Cultural Landscape Plan at Sandy Spring Museum

Spring 2026

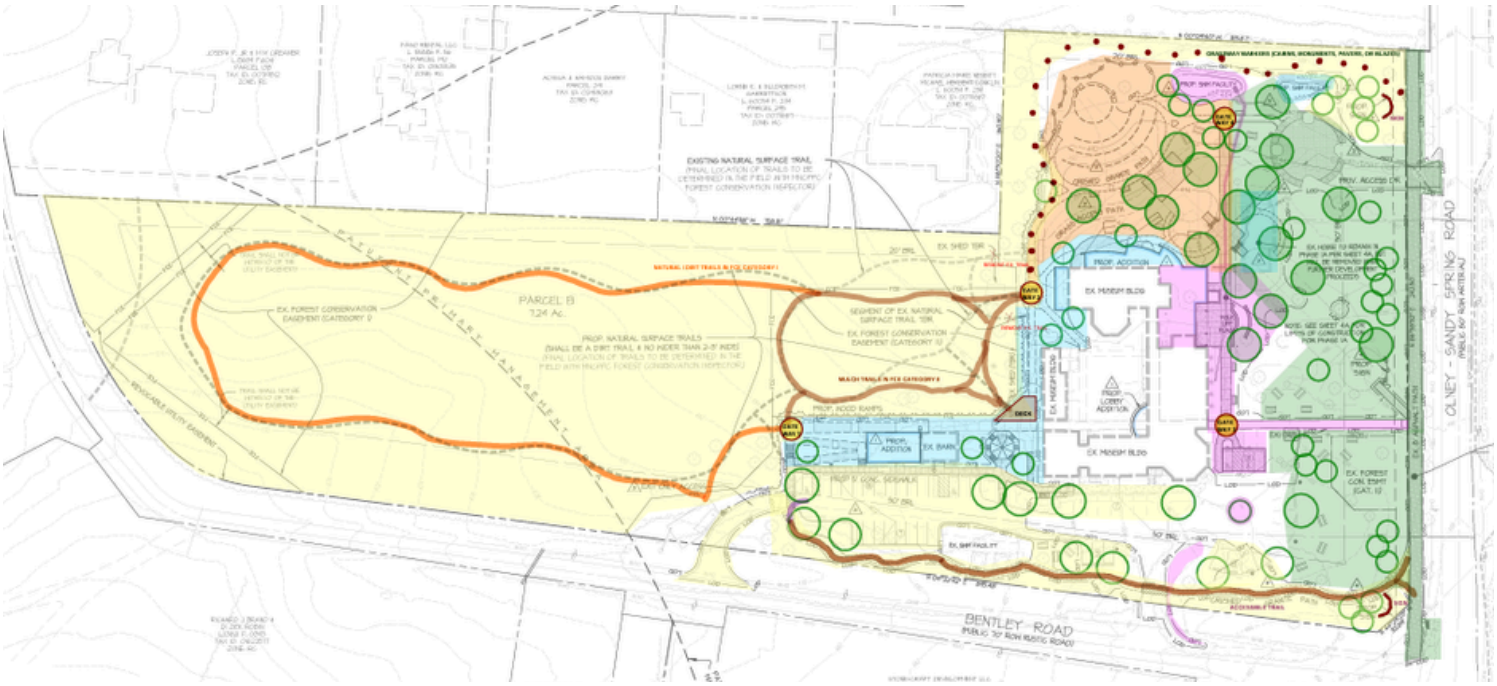
Experience More at Sandy Spring Museum: Bringing New Life to the Campus

We're thrilled to share an update on Sandy Spring Museum's ambitious five-phase Master Plan, a commitment driven by our desire to better serve you, our local community. In September 2025, we opened Willow Grove Cultural Commons, the centerpiece the Master Plan's first phase. This 1,800-square-foot addition provides vital free and low-cost rehearsal and program space for our cultural heritage partners and an outdoor amphitheater that will feature performances during the Strawberry Festival and throughout the year.

Cultural Landscape Plan: Expanding Opportunities

The overarching goal of the Master Plan is to make the entire campus more accessible and vibrant for all kinds of community activities—from lively festivals to family picnics and contemplative walks.

Today, about two acres of our seven-acre campus is a cultivated lawn, where we host annual events like the Strawberry Festival and showcase new work in the seasonal ARTINA sculpture garden. It's already a welcoming spot for public gatherings and picnics. But it could be so much more. Our Cultural Landscape Plan, the next phase of the Master Plan, will make the remainder of the property accessible and inviting for public use—creating new opportunities for recreation, innovative outdoor installations, and simply more space to connect with nature right here in the community.



Preliminary sketch of trails

Explore, Connect, and Recharge on New Trails

Get ready to explore! We're introducing new walking trails that will allow everyone to discover the museum's property on foot. Take a hike through a natural landscape, enjoy a peaceful stroll through the museum's three-acre forest, or find serenity on the grass and stepping-stone trail on the east side of the property. These combined new trails will create a .75-mile loop, perfect for a brisk walk, an easy run, or a leisurely stroll with family and friends. Paths will enable visitors to enjoy our trees, plants, birds and wildlife as well as provide opportunities for exercise and fellowship.

A Greener, More Welcoming Space for Sandy Spring and Ashton

The Cultural Landscape Plan isn't just about trails; it's about significantly increasing the amount of accessible green space for residents of Sandy Spring and Ashton. These communities, surprisingly, have few public natural areas, and we're changing that. This vital effort also includes environmentally sensitive landscaping, which will benefit birds and wildlife as well as people, and improved parking and traffic flow for a smoother, more welcoming experience for everyone who visits.

