



## APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2020.** 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: Franklin County  
Program Title: Westlake - Hales Ford Area Plan  
Program Category: Community and Economic Development

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Christopher Whitlow  
Title: County Administrator  
Signature: *Christopher L. Whitlow*

## Westlake – Hales Ford Area Plan

### Executive Summary

Franklin County has written area plans before in the Westlake area; however, the plans would sit on a bookshelf and the implementation of the plan would not proceed. The Board of Supervisor for the Gills Creek District had seen this happen in the past when he was on the Planning Commission. He wanted to make sure the new area plan was useful to the County, citizens, business owners, and the surrounding community. He decided to combine the unincorporated town of Westlake and the village of Hales Ford into one area plan. The areas are in close proximity to each other and development in these areas effect both communities.

The Board of Supervisor for the Gills Creek area formed an advisory community who designed their own vision document that served as the foundation for the Westlake – Hales Ford Area Plan. This advisory committee met for two years prior to their vision document being written.

Once the committee finished their document and presented it to the Board of Supervisors it was decided to apply for a grant and was awarded the grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation to create a multi-modal, environmentally sensitive, and economically viable vision for the area, complete with recommended zoning revisions to implement traditional neighborhood design (TND) principles that codify this vision.

The Westlake – Hales Ford Area Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in November of 2016 and became an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. The area plan was the second designated growth area (urban development area) in the County. This area plan has not set on a bookshelf, but several items have been implemented and the committee is still working today with the County Planning staff to implement more of the area plan.

## Franklin County “Westlake – Hales Ford Area Plan”

Westlake – Hales Ford Advisory Committee

Submission for Virginia Association of Counties

Achievement Awards

### **Problem and Challenge for the County**

Most localities adopt area plans with implementation strategies and in some cases the plan for some reason or another just sets on a bookshelf. Unfortunately, Franklin County has had some plans written, not adopted by the Board of Supervisors, or adopted and set on a bookshelf. The Board of Supervisor member for the Gills Creek District where the unincorporated town of Westlake and the Village of Hales Ford are located decided he did not want that fate for this communities' plan.

In January of 2014, Gills Creek Supervisor, Bob Camicia, established a Westlake – Hales Ford Planning Advisory Committee to review the Westlake and Hales Ford areas and make recommendation for the future of this area. The Advisory Committee met monthly for two years and had discussions with subject-matter professionals, close dialogue with the business community, and numerous discussions with individuals and small groups. In addition, the committee held three public community meetings over the two years. The Advisory Committee was comprised of citizens, developers, businesses owners, farmer, real estate agents, a representative from Smith Mountain Lake Chamber, and Superintendent of Booker T. Washington National Monument. Planning staff and the Gills Creek Planning Commissioner Member served as support staff for the advisory committee.

In March of 2016, the Advisory Committee presented to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors a report entitled “Charting a Path to 2030 and Beyond”. The Board of Supervisor directed the Planning Commission and staff to write a community plan for the Westlake – Hales Ford area. <https://www.franklincountyva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/631/Charting-a-Path-to-2030-and-Beyond-PDF>

In January of 2016, the County was awarded a grant from the Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) for professional planning consultant assistance to establish and support Urban Development Areas (UDAs), places that promote economic activity through coordinated land use and transportation planning and investment. The development of a UDA confers eligibility for state transportation improvement funds, among other things. This small grant award of technical assistance therefore allowed the advisory committee’s plan to serve as the foundation for planning that is infused by state transportation investment in the community’s vision.

### **Solution-Innovation, partnering and collaboration**

This plan advances multidisciplinary planning by integrating traditionally siloed disciplines into a concise, easy to read plan. Additionally, the plan process was extremely collaborative, involving citizens, adjacent National Park leadership, Chamber of Commerce, County planning staff, the County’s Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, technical assistance consultants, and the Virginia Department of Transportation, a list that well exceeds those of standard small area plans in rural communities. It should be noted without the support of the community being an active partner and the advisory committee visioning for this area and creating the document called “Charting A Path to 2030 and Beyond” this area plan would not have been

successful. To summarize the visioning document of the Advisory Committee the document discusses the following:

- Plan preparation
- Farmland to Suburb – Transformation of Westlake / Hales Ford
- Current Planning Policies and Zoning Provision for Westlake
- Planning Concerns and Challenges for the area
- Themes for the Future of the Westlake – Hales Ford area
- Recommended Strategies
- Next Steps

