

https://roanoke.com/news/local/roanoke-lansdowne-park-salem-turnpike-northwest-pedestrian-safety-improvements-street-art-kristin-adkins-rob-issem/article_1a2841c4-0fcb-11ef-8e15-47b4e62a6d8b.html

ALERT **TOP STORY**

Northwest Roanoke neighborhood gets much-needed safety improvements, and some street art

Emma Coleman

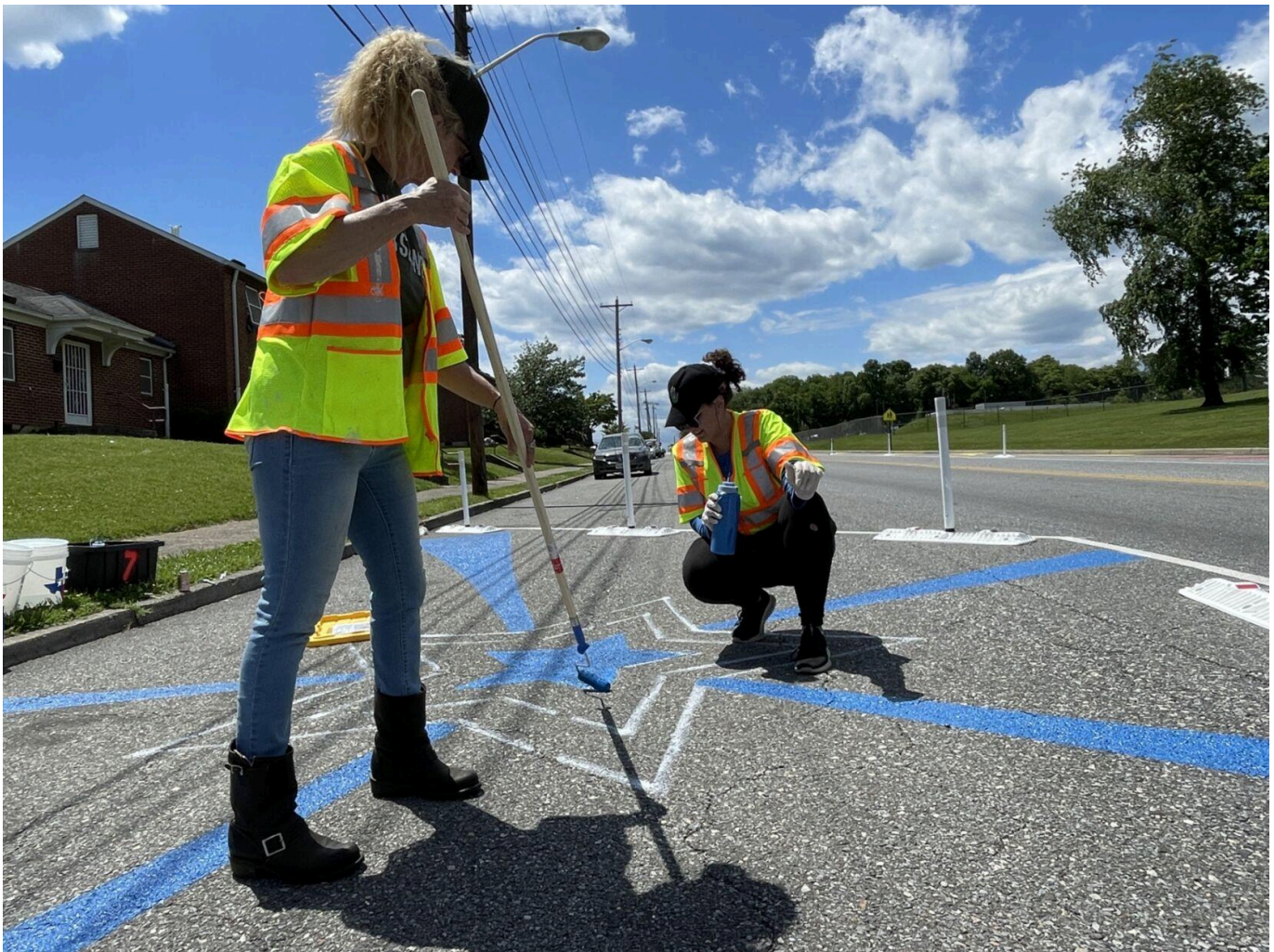
May 11, 2024



Community leaders and northwest Roanoke residents took to Salem Turnpike with paint, brushes and rollers Saturday afternoon to complete a neighborhood safety project.

The project, which has been in the works for about 18 months, improves pedestrian safety along the turnpike between 24th Street Northwest and the **Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority, or RRHA**, headquarters.

Among the improvements are a new accessible bus stop, high-visibility crosswalks, extended curbs, flashing beacons at pedestrian crossings and a street mural, according to a city news release.



Carilion Clinic Community Health Educator Erynn Miller, right, and her mother Tina O'Brien, left, fill in street mural stencils with paint along Salem Turnpike Northwest on Saturday.

Emma Coleman

The mural, which features large hand prints and Roanoke stars, was designed with input from residents of nearby **Lansdowne Park**. The public housing complex is run by RRHA and is situated across Salem Turnpike from several community amenities, including the **Roanoke EnVision Center**, **Horton Park** and **Melrose Plaza, which will soon feature a grocery store.**

People are also reading...

