the High Injury Network and see how CDOT emphasizes safe transportation systems.
Mecklenburg County Land Use & Environmental Services Agency	Find information on regional health-based air quality standards and regional pollution reduction efforts.
Mecklenburg County Community Health Assessment	A review of community health indicators and top identified community priorities.



PLACEMAKING PROJECT GRANT

Do you have a specific project idea to address an issue or opportunity in your neighborhood? Are you ready to design and implement a project with the help of your project team and city staff? If yes, check out the Placemaking project types on pages 9 and 10. Your grant will include:

- Design assistance
- Help choosing materials
- Coordination with other City departments
- Help obtaining necessary approvals or permitting
- Communication and support for community meetings
- Measuring community impact

TOTAL FUNDING AVAILABLE: \$150,000
AWARD GRANTS BETWEEN \$5,000 AND \$25,000

Additional funding may be available for projects that achieve carbon reduction goals, provide education on environmentally sustainable practices, address climate change or are aligned with the City of Charlotte Strategic Energy Action Plan or the Corridors of Opportunity program.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Neighborhood and homeowners associations
- Community organizations
- Businesses or merchant organizations
- Individuals with Project Teams
- Applicant groups must be significantly composed of people who live within the City of Charlotte limits
- If selected, applicant must be able to meet the City of Charlotte vendor requirements



You do not need to reach out to other City departments during the application process. However, it is important to understand that your project will eventually require collaboration and potentially approval from other City Departments such as: Charlotte Department of Transportation, General Services, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, Housing & Neighborhood Services, etc.

We will help coordinate with them later in the program if you are selected.

PLACEMAKING GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

If you need assistance please reach out to City staff. We will be happy to provide assistance completing the application. Email Kate Cavazza at kate.cavazza@charlottenc.gov with questions or concerns.

1. LETTER(S) OF SUPPORT

All Placemaking Grant applications need to have letter of support from the respective neighborhood association or equivalent organization at the time of submission. Please see page 7 for more details.

Please note that letters of support may not be written by any member of your Project Team.

2. FORMING A PROJECT TEAM

Next, find people who share the same interest and want to work with you to help your vision become a reality. The Project Team should be:

- 3-6 members
- Diverse and represent different perspectives and interests
- Define roles
- Composed of members who are committed to seeing the project through implementation

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please tell us about your project and how you will:

- Address a community issue or opportunity.
- Complete your project by the end of 2024 by including a timeline.
- Describe what success looks through desired community change.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Using the project timeline on page 12, please describe your strategy for engaging your neighborhood (or adjacent businesses) to participate in community meetings and your outreach efforts.

5. SITE PHOTOS

Include multiple photos of your project location from different angles to show the current conditions of the site. This will help us understand and evaluate the project proposal.

6. PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN/DESIGN

Please include a conceptual design and/or aerial plan of your grant idea. This is a visual representation and can be hand drawn or created on a computer. Graphic ability is not important! These drawings will help us understand your idea. The image shall include dimensions, labels, and names of the streets as appropriate. Include precedent images where appropriate to explain different elements of your idea (i.e. a similar project elsewhere that may have inspired your idea).

7. COST

Applications should include an estimated amount of funding from \$5,000 to \$25,000. Applicants are not required to submit a detailed budget, but please include a breakdown of projected basic costs like artists fees and materials. Please see page 13 to get a better understanding of how much your project might cost.

8. MAINTENANCE & PROGRAMMING COMMITMENT

Please include the Project Team's plans for maintaining and programming their project (if necessary). Some projects like murals or signal cabinet wraps are meant to be temporary and can be removed after a period of time. Projects like pop-up plazas that are being used for gatherings will require a maintenance and programming strategy.

At any point, if the project falls into disrepair or becomes dangerous, it can be removed by the City of Charlotte.

Please note, some activities may require applicant or non-profit organization to hold liability insurance. For example, if you are planning a project within 500 feet of any Charlotte Area Transit System facility like the Silver Line Light Rail or Gold Line Street Car, you will be required to carry a \$3 million specialized insurance policy.

APPLICATION MATERIALS

Start gathering your Placemaking Grant application materials early! Depending on your project, you will need to provide more than just a letter of support from your neighborhood organization.

STEP 1:

Obtain a letter of support from your Neighborhood Organization or Equivalent Organization

All applications need a letter of support from the respective neighborhood association or equivalent organization for where the project will be located at the time of submission.