Through the technical assistance grant award, the County was able to collaborate with professional planners of Renaissance Planning to develop the Westlake – Hales Ford Area Plan. The plan provides historical background and existing area analysis before outlining a multimodal, multidisciplinary set of guidelines that advance the vision of the citizens committee plan. The land use concepts are designed to leverage investment in public amenities towards creating contextually appropriate mixes of housing, jobs, and activities. The transportation plan attempts to counteract growing interest in expanding the capacity of the main street connecting the larger Westlake - Hales Ford Area by outlining circulation concepts that promote local connectivity and minimize traffic impacts on existing congested roads. To help facilitate the community vision, an intuitive land use typology was created, each with visual and written aids as to the expected development characteristics of each land use type. Supplementing the typology was a set of transportation-focused gateway concepts that help tell the visual story of the Westlake –

Hales Ford area for motorists, particularly those of whom are new to this visitor-heavy corridor.

A robust implementation process was provided, focused primarily on informing readers about funding options for the plan's vision. The what, when, and who of funding options are laid out for a wide range of funding sources at the state and federal level. Finally, the plan acknowledges the significant change in land use regulation that is required for the implementation of the community's vision and provides detailed amendments to key portions of Franklin County's development ordinances.

The methodologies, analytical techniques, and plan layout are all easily transferable throughout the County and state and can serve as a model for future small towns and rural areas in Virginia, regardless of whether they work with the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment.

In fact, Franklin County intends to use this as a model for the development of the remaining six (6) villages designated in the County's Comprehensive Plan. While the concepts of the plan are transferable to each village, the County recognizes that the plan is also flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of each individual village area.

The Plan style was designed to be easily read and understood by a wide variety of potentially interested parties. The design is simple, with a focus on keeping readers engaged and informed about how the individual pieces fit together into the larger plan.

The plan was intended to be conceptual in ideas and designs but allowing for implementation in phases. It is envisioned that various aspects of the plan will be implemented over several years by a variety of users such as developers, citizens groups, County's Parks and Recreation Department (both private and public), businesses as well

as investment of public funds by the County. As a result of the plan, a group of citizens, businesses, developers, and county staff have formed to develop a portion of the trail/greenway network to connect to the National Park, conducted a survey on the aging population in the planning area on what amenities and other livable aspects for senior population, and searching for a location for a community center to serve the area.

