



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 3, 2019.** Please include this application form with 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: Augusta County

Program Title: The Trails at Mill Place

Program Category: Parks & Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Timothy K. Fitzgerald

Title: County Administrator

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]



2019 VACo Achievement Awards—The Trails at Mill Place

Executive Summary

For many years, the citizens of Verona, an Augusta County community centrally located on Route 11 and brimming with businesses and residents, have not had access to safe and public walking trails, natural areas, or fishing in close proximity to their homes or places of work.

With the completion of The Trails at Mill Place, located in the County-owned Mill Place Commerce Park, residents have access to a two-thirds of a mile paved walking trail complete with benches, trash cans, and a picnic shelter. The cornerstone element of the trail is a two-acre stormwater management pond which is open for catch-and-release fishing—a textbook opportunity for adults and children of all ages to be introduced to recreational fishing.

The \$243,000 project was completed over the course of several years through collaboration and cooperation of various Augusta County staff and local businesses. The Trails at Mill Place is an innovative solution to the need for trails, water access, and natural areas that used land already owned by the County and dedicated to stormwater management. This project is a model for other localities interested in developing recreational opportunities meshing with stormwater management facilities while collaborating with community residents and businesses for successful implementation.

Augusta County Parks and Recreation

QUALITY RECREATION & LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES

Brief Overview

The Trails at Mill Place officially opened to the public on September 28th, 2018. This unique recreational opportunity serves those working in Augusta County's Mill Place Commerce Park, residents of Verona, and the greater Augusta County area.

The primary amenity of the facility is a two-thirds of a mile paved walking trail that encircles a two-acre stormwater management pond. Additionally, a picnic shelter is located beside the parking lot and benches are placed along the trail for those who choose to bring their lunch or decide to rest their feet. The pond, which is home to several species of freshwater fish, is open for catch-and-release fishing and a wetland area acting as a filter for the pond provides bountiful wildlife viewing opportunities.

The opening of the trail adds a much needed outdoor recreation amenity for tenants of the Park as well as the residents of Verona. As both a space to enjoy the outdoors and exercise in a traffic-free, pedestrian-focused environment, the walking path is the first of its kind in the Verona area. In addition to the approximately \$231,000 of local funds invested in the project, construction and completion of the trail was also greatly supported by numerous community partners and businesses. Several Commerce Park tenants neighboring the project provided construction access and cooperation throughout the entire process. The Greater Verona Business Association donated the picnic shelter and has pledged future support for the trail as well.

Problem, Challenge, or Situation

Augusta County's Verona residents have waited for a walking trail for many years. Verona is a small community nestled in the middle of the County, centrally located on Route 11. The community is home to many small businesses, several manufacturing and light industrial facilities, and significant residential development. With the lack of any nearby recreational amenities, those living and working in Verona traveled significant distances in order to reach a safe, welcoming place to walk, picnic, or fish. Additionally, the County's Commerce Park, which is located in Verona, did not have any recreational facilities available for those working in the Park. Mill Place Commerce Park has attracted several businesses over the years, but lacked a recreational space to draw in businesses interested in providing wellness opportunities for their employees.

This situation aligned with the 2013 and 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey results which identified trails, water access, and natural areas as some of the most needed outdoor recreation opportunities. These top needs were identified both for the entire state and specifically for the Central Shenandoah Recreational Planning Region.

Implementation

The Trails at Mill Place is a unique recreational opportunity serving those working in Augusta County's Mill Place Commerce Park, residents of Verona, and the greater Augusta County area.

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fishing and a wetland area acting as a filter for the pond provides bountiful wildlife viewing opportunities. The opening of the trail adds a much needed outdoor recreation amenity for tenants of the Park as well as the residents of Verona.

The Trails at Mill Place is a testament to the power of engaged community members who reach out to their local government leaders in order to seek new opportunities. Additionally, it is an example of intergovernmental cooperation and innovative solutions that can be applied across the state.

The Greater Verona Business Association approached its Board of Supervisor representative many years before this project came to fruition. From initial discussions to donating funds to the purchase of the picnic shelter for the project, this group of local business leaders and community members remained involved and interested in helping to create this recreational opportunity. Once Augusta County Parks and Recreation staff were directed to consider the feasibility of the project, an initial proposal and project budget were assembled and quickly agreed upon, with staff from several County departments collaborating on implementation.