Equivalent organizations must meet the requirements as defined by Housing and Neighborhood Services. They can be:

- Neighborhood Associations
- Homeowners Associations (HOA)
- Neighborhood Coalitions including Community Development Corporations
- Resident Organizations in Tax Credit Funded Rental Communities

Please note that letters of support may not be written or signed by any member of your Project Team. The content of the letter should acknowledge the organization’s support and understanding of the proposed placemaking project.

How Do I Contact My Neighborhood Organization?

The City of Charlotte’s Housing and Neighborhood Services Department maintains a list of neighborhood leaders and organizations. You can connect with your organization by consulting the [Neighborhood Organization Contact List](#).

STEP 2:

Determine where your proposed project is located

Private Property

City of Charlotte Parcels

City of Charlotte Right of Way

North Carolina Department of Transportation Right of Way

Mecklenburg County Property

I don’t know how to tell

STEP 3:

If necessary, obtain additional letters as required

Please submit a letter of support from the business and/or property owner (if they are different) acknowledging their support and understanding of the proposed placemaking project. The letter will be required at the time of application submission for the project to be considered.

You do not need permission or a letter of support from other City Departments at the time of application submission.

You do not need permission or an expressed letter of support from NCDOT at the time of application submission.

Please submit a letter of support from the County (most likely Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation) acknowledging their support and understanding of the proposed placemaking project.

[Charlotte Explorer](#) and [Mecklenburg County Polaris 3G](#) are public free online mapping tools where you can enter the address of your proposed project and see if it is on public or private property.

Things to Know: Public Realm

All projects must enhance the public realm. If your project is on private property, make sure it is outside, visible, and accessible by the public all the time. For example, avoid walls facing parking lots on streets without sidewalks. Placemaking Grants for personal use (private residences, inside storefronts, etc.) will not be considered.

Things to Know: NCDOT

All proposed art in the NCDOT right of way (anything close to a highway) will have to pass through the NCDOT Public Art Committee. The approval process can take up to 12 months. Please work this into the application’s proposed timeline.



PLACEMAKING GRANT PROJECT TYPES

Below are the types of placemaking projects that will be considered for a funding. All locations must be approved by the City of Charlotte.



WALL MURALS



STREET FURNITURE *



STREET PARKLETS *

MAINTENANCE PLANS

Project types with an asterisk * are required to have a maintenance plan for continued care after installation. Please submit a preliminary maintenance plan at the time of application.



PAINTED CROSSWALKS



BIKE PARKING



PLAYSCAPES



SWINGS



SIDEWALK DINING *



POP-UP PLAZA/ PARK *



STREET MURALS

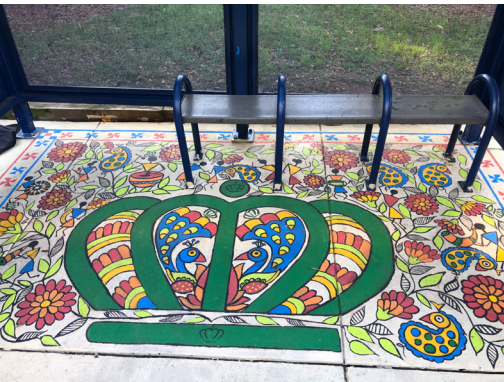


PAINTED TRAFFIC CIRCLES



PROGRAMMING & EVENTS

For previously completed City of Charlotte Placemaking Projects



BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS

Designs must meet CATS artwork guidelines



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE *

Projects that absorb and filter storm water, remove air pollutants, or reduce energy use.



COMMUNITY AGRICULTURE *

Two year timeline requiring one year of training and capacity building if needed.



SIGNAL CABINET WRAPS



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

An engagement process and plan to help your neighborhood implement placemaking projects over time

Thinking about something different? We love new ideas. Other projects will be considered.

All projects must be approved by the City of Charlotte.

MATERIALS & COSTS

Below are estimates for materials and project elements. It is always best to estimate more than less.