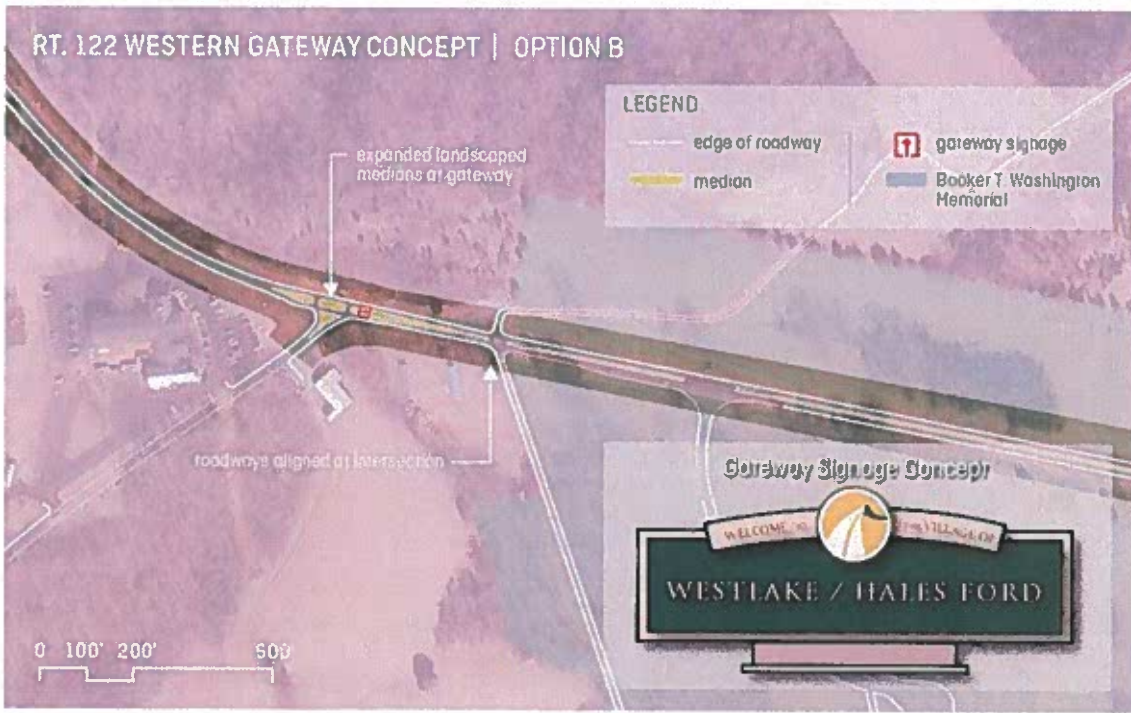
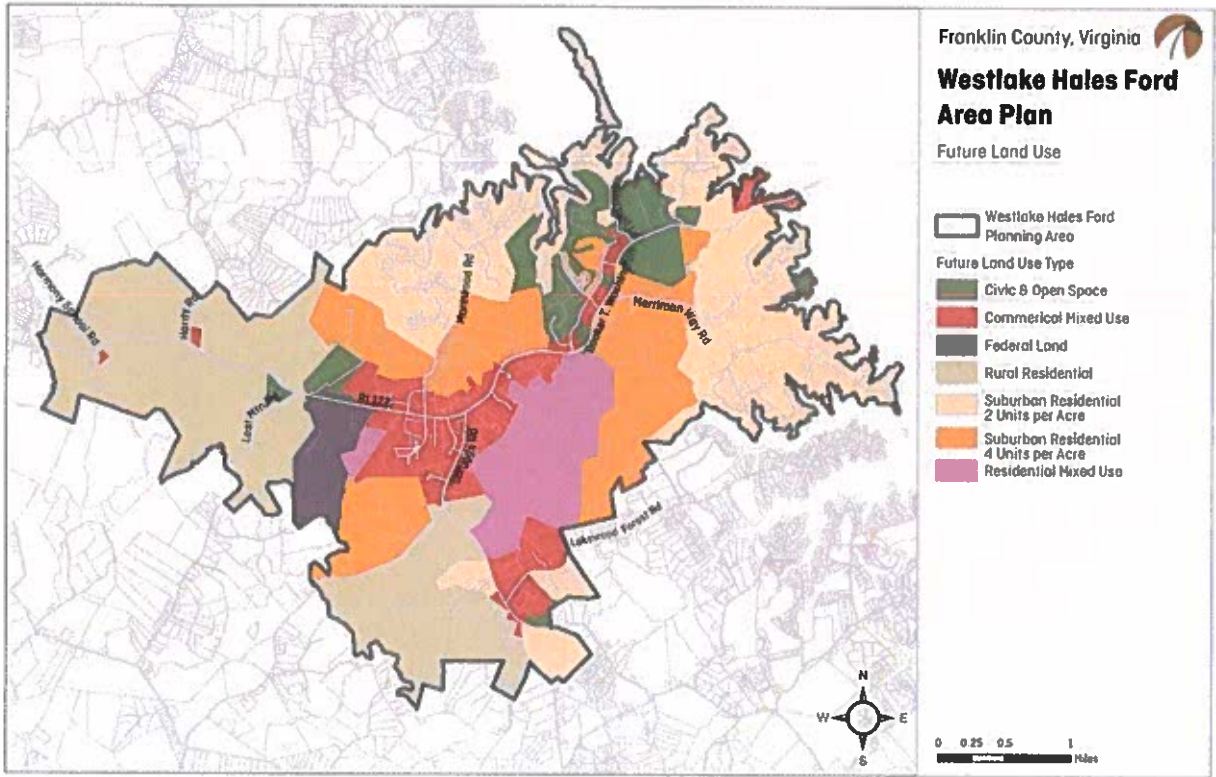
Comprehensiveness is perhaps the hallmark of this work, as the multimodal, multidisciplinary nature of the analysis includes and is informed by land use, transportation, urban design, economic development, and – critically – funding feasibility. Additionally, the multiyear citizen-led visioning process serves as the foundation of this plan and is a unique and comprehensive element of the final product. As a testament of the collaborative effort of the plan, the plan was presented to the Board of Supervisors with a roomful of supporters and no opposition.

