Willow Grove Cultural Commons

Introduction and Policies

About the Grove

Welcome to Willow Grove Cultural Commons at Sandy Spring Museum.

The Grove's purpose is to support folk and traditional artists in Montgomery County by providing flexible access to space for performances, rehearsals, recordings, workshops, and meetings at no upfront cost. Artists working in partnership with the Grove never pay a venue rental fee: those who generate revenue at the Grove share a small portion of their earnings with the museum, and artists who host unmonetized events use the space entirely for free.

Sandy Spring Museum envisions an equitable Montgomery County that leverages the rich and diverse cultural heritages of its residents as a vehicle toward increased empathy, cross-cultural understanding, and coalition building. The Grove is a meaningful investment in bringing that vision to life.

History

In 2020-21, Sandy Spring Museum solicited input from Montgomery County residents about how the museum could better serve cultural practitioners and, in doing so, better fulfill its mission to advance social equity through shared experiences of cultural heritage. The response was clear: cultural heritage partners needed accessible indoor and outdoor space to rehearse, perform, meet, teach, and carry out the work of sharing cultural traditions with others. In 2020, museum leadership approved a Master Plan to meet this need, and a vision emerged for a new space designed specifically for independent use by cultural heritage partners in a wide variety of capacities.

Through the generosity of many funders, including the State of Maryland, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Maryland State Arts Council, and Montgomery County, as well as private donors and members of Sandy Spring Museum, the museum was able to bring that vision to life. The Grove opened for use in August 2025.

The Space

The Grove is located onsite at Sandy Spring Museum. It is comprised of an interior space designed for rehearsals, workshops, and meetings, and an outdoor performance amphitheater.

The interior space includes:

- A 1300-square foot open space with skylights and floor-to-ceiling windows
- 10 rectangular folding tables (6'x30") and 52 folding chairs stored on a rolling cart
- A wall of mirrors
- A kitchenette with tables, chairs, and a refrigerator with a freezer and water dispenser

The outdoor amphitheater includes:

- A 934-square foot performance stage
- A sound system
- Optional seating for up to 75 guests

Willow Grove Partners

We seek to support folk and traditional artists from our member community by providing flexible access to the Grove for performances, rehearsals, recordings, workshops, and meetings at no upfront cost. Selected artists, titled Willow Grove Partners, will have the freedom to reserve the Grove on their own schedule (regardless of museum hours) and to use it independently (without supervision from museum staff).

Interested artists should review the following use policies and membership requirement, then complete our online Willow Grove Partner Application.

Willow Grove Partners never pay a venue rental fee: those who generate revenue at the Grove share a small portion of their earnings with the museum, and artists who host unmonetized events use the space entirely for free.

Willow Grove Partner Application

The Willow Grove Partner Application is available on the Sandy Spring Museum website. Ideal candidates are folk and traditional artists who demonstrate active engagement in cultural heritage, and who seek to use the Grove for cultural heritage activities.

The application prompts prospective partners to thoroughly consider their desired use of the Grove. Applicants demonstrating alignment with the museum's mission and values will be contacted for an interview with the Cultural Heritage Manager. Pending a successful interview, applicants will be invited to accept Willow Grove Partner status by signing a Community Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding. Upon completion of these documents, Willow Grove Partners will be granted access to the Willow Grove online reservation portal, where they can request use of the Grove by appointment.

Membership Requirement

Willow Grove Partners must be members of Sandy Spring Museum at the Individual, Family, or Community level. Organizations may apply provided that at least one individual in leadership is a museum member. Memberships are valid for one year and must be renewed annually to preserve Willow Grove Partnership. Memberships can be purchased online.

Policies for Use

The following are Sandy Spring Museum's Policies for Use of Willow Grove Cultural Commons by Willow Grove Partners.

Reserving the Grove

The Grove can be reserved by the hour, with a two-hour minimum. **Reservations must encompass set-up and clean-up time.** Reservations are requested online and confirmed within three business days by the Cultural Heritage Manager.

