



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Amherst County

Program Title: Seminole Park Project

Program Category: Parks & Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Jeremy S. Bryant

Title: County Administrator

Signature: 

2025



Parks & Rec

AMHERST COUNTY | VIRGINIA

Amherst County Parks & Recreation Department
VACo Achievement Award Submission

SEMINOLE PARK PROJECT

101 High Street,
Madison Heights, VA 24572

Executive Summary

Amherst County Parks and Recreation is committed to working within its core values and goals. Within those core values it is vastly important that, when reviewing potential projects, the County is able to utilize holistic approaches to promote cultural understanding, economic development, family public health, and safety by working in coalitions and partnerships with allied organizations. It is also a key goal to promote public awareness of the environmental and natural resource management aspects of recreation and leisure services that are available.

The Seminole Park Project was a culmination of those values and goals working in tandem. Through valuable partnerships and a holistic approach, Amherst County was able to alleviate a blight within the community, create new tax revenue for the County, and establish a beautiful space for citizens from throughout the County and neighboring areas to play.

The master plan of Seminole Park was a collaborative effort that endured several speed bumps before reaching completion. The project was stalled due to the onslaught of the COVID pandemic as well as the transition of roles between three different Directors in the Parks and Recreation Department. Through determination and collaboration, much of the work for this project was able to be handled through internal partnerships within County departments to breathe life into this forgotten piece of property. Amherst County Parks and Recreation along with Amherst County Public Works joined forces for the labor and oversight of the project from start to finish, even through various changes and pivots within the process.

Their efforts have culminated in a beautiful park that consists of a modern and inclusive playground, adaptive swing, child friendly zip-line, two pavilions, picnic spaces, dog park, and walking path. Since Seminole Parks Grand Opening on October 15th, 2024, the park has seen numerous varieties of family parties, countless playdates, the beginning of new friendships, and insurmountable amounts of memories already made in its inception year.

Amherst County Parks and Recreation whole heartedly believes this is just the beginning of the wonderment that will come from Seminole Park throughout its lifetime.

This project is the epitome of the term “trash to treasure”. It has taken a forgotten piece of a community's history, something that was diminished and left to rot, and turned it into something the community can cherish and love once again. Once again, this property can now be viewed as a space for child-like wonder and adventure. A park is more than a playground; a park is a space for connecting with the outdoors, connecting with neighbors, and discovering the joy and laughter that the art of play can bring to anyone of all ages.

Community Need

A Communities Call to Action

The Properties History

Seminole Park is adjacent to what was originally the Madison Heights High School, built in 1924-1925. The property has seen numerous transitions over the years since its inception as an Educational Institution within the County. The property endured several additions up until 1966. In the year 1939, after a fire destroyed the original site of Madison Heights Elementary School, a new building was built connected to the Madison Heights High School to accommodate the new Madison Heights Elementary.

In 1962, the last class of Madison Heights High School graduated and the 1920's style building was demolished, leaving the 1939 addition as the buildings focal point of Madison Heights Elementary. In 1991, a new Madison Heights Elementary School was built, and the original School's doors were permanently closed after withstanding some of the most tumultuous times within American History. After the schools' doors were closed, the property remained vacant and unkempt, falling victim to the changing of time, vandalism, and abandonment.

Much to the dismay and heartbreak of the multitude of citizens throughout the community who called its hallowed halls home for several generations. Though there were rumors over the years of the building being used for various endeavors such as a community center, those rumors never transpired. That is until 2017 when Waukeshaw Development, Inc entered into an agreement with Amherst County to purchase the property and turn it into a 41-unit apartment complex. After over 30 years of abandonment, gossip, and being considered a blight within the community, the property has had new life breathed into it. The developers took great care to honor the history of the property, the charm of its historical structure and design, while creating a unique and modern home for several new residents to the community of Madison Heights.

In 2019, before the completion of construction and renovations, the property was registered through the National Register of Historical Places. Construction was completed in 2021 on the building. Through the agreement between Waukeshaw Development and Amherst County, the adjacent lot to the property became home to Seminole Park.

Once all of the details of the arrangement between Amherst County and Waukeshaw were finalized, Amherst County began searching for funding to begin construction on the Park.

Amherst County was able to secure funding through the Land, Water, and Conservation Grant Program funded through the National Parks Services and administered through the Virginia State Department of Conservation & Recreation. Part of the agreement was that a portion of the Public Park be made into a dog park that was available to the tenants of newly redeveloped apartment complex. With the partnership between four entities in total and their combined work force and funding, Amherst County broke ground on the park on February 5th, 2024 and hosted their ribbon cutting of the park on October 15th, 2024. The total combined cost of the project was \$400,250.00.