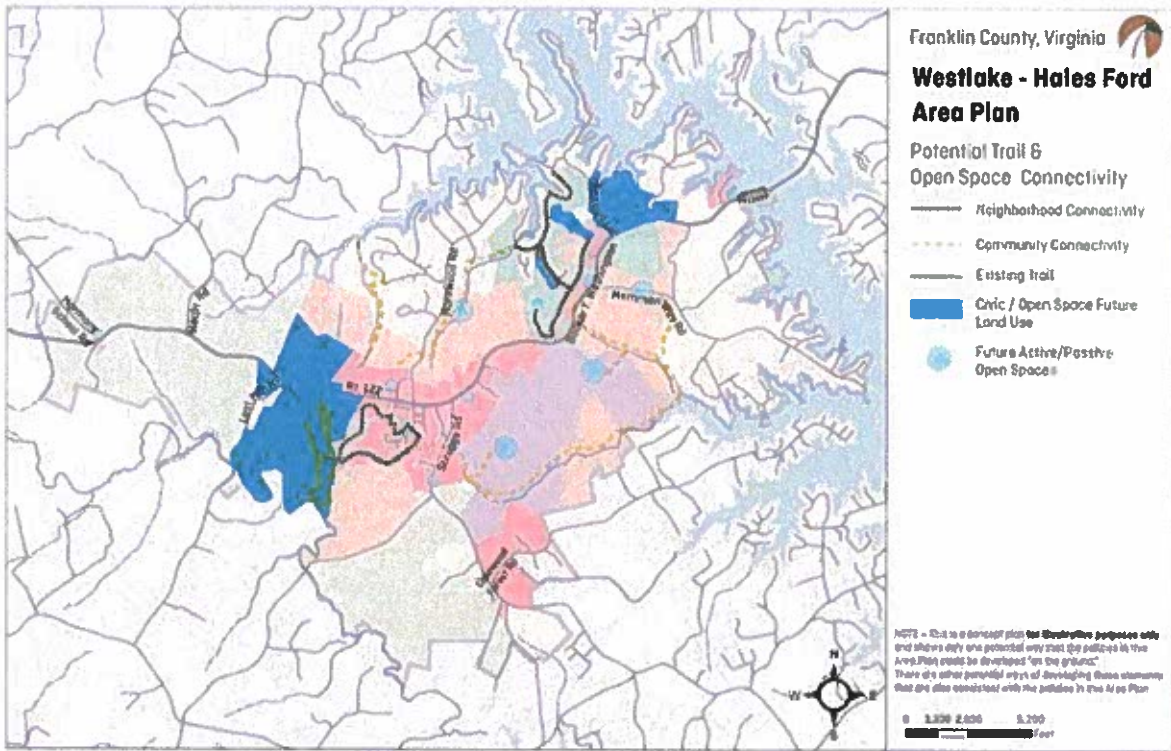
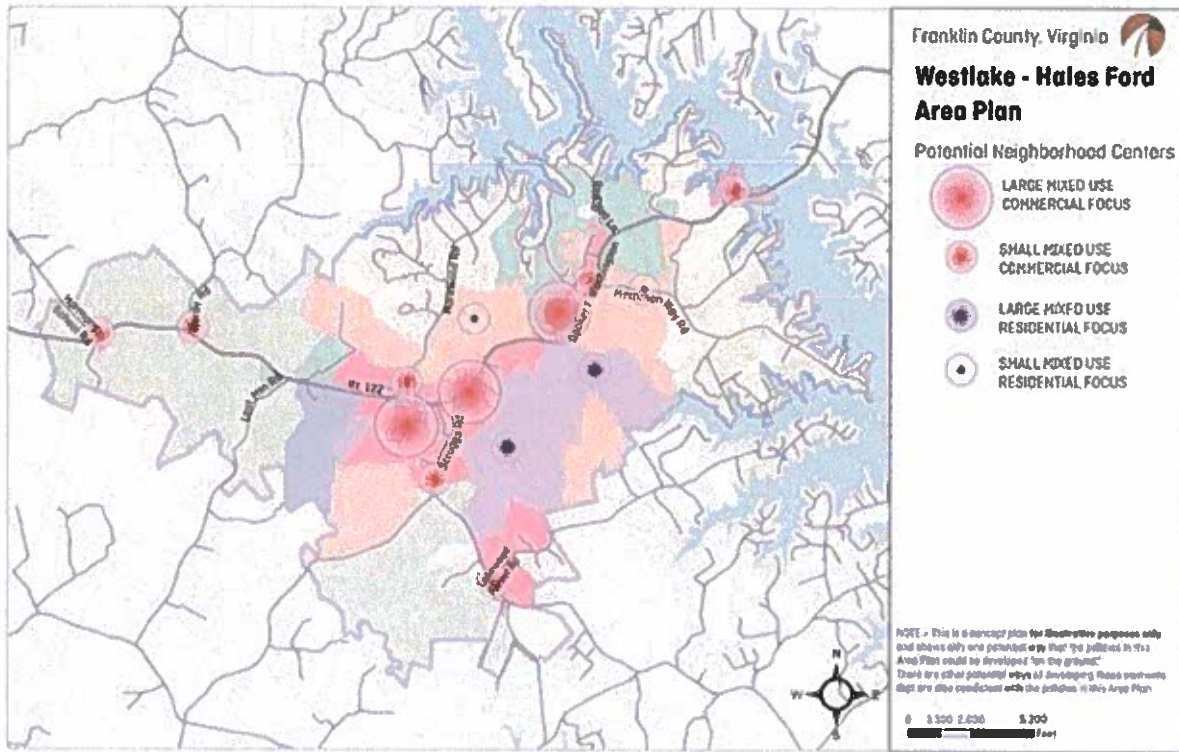
The Westlake – Hales Ford Area Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisor in November of 2016 as an amendment to the County's Comprehensive Plan. This area plan has not set on the bookshelf as previous plans. With the adoption of the area plan a new Future Land Use Map was created to guide development in this area and the boundary became a Designated Growth Area (DGA); the second in the County. The creation of the DGA/UDA allows for SMART Scale eligibility for the County to seek funding for transportation projects in this area. The County has been awarded a third round SMART Scale project at the intersection of Lost Mountain Road and Route 122. The project will consist of improvements to the intersection of route 122 (Booker T. Washington Highway) and Route 636 (Lost Mountain Road) with the construction of right and left turn lanes being constructed on Route 122 with median separation and multi-use