Vibrant Outdoor Installations

Sandy Spring Museum offers shared community experiences grounded in cultural heritage and place, indoors and out. We will collaborate with experts and community members to develop functional sculpture installations that serve everyday purposes while adding moments of surprise and delight to the grounds. This early-stage project will invite broad community participation and encourage contributors to engage thoughtfully with the landscape.

Help Us Unlock the Full Potential of Sandy Spring Museum

The ambitious vision of the Master Plan — creating more green space, accessible trails, and vibrant programs — is within reach, but we need your help to realize the potential of the Cultural Landscape Plan.

This crucial effort, dedicated to making the beautiful grounds even more accessible for everyone, requires additional financial support. We're proud to have already secured substantial funding through public grants. However, with shifts in federal and state funding programs, philanthropy is more vital than ever. Your gift can help ensure that we can fully fund the new trails, environmentally sensitive landscaping, and other outdoor enhancements included in the Cultural Landscape Plan.

We need to raise an additional funds to complete this transformative work.

Your contribution isn't just a donation, it's an investment in:

- More greenspace and access to nature for everyone.
- Safe and inviting trails for walking, running, and exploration.
- Enhanced opportunities for community gatherings, performances, and family enjoyment.
- A stronger, more vibrant Sandy Spring Museum for generations to come.

We invite you to make a pledge payable over 2-4 years to help us unlock all that the museum grounds have to offer. For those who wish to leave a lasting legacy, naming opportunities are available.

Naming Opportunities include:

Forest Trail – This new natural surface trail will form two loops in the forested area behind the museum that is protected by a strict conservation easement. These will be the longest and most secluded trails on the property. Leading visitors through a densely wooded area and around mature deciduous trees, this largely undisturbed walk will allow for possible encounters with wildlife, including many species of songbirds and woodpeckers.



Section of the proposed Forest Trail

Stepping-Stone Path – A path demarcated by stepping stones will run along the property's eastern boundary. It will enable visitors to walk a full loop around the grounds and enjoy all that the museum's land has to offer. The large field on the east side of the property has the potential to be used for outdoor gatherings, including rentals for private events like weddings, birthdays, or family reunions.

Lawn Trail – A mulch trail will run alongside Bentley Road. It will provide a meandering, scenic walk within easy reach of the parking area and the art barn. This walkway will introduce visitors to the museum's campus and encourage guests to explore as they make their way to the museum or back to their cars.

Outdoor Amphitheater – This space provides seating for audiences attending performances on the Warner Williams Plaza. It accommodates dozens of audience members comfortably. The amphitheater makes outdoor cultural celebrations and performances possible and will be used throughout the spring, summer and fall, including during the popular Strawberry Festival. The amphitheater makes Willow Grove Cultural Commons into a true indoor–outdoor venue, seamlessly connecting the museum's interior with its grounds.



Taiko drumming at the Strawberry Festival

Pocket Garden - NAMED – This small garden located just outside of Willow Grove will contain appropriate native plants. It will add charm to the exterior of the building and support local birds, wildlife, and insects.

Donors to the Cultural Landscape Plan will be listed on signage at the museum.

Arboretum Accreditation

Achieving Level I Accreditation as an Arboretum from the ArbNet Accreditation Program is a high priority initiative within the Cultural Landscape Plan. This project illustrates Sandy Spring Museum's commitment to maintaining the health of a broad and diverse selection of trees and shrubs for public enjoyment and to support the many bird, animal, and insect species of our area. Achieving Level I Arboretum Accreditation requires meeting specific criteria:

- Identifying, mapping, and committing to the maintenance of at least 25 distinct tree and/or woody plant species.
- Identifying and clearly labeling these specimens for educational purposes.
- Ensuring the property and its plant collection are accessible to the public and the subject of at least one annual public program.

With enthusiastic assistance from the Sandy Spring Museum Garden Club, we are currently focused on identifying and mapping trees and woody plants. We plan to complete the application process and secure arboretum status in 2026.

Functional Sculptures



Trails, gardens, and outdoor performance spaces invite visitors to linger on the museum grounds. We are also making it easier and more enjoyable to spend time outdoors by introducing functional sculpture installations that support gathering, rest, and play while adding moments of creativity and surprise across the campus.

This project is currently in its planning phase. Community input will help shape Requests for Proposals, ensuring that new installations reflect both local voices and regional talent. Functional art will enhance accessibility throughout the grounds while showcasing the work of area artists and makers.

To bring this vision to life, we seek additional funding beyond other Cultural Landscape Plan-related needs. This investment will directly support design, fabrication, and installation, ensuring regional artists are meaningfully resourced to create functional art that reflects community input and transforms the museum grounds into spaces for use, discovery, and connection.

Welcome to our Newest Residents: Honey Bees



Through a partnership with Sandy Spring Honey, Inc., the museum will host beehives on our grounds. We will begin harvesting and selling Sandy Spring Museum honey in summer 2026. This collaboration offers multiple benefits: it supports pollinating bees that enhance the health of flowering plants on and around our property, provides the community with a source of hyper-local honey, and creates a modest new revenue stream that advances the museum's sustainability efforts.

Join us in bringing these exciting plans to life. Your support will directly impact the well-being and connectivity of our community!