Signal Cabinet Wrap	\$2,500 (including materials, installation & general artist fee)
Painted Wall Mural	\$30-50 sq/ft (including materials, installation & general artist fee)
Painted Street Mural	\$30-50 sq/ft (including materials, installation & general artist fee)
Vinyl Wrap Wall Mural	\$32 sq/ft (including materials, installation & general artist fee)
Parklet	\$8,000-\$20,000
Painted Crosswalk	\$30-50 sq/ft (including materials, installation & general artist fee)
Permanent Street Furniture	\$1,500-\$2,500 each
Temporary Street Furniture	\$20-\$1000 each
Community Garden Plot	\$200
Plaza Hardscape	\$75 sq/ft
Swing	\$7,000 - 10,000
Playscapes	\$15,000 - 30,000
Traffic Control	\$200-\$1,000 (varies depending on location and size)
One-Day Programming (for previously completed City of Charlotte placemaking projects)	\$1,500-\$10,000

EXPENDITURES

ELIGIBLE:

- Project materials and contracted labor costs
- Programming tied to activation of City of Charlotte public space(s)
- Refreshments when incorporated into a community building project (may not exceed 5% of total budget)

INELIGIBLE:

- Salaries
- Alcoholic beverages
- Costs incurred as part of the application process
- Expenditures before agreement signing
- Personal use items or efforts solely benefiting one specific person
- Political/public policy campaigns (non-partisan voter registration is permitted)
- Grants cannot discriminate on race, color, creed, origin, sex, age, and/or disability

2024 PLACEMAKING GRANT PROJECT TIMELINE

APPLICATION

1. APPLICATION OPENS

Application will be posted at www.charlottenc.gov/placemaking

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2024

2. INTERESTED APPLICANT Q&A MEETINGS

City staff will host two events to answer questions for applicants about placemaking projects and the application process. Attendance at one of these events is recommended but not required. You can always reach out to Kate Cavazza at kate.cavazza@charlottenc.gov with questions.

FEBRUARY 15, 2024 @ 6:00pm

Virtual (check our website for link)

FEBRUARY 29, 2024 @ 6:00pm

In-person at 1507 Camden Rd.

3. APPLICATION DUE

Please submit your application digitally. Instructions are included on the application.

FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2024 @ 5pm

4. PROJECT SELECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

The City will review all applications based on the scoring system on page 13.

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2024

PROGRAM

1. KICK-OFF MEETING

Project Teams will attend a kick-off meeting to think through their projects in depth with City staff.

APRIL-MAY 2024

2. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

One public meeting is required for all projects. More may be necessary depending on the size/type of project. These can be virtual or in-person, dependent on your comfort level.

MAY-SEPTEMBER 2024

Concept Brainstorming + Public Meeting

Project Teams will develop their ideas internally and provide a more detailed design to share with the community. Teams will gather feedback to include in their final design. City Staff are available to support Project Teams with this process.

3. CONSTRUCTION/ INSTALLATION

After a final design has been agreed upon, the Project Teams will start implementing with assistance from City staff. Construction and installation should be completed by the end of the year.

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2024

4. PRESENTATION OF FINAL PROJECT OPEN HOUSE

After Project Teams have incorporated all feedback, they will present their final design idea to the public with other placemaking grant winners.

SPRING 2025

SCORING CRITERIA

Each application will be evaluated based on the following criteria. If your project is not approved by the City of Charlotte, you will be notified on April 19th.

SCORING CRITERIA	MAX POINTS
Project Budget <ul style="list-style-type: none">Project budget is realisticTotal costs are under \$25,000Project budget represents eligible expenditures within the Placemaking Grant Program	4
Project Viability and Visibility <ul style="list-style-type: none">Project is ready to be implementedProject can be completed by the end of 2024Project is visible and accessible to the publicProject will enhance the public realm	4
Project Impact and Need <ul style="list-style-type: none">Proposed activities are in response to a recognized problem or opportunity in the communityProject provides a measurable and lasting social benefit	4
Community Participation and Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none">Application includes a letter of support from neighborhood association or equivalent organizationApplication includes a clear plan for community outreach for required public meeting(s)Project planning shows evidence of community support and buy-in from adjacent property owners	4
Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none">Proposal is distinctive from existing approaches	4
Located on a Corridor of Opportunity (bonus point)	1
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS	21

READY TO APPLY?

Looking for more resources? Check out the following:



[The Guide for Parks & Creative Placemaking](#)

The Trust for Public Land & City Parks Alliance



[How to do Creative Placemaking](#)

National Endowment for the Arts



[Placemaking: What If We Built Our Cities Around Places?](#)

Project for Public Spaces



[Assembly Civic Design Guidelines](#)

Center for Active Design



START YOUR APPLICATION TODAY!

www.charlottenc.gov/placemaking

If you have any additional questions about the City of Charlotte’s Placemaking Grant Program or the program application, please contact:

Kate Cavazza
Associate Urban Designer
kate.cavazza@charlottenc.gov



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