The Trails at Mill Place project is an innovative solution for several reasons. Primarily, the land that was identified and eventually set aside to be used for the trail has very limited uses otherwise. As Mill Place Commerce Park has developed over the years, stormwater management has been implemented according to all applicable requirements. As additional businesses have undertaken large construction projects, additional sediment basins, ponds, and wetland areas have been established in order to properly accommodate runoff. The pond around which the trail runs is one such structure and was restructured shortly before the trail was constructed. When staff was in the process of identifying potential areas for the trail, this portion of the Commerce Park became the obvious choice as it was

already owned by the County and this section of land would not be used for business or development purposes otherwise—it had already been set aside for stormwater purposes, but staff realized that purpose did not have to be exclusive.

The project also meshes recreation with environmental stewardship, exposing users to the benefits of proper water quality control measures. Future plans for the project include signage and educational material which will serve to inform visitors of the details of stormwater management and its impact on improved water quality and flora, fauna, and wildlife located around the trail.

The Trails at Mill Place project was successful in part due to the cooperation of several County departments throughout the planning, design, construction, and completion phases. As soon as the project had commenced, intentional conversations took place between the Parks and Recreation, Community Development, and Economic Development departments, all of which contributed significantly to the final product. In particular, an initial planning meeting was scheduled and carried out prior to design with various key Community Development staff so that the Parks and Recreation project coordinator would have all necessary restrictions and guidelines in mind when carrying out the design phase. Following that meeting, Community Development continued to provide guidance and expertise to make necessary adjustments as the project was constructed. This included several engineering related changes which had to mesh with the stormwater management requirements of the pond. The Economic Development Department also provided crucial guidance and aided in facilitating conversations with business surrounding the trail project.

The project also required cooperation and collaboration with several private businesses neighboring the trail. Firstly, prior to the trail design phase a new manufacturing facility was in the

works on a lot immediately adjacent to the area identified for trail parking. This was a major project for the Economic Development Department and was the result of extensive negotiations. However, as staff was working on plans for both the trail and the manufacturing facility, the company constructing the manufacturing facility was approached about the possibility of using excess fill dirt from grading activities to create the trail parking area. This proposal was promptly embraced by the company and eventually led to a leveled and compacted area which is now the 19-space parking lot for the trail project. Due to the collaboration with this particular business, the grading and leveling of the parking lot needed no additional County funds, reducing the overall expense of the project.

An additional cooperative element of the project was in the securing of an easement for a portion of the trail. Due to the layout of the stormwater pond and certain property lines, the most feasible path for the trail was through a corner of an adjoining property. Again, with Economic Development staff providing the introductions, the project coordinator and other staff approached the property owner regarding a potential easement for the trail. Once more, the idea was readily embraced and in short order, the County had secured an easement for the necessary portion of trail to pass through.

The Trails at Mill Place project provides a model that can be implemented by other local governments as it demonstrates the ability for recreational opportunities to integrate seamlessly with required water quality controls. Prior to design, research for similar projects proved that a very limited number of examples existed previously. While many may view stormwater management as an exclusive use for a portion of land, this project proves that is certainly not the case and can provide ideas and guidance for anyone interested in creating a similar project.

Finance & Staffing

The majority of funding for The Trails at Mill Place was sourced through the County's infrastructure funds dedicated to the Beverley Manor district, where the trail is located. At project completion, the total cost to the County was \$231,000. An initial allocation of \$120,000 started the project off in the summer of 2016, with the additional funds allocated as the project scope increased to its final state.

In support of the project, the Greater Verona Business Association also contributed \$12,000 towards the purchase of the picnic shelter kit. This generous contribution was the result of the support of approximately 100 businesses in the Verona area. Future plans include a plaque and landscaping to recognize the Association's involvement and financial support.

In terms of staffing, the project was carried out and coordinated almost entirely by County staff of various departments. Design and construction were procured and contracted. Primarily, the project was coordinated by a program coordinator in the Parks and Recreation Department. This staff member coordinated all planning, design, purchasing, construction, and implementation associated with the project with the support of the Parks and Recreation Director. Although the main portion of design was contracted out, Community Development staff provided crucial support and guidance in the form of troubleshooting design changes, guiding plan approval, and providing necessary building permits. And as previously mentioned, Economic Development staff provided essential support in the form of communication with Mill Place Commerce Park businesses and consulting with staff on design and layout so as to complement with the Commerce Park atmosphere.

Program Results

The Trails at Mill Place opened on September 28th, 2018 and has seen consistent use since that time. Augusta County Parks and Recreation has received nothing but positive feedback from the community and has heard appreciation from many County residents. The trail sees visitors from both the Verona community and the entire County and has proven to be a draw for many. With the trail now complete, the need in the Central Shenandoah region for trails, water access, and natural areas is reduced on all three counts. The completion of this project, however, does not mark the end of building trails in Mill Place Commerce Park or Augusta County. With a proposed master plan showing an extensive network of trails, Mill Place Commerce Park is now poised to be a premier commerce park with recreational opportunities included. As the Park develops, this network may very well become a reality and now has a foundation in The Trails at Mill Place.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 28, 2018

Augusta County Parks and Recreation Opens Walking Trail in Mill Place Commerce Park
The Trails at Mill Place

VERONA, VA—Augusta County Parks and Recreation officially opened The Trails at Mill Place today at a Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. The new walking trail is located in Augusta County's Mill Place Commerce Park in Verona just off of Route 612 and has been a long-term County project.

