



*City of
Centerville*

Brooks A. Compton, Mayor | Wayne S. Davis, City Manager

Benham's Grove Improvement Plan 2023 Open House Frequently Asked Questions

In 2021, the City of Centerville created a vision for Benham's Grove as a charming Victorian farmhouse venue and gathering space nestled in Uptown Centerville that delivers an exceptional guest experience. As a result, the City is developing an improvement plan for the ten-acre homestead rooted in Centerville's history. Thousands of guests visit annually for a variety of functions from intimate meetings to large gatherings or a simple walk in the park.

Now, the City is at the stage of exploring concepts in the process of reaching construction design. Expect a refresh of some of the buildings and changes that will make the space more accessible for all guests, including a new event center that will allow Benham's Grove to host weddings and other events concurrently year-round.

The following questions and answers outline the comments raised in the Open House for the Benham's Grove Improvement Project on January 17, 2023. In some cases, multiple comments on the same topic have been condensed. We made our best effort to respond to comments succinctly, but we are always happy to have more detailed discussion on any of the topics below.

What are you doing to preserve the history of the Gerber House?

It is critical that the City of Centerville preserves and continues to invest in Benham's Grove and the Gerber House specifically. The wear on the Gerber House – including annual installation and removal of the tent – puts stress on the house it was never designed to sustain. Moving higher-traffic events to the event center will relieve use on the Gerber House, allow for appropriately-scaled events to be held there and preserve the historic Victorian campus. Additionally, adding the event center on the opposite side of the campus and reorienting the driveway allows the historic buildings to remain the visual focus. The refresh will make the historic space more accessible for all guests.

How did the team select the location of the new building?

The decision to orient the event center on the northern side of Benham's Grove was a collaborative one not taken lightly considering its significance in the community. Ultimately, the spot is farther away from residential areas while maintaining historically appropriate scale in relationship to State Route 48. The location will be accessible for construction without impacting the original campus and – most importantly – the distance from the historic campus means the event center will not overshadow historic gems like the Gerber House, barn, cottage and gazebo. Moving away from a rented outdoor tent and constructing an event center allows Benham's Grove to nearly double its event season. Organizers turn away thousands of guests each year because the current grounds cannot accommodate large groups in colder months.

How were the materials and design chosen for the new event center?

The Benham's Grove Improvement Plan was designed to secure the vibrancy of the 19th-century estate for generations in the future. Designers of the new event center were purposeful in creating a building that would complement the historic structures on campus without competing with their subtle but elegant architecture. Limestone is a key component of the event center. The design features a monolithic wall which is an homage to the foundation of Centerville, known for the largest collection of early stone homes. Glass and wood are used to preserve the best parts of the tent experience: incorporating mature trees and allowing guests to be a part of the natural environment.

Will designers reuse historic material like the limestone patio?

Designers will use historic limestone on the construction of the event center. Careful effort will be made to save and reuse materials that are part of the fabric of the homestead. Designers are aware of those elements, and Benham's Grove will share how the team incorporates sentimental physical materials into the future of the campus.

Is the City constructing a paved connection to Lakeview Road?

There are no plans to create a connection between Benham's Grove and Lakeview Road beyond the dirt-worn path that already exists. Early renderings did show a connection – because the designers did exactly what the City asked them to do: suggest creative options for discussion. The connection has been removed.