

Bennett's Village

A place for all to play

Bennett's Village Project Report to City Council September 2025

Major milestone achievements:

- Completed and opened the Treehouse at Bennett's Village and turned it back over to the City.
 - Added decorative elements, including the butterfly bench and sensory wall—a great photo opportunity for tourists and community members alike
 - Partnered with Charlottesville Tree Stewards, Piedmont Master Gardeners, and volunteers to replant slope with native trees, shrubs and grasses
- Added Bennett's Village rock snake to playspace, a constantly evolving community art installation
- Worked with City Parks and Recreation to install first public adult changing table in the community in the new family accessible bathroom
- Collaborated with the family of Josie Klotz and Parks and Recreation to pave accessible path behind the treehouse
- Completed *design* documents with Mahan Rykiel Associates for rest of playspace
- Worked with Eskew Dumez Ripple on design and cost estimates for additional bathroom that would support the needs of those with mobility and sensory challenges
- Kara McClurken has shifted her role from President to Executive Director. We have expanded the number of Board members and added additional administrative support to better address the ongoing fundraising and programming needs of the organization..
- Updated our branding and [website](#) to provide coherent unified messaging that tell the playful story of Bennett's Village using colors, fonts, characters, and shapes that express our commitment to community, nature, accessibility, and inclusivity.
- Treehouse named runner up for Best play space in Cville Weekly and a finalist for best social programming nonprofit

Programming achievements:

- Lovely [piece](#) on the project by Charlottesville Inside Out/Virginia Public Media
- Created fundraising and [outreach materials](#) for next phases of project
- Partnered with Charlottesville Parks and Recreation's Adaptive Recreation and UVA School of Education and Human Development's Assistive Technology students to host 150 community member in preview event in the treehouse—Treehouse Tales

- Participated in CURE SMA event held at Pen Park and with the Botanical Garden for their Fall Festival
- Gave presentations to teachers, education majors, and community organizations on the importance of accessible play and the possibilities for inclusive play at Pen Park
- Held official celebration- "Party in the Park" Sunday, April 27, 1-5pm (with Parks and Recreation) celebrating the ways Bennett's Village and the City of Charlottesville is making Pen Park more accessible via the treehouse, the accessible bathroom, and the accessible path. The celebration was a great success by every measure.
 - More than 1000 people
 - Partnered with 26 organizations and vendors
 - Thanks to the City of Charlottesville for their financial sponsorship and to Parks and Recreation specifically for providing porta potties, loaning tables and chairs, and staffing the event to help with trash, etc.

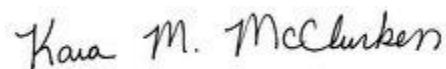
Fundraising efforts:

- We have raised the funds to pay for the construction documents that will be created by the team put together by Mahan, Rykiel, & Associates.
- So far this year we have raised \$134,00 with another \$75,000 in pledged funds.
- The Budget vs. Actual expenditures for Treehouse can be found in this [spreadsheet](#).

Current/future endeavors:

- Add railings to Josie's Way for additional accessibility
- Hold second Treehouse Tales event and other activities at the Treehouse
- Participate in community events such as the UVA NICU reunion and the CureSMA Walk N Roll event
- Successfully complete construction documents and site plan submission for rest of project
- Hire Director of Development to expand fundraising capacity for future phases of the project
- Consult with other organizations to support more inclusive playspaces into other community projects

Respectfully submitted,



Kara M. McClurken,
Executive Director,
Bennett's Village