The trail is approximately two-thirds of a mile long and encircles a storm water management pond which receives runoff from a large portion of the Park. The pond contains several freshwater fish species and is open for catch and release fishing for citizens with fishing licenses. A picnic shelter with several picnic tables is just a few feet off of the parking lot, and three benches are placed at intervals along the trail.

The opening of the trail adds a needed outdoor recreation amenity for tenants of the Park as well as the residents of Verona. As both a space to enjoy the outdoors and exercise in a traffic-free, pedestrian-focused environment, the walking path is the first public walking path in the Verona area. The Trails at Mill Place moniker was strategically selected in order to provide for future trail expansion in the Park including integration with current and future businesses.

"The trail brought together many community partners, including the Greater Verona Business Association, resulting in a strong partnership and a needed community asset," said Terry Kelley, Board of Supervisors representative for the Beverley Manor District where the trail is located, at today's Grand Opening ceremony. "I'm thrilled to see this project completed and hope to see the community take advantage of the developed greenspace."

The Greater Verona Business Association purchased the picnic shelter situated next to the trail parking lot. "The Greater Verona Business Association has been helping to enhance existing businesses, to promote their success, and enhance the community in order to get new businesses in the greater Verona area since 1981," said Abbey Smith, President of the Greater Verona Business Association. "With the help of 183 businesses in the Verona area over the last 5 years, GVBA was able to raise the money for the completion of the pavilion at The Trails At Mill Place. It is the hope of GVBA that this new walking trail will enhance the Verona community and encourage economic growth to the area."

Augusta County Parks and Recreation
QUALITY RECREATION & LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES

Current Mill Place Commerce Park businesses, working alongside Augusta County Parks & Recreation, were involved throughout the process from providing easements to allowing construction access to aiding in parking lot construction itself. "We appreciate the willingness of the community and our business partners in helping complete this project," said Gerald Garber, Chair of the Augusta County Board of Supervisors. "Mill Place Commerce Park is a special development, and the Park's tenants have aided in continuing to make this a thoughtfully-planned Park for the future."

Augusta County Parks and Recreation invites Mill Place Commerce Park, Verona, and all of Augusta County to come out and enjoy the outdoors at The Trails at Mill Place.

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We at Augusta County Parks and Recreation believe that learning and playing are lifelong endeavors and vital to overall health and wellness. Our department is dedicated to providing a variety of quality recreational and leisure opportunities to the citizens of Augusta County. If you're looking for a creative outlet, a challenging adventure, a means to stay fit and healthy, or an activity to further your child's development, you have come to the right place! We manage six parks throughout the county that can host a wide range of activities and our trip offerings take you to amazing places both within our state and beyond. Visit a park, join us for a trip, or sign up for one of our many programs today!

More information at www.augustarec.com

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NEWS SPORTS EVENTS



Trails at Mill Place provides walking path for Verona

Patrick Hite, Staunton News Leader

Published 3:52 p.m. ET Sept. 17, 2018



(Photo: Patrick Hite/The News Leader)

VERONA - Terry Kelley's family moved to Verona when he was two months old. As he grew up in the area, one thing he always felt was missing was a place for families to take a quiet walk, maybe have a picnic, do some fishing.

Three years ago, when Kelley was elected to the Augusta County Board of Supervisors, representing the Beverley Manor District, the Greater Verona Business Association contacted him about possibly building a walking path at Mill Place Commerce Park just off of Laurel Hill Road.

He thought it was a great idea, and one that would take a few months to complete. His timetable was a little off. Within a few months, he was still working through the planning process.

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The two-thirds-mile walking trail is already being used by families in the Verona area. (Photo: Patrick Hite/The News Leader)

"It was a year and a half before anything was even decided what would be done here," Kelley said.

But now, almost three years after he was elected, the project is complete. There will be an official dedication and ribbon cutting Thursday, Sept. 27, at noon for the Trails at Mill Place.

The park consists of a blacktop walking loop that is two-thirds of a mile long, a pond that can be used for fishing, and a picnic pavilion. There is a parking lot that can be accessed from Centerview Drive, between Sumitomo Drive Technologies and Shamrock Farms, off of Mill Place Parkway.