trail along Route 122; which will connect with sidewalk in the Westlake Towne Center. This intersection was the Western Gateway to the Westlake and Hales Ford area. The County has been awarded a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant for a two-mile multi-use trail in the Westlake Towne Center to connect to the trails located at Booker T. Washington National Monument. The total grant is for \$768,924. This grant is in the scoping stages completion in 2021. The County is applying this year for fourth round SMART Scale funding for the intersections of Route 1235 (Lakemount Drive) and Route 122 (Booker T. Washington Highway) and Route 834 (Brooks Mill Road) and Route 122 (Booker T. Washington Highway), both proposals are roundabouts at the intersections. Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors has worked on comprehensive zoning changes to the Westlake – Hales Ford Area and zoning amendments to the Westlake Overlay District, but this work is not completed at this time. This area plan has not been sitting on the bookshelf, it is a document that is moving forward thanks to the collaboration of the Advisory Committee who started the process and continues to be involved with the implementation of the plan, the communities of the Westlake – Hales Ford, Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

<https://www.franklincountyva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/628/Adopted-Westlake-Hales-Ford-Area-Plan-PDF>







## **Brief Overview of the Westlake – Hales Ford Area Plan**

The Westlake – Hales Ford Area Plan was created to further guide the growth of these areas, using multidisciplinary analyses and extensive outreach with citizens and public officials to create a plan that has the buy-in and feasibility required to be a true guidebook for the area's future.

Like many places, development pressure peaked in the mid to late 2000s which began to create tension between new development and the existing citizenry. While the recession slowed development, it did not slow the community's resolve to be an active partner in their community's growth. To that end, a citizens advisory committee was formed, headed by a member of the Board of Supervisors. This citizens committee worked for two years on the creation of a visioning document called 'Charting a Path to 2030 and Beyond'.

That plan may have gone no further than the bookshelf without the Franklin County Planning Department and the Advisory Committee seeing an opportunity to advance the work by harnessing a grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation's Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIP). OIP began offering technical assistance grants to communities looking to create what they call Urban Development Areas, places that promote economic activity through coordinated land use and transportation planning and investment. The development of a UDA confers eligibility for state transportation improvement funds, among other things. This small grant award of technical assistance therefore allowed the citizens committee's plan to serve as the foundation for planning that is infused by state transportation investment in the community's vision.