Demographics Served

Seminole Park is housed within the Madison Heights limits of Amherst County, located off of Route 29 which is the primary road through the County.

This area of the County is considered the business corridor as it is home to the bulk of the county's commerce. Currently, Amherst County is home to just over 31,000 residents and roughly 19,000 of those residents reside within the Madison Heights limits. The average median income of a family hovers around \$61,500.00. When communicating with the community regarding the prospected utilization of the lot, it was made abundantly clear that a public park was desired. Before the construction of Seminole Park, Amherst County was already home to several public parks. The issue residents had was that the vast majority of the public parks were located within the more rural areas of the County. The residents of Madison Heights wanted a public park that was centrally located within their area and within a reasonable walking and/or driving distance. The proposal of this project received immensely positive feedback from within the community.

Considering 20% of the children within Amherst County reside within a single-parent household, it was essential that this park be located within a safer area that was well lit and traversed. With the redevelopment of the apartment complex, it eradicated the dangers that come along with larger vacant structures and provided a well-lit and maintained adjacent area for this lot to thrive as a family-friendly space for the community at large.

Innovative Collaborations

The lot in which Seminole Park is housed has remained the property of Amherst County since the lot was divided from the School Building in 1994. The lot remained unused and overgrown for several years before the development of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to expand its park systems. Once the lot was identified as a possible location for expansion, it was placed on the maintenance list for the Amherst County Public Works, the same department that maintains all of the County Parks and public spaces. With the news of the development of the old school building into apartments, it was raised on the priority list once the County was approached by the developers to place a dog-park for the apartment on the vacant lot. It was then that the Master Plan was revised to reflect the collaboration between Waukeshaw and Amherst County for the development of Seminole Park.

Amherst County was able to secure a grant through the Land, Water, and Conservation Program to provide funding for the endeavor. The County was awarded the funding in October of 2023 and construction began in February of 2024.

Amherst County has a strong history of utilizing its internal resources to save tax-payers any additional burden. In adhering to this tradition, when it came time to construct the park, it was a mostly internal affair. With the guidance of the County Community Development team to ensure proper codes were met for the safety of citizens, the Amherst County Public Works Department were able to provide the labor and equipment used to bring the vision of Seminole Park to life.

It was not all Amherst County in this endeavor though. Throughout the process the County worked in tandem with the Waukeshaw Group to create a dog park within Seminole Park. It was the vision of Waukeshaw to have a pet friendly apartment complex to offer the community. They wanted to safe and secure place for not only the residents to utilize for recreational leisure, but also their beloved pets. Throughout the process, Waukeshaw and Amherst County worked together to ensure a cohesive vision took place.

After over 820 hours of labor, on October 15, 2024, Seminole Park was opened to the Public. A ribbon cutting was held with local news and community members in attendance for the reveal. Since then, this park has been utilized daily by not only those residing within the adjacent apartment complex, but by community members from throughout Amherst County.

Amherst County would be remiss to exclude another integral part of this collaborative effort, the Amherst County Economic Development Administration. The team within the Amherst County EDA played a pivotal role in connecting Amherst County with Waukeshaw and championing the change from trash to treasure within the County.



Conclusion

Seminole Park is the Cinderella story of Amherst County. It was once a place of education, transformation, and growth, a place of laughter and community. Over time it became forgotten, consumed by poverty and ill-begotten activities. Through the vision and determination of multiple entities, a transformation took place. Turning this blight within the community into something beautiful, vibrant, and once again bringing laughter and a sense of youth to all who wander the grounds.

In the short time since the completion of this project, it has had a profound impact on the community at large. Several community members came together during the annual Day of Giving to assist in the beautification of Seminole Park, planting trees and shrubs to assist in the vision for the park, showcasing a newfound sense of ownership and community. The neighborhood it resides in feels safer, the residents within the Amherst County business corridor have a centrally located place to play and commune, an eyesore has been eradicated from within the County, and new collaborations have been established within the County Administration and a local business. The Seminole Park Project was a win across the board for Amherst County and its residents.

The County looks forward to seeing this space being utilized by generations to come, to become a part of its citizens core memories. Amherst County is dedicated to creating spaces that encourage community and family, Seminole Park is a testament to that mission.