"It's just a process," Kelley said. "We had to get the EPA involved. We had to get the ADA involved. I had to get the other board members' permission. They were thrilled. They wanted it right off just like I did."

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In addition to the walking trail, there is pond at the Trails at Mill Place that's available for fishing. (Photo: Patrick Hite/The News Leader)

The process was, at times, a little overwhelming to Kelley, but, now that he's been through it, he said it was a positive experience that helped him understand his job better.

"It's been a good learning experience for me as a new board of supervisor," he said. "To dig in and get a project and see it through for the whole thing."

And, now that it's completed, Kelley couldn't be happier.

"To see something that I know will be here for my grandkids, great-grandkids, even if no one remembers that I pushed it through, I really don't care," Kelley said. "It's just the fact that Verona has a place like this to go to, I'm excited. I really am."

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While there is a pond and a picnic pavilion, the main attraction of the Trails at Mill Place is the two-thirds-mile walking trail. (Photo: Patrick Hite/The News Leader)

Kelley said the total for the project was \$230,000, with the Greater Verona Business Association paying for the pavilion. The remainder of the money came from the parks and recreation infrastructure funds.

"I just feel like Verona needed something and I had the infrastructure money to do it," Kelley said.

Included in the comprehensive plan for the park is a 20-mile loop, although there has been no discussion yet to extend the loop past the current two-thirds-mile trail and Kelley doesn't expect it anytime soon.

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In addition to a walking trail and pond, there's a picnic pavilion near the parking lot of the Trails at Mill Place. (Photo: Patrick Hite/The News Leader)

"Probably not in my lifetime," he said, "but I started it. You've got to start somewhere."

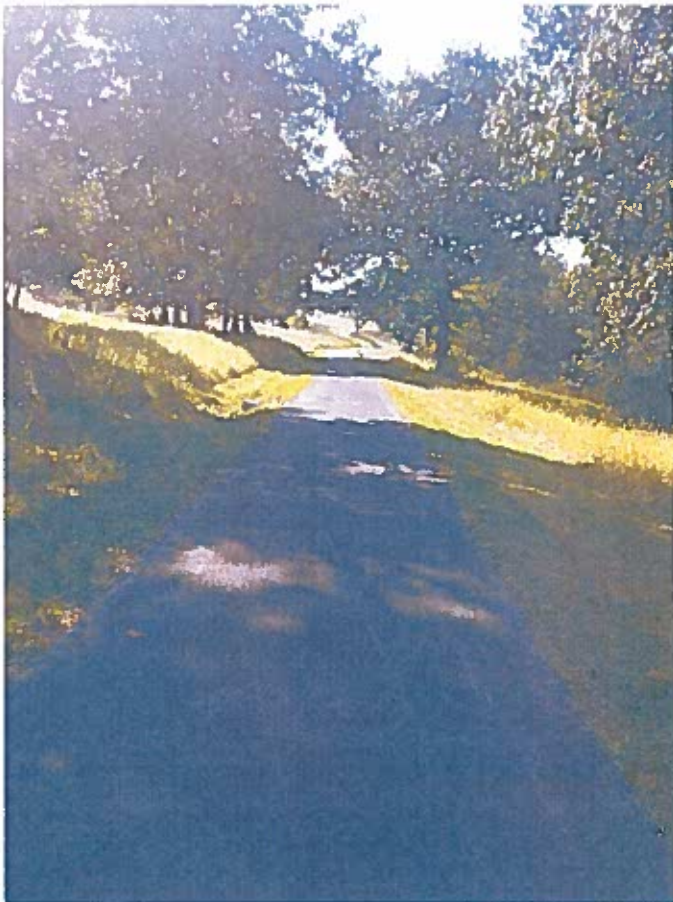
The park is open to the public. Kelley and his family have walked it several times and he recently talked to someone who used a kayak on the lake. There is plenty of wildlife to see as well, including deer, ducks and geese.

It's also a nice addition to the park, allowing employees of the nearby companies a place to walk during lunch break or before or after work.

"It's a draw," Kelley said. "A lot of new industries, factories, want a place for their employees to go to take a walk, to take a nice stroll for lunch. It's just a perfect place."









MILL PLACE COMMERCE PARK

Located 1/2 mile from interstate 81 at exit 227 Mill Place Commerce Park is owned by Augusta County and located in Verona, Virginia. The 371-acre Park enjoys interstate visibility with backgrounds of forested tracts and ponds. Approximately 190 acres remain available for development.

OPENING OF THE TRAILS AT MILL PLACE

SEPTEMBER 2018

- 2/3 mile paved trail
- Event pavilion
- Future trails possible



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