Within three business days of the scheduled reservation, the Cultural Heritage Manager will provide a unique keypad entry code which will become active at the start of the scheduled reservation and remain active until the scheduled reservation concludes. **Renters must leave the property at the end of their reserved time.**

Sandy Spring Museum reserves the right to refuse usage to any individual or group who proposes hosting an activity deemed to be in conflict with the museum's mission and values.

Attendee Registration and Fees

For all public events hosted by Willow Grove Partners, Sandy Spring Museum will manage attendee preregistration and, where applicable, collection of participant fees. Fees will be collected on a cashless basis via online payment. **Willow Grove Partners are prohibited from use of non-museum registration platforms, and from independent collection of fees or money exchange.**

The Cultural Heritage Manager will provide a current attendance roster before close of business on the business day preceding the scheduled event. At the conclusion of the reservation, Willow Grove Partners will be prompted by email to report final attendance numbers. We ask that Willow Grove Partners prioritize this report, as it is important data for the museum.

Collected fees are subject to a standard revenue share agreement (see page 6 for the Willow Grove Fee Schedule) and artist payouts will be issued within five business days following the scheduled reservation.

Cancellation Policy

We understand the inevitability of late cancellations from time to time. However, as the Grove is a community space with finite capacity, we ask that Willow Grove Partners who need to cancel any existing reservation contact the Cultural Heritage Manager as soon as possible.

To ensure that the Grove can be fully utilized, Willow Grove Partners who frequently cancel reservations within seven days or less of the reservation date (including no-shows) may risk loss of partner status. Within any given six-month period:

- First late cancellation or no-show: No penalty.
- Second late cancellation or no-show: A conversation with the Cultural Heritage Manager will be arranged.
- Third late cancellation or no-show: A conversation with the Cultural Heritage Manager and Executive Director will be arranged.
- Fourth late cancellation or no-show: Partner status will be suspended or revoked at the discretion of the Executive Director.

Kitchenette and Catering Policy

The Grove includes a kitchenette with a table and chairs and a refrigerator with a water dispenser. The Grove does **not** include a catering kitchen, but professional caterers may be retained to provide food and beverage prepared offsite. Caterers who will be working at the museum, including to provide catering setup, must provide a Certificate of Liability Insurance at least three days prior to the scheduled reservation. Certificates will be kept on file and do not need to be resupplied for subsequent events, provided the underlying policy is current and active.

Willow Grove Partners and any hired caterers should adhere to the following policies:

Users may:

- Prepare cold meals (e.g. sandwiches, salads)
- Utilize the space as a serving area for catered foods prepared offsite
- Wash dishes and utensils in the sink
- Store food in the refrigerator for the duration of the scheduled event

Users may **not**:

- Use portable stoves, hot plates, toaster ovens, or any other cooking appliances
- Use candles, torches, pyrotechnics, or any other kind of open flame (licensed professional caterers may use chafing dishes with a heat source such as Sterno)

Following any reservation, Willow Grove Partners should wipe down surfaces, put away tables and chairs, sweep the floor, and remove all food and trash. Trash **must** be bagged and placed in outside receptacles. Trash exceeding the capacity of the receptacles provided (e.g. where the receptacle lid does not fully close) must be removed from the site by the Willow Grove Partner.

Alcohol Policy

Events involving alcohol are subject to rules and regulations of Montgomery County Alcohol Beverage Services.

Willow Grove Partners planning events that include alcohol in any capacity should notify the Cultural Heritage Manager at culturalheritagemanager@sandyspringmuseum.org and contact Montgomery County Alcohol Beverage Services at 240-777-1900 to determine whether an alcohol license is required. Willow Grove Partners are responsible for applying for licenses and for associated fees but may contact the Cultural Heritage Manager for assistance if needed, including to obtain signature from the museum's Executive Director.