- 1 **Dream became reality for Virginia Tech women's recruit Petersen**
 - 2 **Downtown Roanoke parking garage next to Amtrak platform deemed unsafe, closed**
 - 3 **Andrew Hart resigns as Lord Botetourt boys basketball coach**
 - 4 **EastMont girls soccer now defunct after 3 straight state titles, 55 straight wins**
-

The safety improvements were made possible through a coalition of community organizations, including representatives from the city, the **Roanoke Arts Commission**, the **Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission**, **Carilion Clinic**, and the **Virginia Department of Health's Roanoke City and Alleghany Health Districts.**



City of Roanoke Artist in Residence Robyn Mitchell, right, fills in a street mural stencil with paint in what will be a safe median for pedestrians in the middle of Salem Turnpike Northwest Saturday.

Emma Coleman

Kristin Adkins, the health districts' population health manager, said Saturday that the coalition worked through a program called the **Virginia Walkability Action Institute, or VWAI, to identify neighborhoods that needed safety improvements.**



Kristin Adkins, population health manager for the Roanoke City and Alleghany Health Districts, stands near the northwest intersection of Salem Turnpike and Delta Drive as community leaders and volunteers put final touches on a street mural Saturday.

Emma Coleman

In the fall of 2022, Adkins and other members of the coalition, including **City of Roanoke Complete Streets and Vision Zero Coordinator Rob Issem**, went to Richmond to learn more about other VWAI projects. Issem said Saturday that they visited **a neighborhood grocery store in Richmond called The Market at 25th**, which inspired the grocery store that's coming to Melrose Plaza.

“The community has been asking for this grocery store for many, many years,” Adkins said of the Lansdowne neighborhood. “This is such a big deal. We finally can help the community with what they’ve wanted.”

On top of that, Adkins said, neighborhood events have regularly been hosted at Horton Park and the EnVision Center, previously a library.



Roanoke resident Wes Fleming fills in a street mural stencil with paint along Salem Turnpike Northwest on Saturday.

Emma Coleman

“And it terrifies everyone, because there’s so many children in Lansdowne,” she said. “And so we were like, how can we make it safer to access this?”

Adkins, Issem and other coalition members at first focused their project goals on the crosswalk closest to the EnVision Center. To make the pedestrian zone safer, Issem said the crosswalk was repainted, a bus stop was moved directly next to the crosswalk, and a sidewalk and landing pad were added to improve accessibility for disabled bus riders.



Rob Issem, Roanoke's Complete Streets and Vision Zero coordinator, stands in the middle of Salem Turnpike Northwest as community leaders and volunteers put final touches on a street mural Saturday.

Emma Coleman

“Everybody now uses this crosswalk,” Issem said. “It’s so, so much better.”

Issem said the coalition planned to fix just that one crosswalk. But then representatives from **Equitable Cities, a consulting firm** that works with VWAI, visited the Lansdowne neighborhood.

“They came last year, about this time, did a site visit, saw the street, laid eyes on it with us, understood our vision, understood the partners we had, understood the city’s commitment, I think, to making this happen, and they gave us a little bit more funding, which allowed us to expand this project down to the light,” Adkins said.

Issem said the city was able to complete the project with under \$50,000.

“If this was done with hard infrastructure, it would be half a million dollars,” Issem said. “But this is maybe even more effective. It’s beautiful. We’ve got the actual people who live in this community here working with us today. So, it’s powerful.”

The extra funding allowed for the installation of small curbs and white posts, called bollards, along the sides of the street. Between the bollards and the street’s concrete curbs lays the street mural.

“Your attention totally changes as a driver when you’re like, ‘Oh, something’s going on here. Let me slow down and figure it out,’” Adkins said. “That’s safer for these kiddos, and moms and families trying to cross the street.”

Adkins said this particular section of Salem Turnpike saw a lot of speeding vehicles before the improvements were made.

“And that’s not the fault of any one of us. This is my commute home. I drove too fast to here,” she said. “The road encouraged the way we behaved. And that’s the point. We can tell people all day long to slow down, or you can make the conditions where the road makes them slow down.”

Issem said that a part of his job as **the city’s Vision Zero initiative** coordinator is working to reduce traffic fatalities and injuries. **According to Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles data**, Roanoke has seen 26 pedestrian-involved crashes so far this year.

“We’re actively working with consultants to create a blueprint for our city moving forward to get to zero,” Issem said.

Adkins said the Lansdowne project is important because the community asked for it.

“People know exactly what they want and need. And they did. They wanted that grocery store,” she said. “We had a role to play in making that safer and more accessible, and that will build health, that will build community safety, that will build strong community.”

Emma Coleman (540) 981-3198

emma.coleman@roanoke.com

Around the Web



When Neuropathy Hits, Try This (It's Genius!)



Surgeon: Ears Ringing? When Tinnitus Doesn't Stop, Do This (Watch)



Md: Building Muscle After 60 Comes Down to This 1 Thing



This Household Item is Like Bleach for Dark Spots



A New \$59 Smartwatch That Can Test Blood Sugar Painlessly Just in a Few Seconds

By Emma Coleman



This Hummingbirds Feeder is Taking Virginia by Storm