Willow Grove Partners assume responsibility for ensuring that alcohol is consumed only by individuals of legal drinking age and that guests associated with my reservation consume alcohol responsibly. Guests who engage in excessive drinking or disruptive behavior should be asked to leave the facility.

Parking Policy

Parking is limited. Vehicle parking at the museum is allowed in designated parking areas only. During the evening and on weekends, overflow parking is available at Sherwood High School (300 Olney-Sandy Spring Road, Sandy Spring, MD 20860).

When any space at Sandy Spring Museum has been reserved for a private rental, parking for the Grove will default to Sherwood High School. In the event this policy applies, Willow Grove Partners will be notified in advance. (Willow Grove Partners and/or event participants who require disability parking may park at the museum regardless of whether a private rental is taking place.)

A/V Equipment and Certification

The Grove contains an A/V equipment library. Equipment is available for loan for use in-studio by Willow Grove Partners.

Equipment loans must be arranged in advance, either at the time of booking a Grove reservation or through the Cultural Heritage Manager. Prior to requesting any equipment loan, Parter Artists must complete an equipment certification session with Sandy Spring Museum's A/V technician and demonstrate proficiency in the use and handling of the equipment. A/V equipment must be used only for purposes agreed upon between the Willow Grove Partner and the Cultural Heritage Manager, and in no way that conflicts with the museum's mission or values.

For artists using equipment appropriately and on a continuous and regular basis (without a lapse of twelve months or more), certification does not expire. If an artist does not use a piece of equipment for twelve months or more, re-certification will be required. Sandy Spring Museum reserves the right to revoke equipment certification or deny equipment usage to any individual or group deemed to be using equipment inappropriately.

When artists are finished using Grove equipment, any digital files from the device must be transferred to the artist's own personal storage device. If an artist notices that a piece of equipment is damaged in any way, or if a piece of equipment becomes damaged while in use, artists must report the damage immediately to the Cultural Heritage Manager at culturalheritage@sandyspringmuseum.org.

Non-Partner Venue Rentals

Sandy Spring Museum strives to be a conscientious steward of the Grove and of the generous community support that made it possible. When the Grove is not in use by Willow Grove Partners for cultural heritage activities, it will be made available as a venue for rental by other community members or groups. These private rentals can be requested through the museum's website or by contacting the Museum Manager and are subject to Sandy Spring Museum's standard policies for event venue rentals. Due to the nature and primary purpose of the Grove, we are unable to hold any reservation until we have received a signed rental contract and payment of the rental deposit.

Willow Grove Fee Schedule

Willow Grove Partners hosting cultural heritage activities that are free for participants to attend may reserve the Grove for no charge.

Willow Grove Partners may choose to host cultural heritage activities with entrance fees, such as ticketed talks, workshops, or performances. In these instances, the museum must manage all collection of fees, and collected fees are subject to the standard revenue share agreement below. **Willow Grove Partners are prohibited from independent collection of fees or money exchange.**

Artist payouts will be issued within five business days following the reservation.

Revenue Sharing Agreement

Total Event Revenue	Museum Retainer*	Artist Payout
FREE Event (No charge to participants)	$0	$0
Event with Entrance Fee	20%	80%

*Rates are subject to revision at any time, at the sole discretion of Sandy Spring Museum

Refundable Security Deposit

In the event that a Willow Grove Partner anticipates attendance of 50 people or greater, Sandy Spring Museum requires refundable security deposit at the time of booking to cover potential damages or excessive cleaning requirements. The deposit is due at the time of booking and is separate from the revenue share agreement.

Provided the Grove is left clean, trash is bagged and removed, attendees have vacated the Grove by the close of the reservation, and no equipment or part of the space has been damaged, the museum will issue a full refund within five business days.

Space Rented	Security Deposit
Indoor Space ONLY	$200
Indoor Space and Outdoor Plaza	$400