



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the 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: Botetourt County

Program Title: Gateway Crossing Zoning Overlay

Program Category: Community Economic Development

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Title: County Administrator

Signature:



Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Awards Application 2023 Botetourt County Gateway Crossing Zoning Overlay

Executive Summary:

Botetourt County is a rural county located in southwestern Virginia. The county is 548 square miles and is home to approximately 33,500 residents. Botetourt County is submitting a 2023 VACO Award for our [Gateway Crossing Zoning Overlay](#) in the Community/Economic Development Category.

The [Gateway Crossing Area Plan](#) was formally adopted by the Board of Supervisors as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan in 2016. The Plan recognizes the importance of the area as one that defines many visitors' first impressions of the County. Not only does the plan set a vision and list of goals to improve this area, but also a path forward to achieve those goals. The vision for the Gateway Crossing Area is of a walkable district with a mixture of uses including housing and locally serving shops and offices to the west of Interstate 81, and both local and highway-serving shops, hotels, and services to the east of Interstate 81. New sidewalks, greenways, bicycle lanes, and a local street network would knit the area together and better connect it to the Roanoke Valley region.

The Gateway Crossing Overlay project represents a shining example of successful urban planning and design, achieving outstanding results in the areas of redevelopment, economic development, and pedestrian mobility. This project is in the process of transforming an underutilized and underperforming area of the County into a vibrant, mixed-use community that benefits residents,



businesses, and visitors alike.

Background and Program:

Botetourt County is a rural county located in southwestern Virginia. It is home to 33,500 residents and thousands of visitors each day. Botetourt County Planners have overall responsibility to these residents, our businesses, and our visitors. The Gateway Crossing Area has been underperforming for years and was not a good representation of the County's beauty and rich natural heritage to outsiders. To bring this area of the county up to par with the rest of Botetourt and for the citizens to be proud of this incredibly important gateway into Botetourt, it took creativity, hard work in identifying issues and needs with community stakeholders, and a great deal of collaboration between elected officials, appointed officials, staff members, and property owners.

The Gateway Crossing Overlay project is a testament to the power of creative, community-driven planning and design. By prioritizing redevelopment, economic development, and pedestrian mobility, the project is taking steps to transform an underperforming area into a thriving, sustainable, and inclusive community that will serve as a model for urban planning and design for years to come.

The [Gateway Crossing Overlay](#) is a zoning tool used to encourage economic development and redevelopment of dilapidated parcels in Botetourt County's Gateway Crossing area, located around the Interstate-81 Exit 150 interchange. This area has been identified by the Botetourt



County Board of Supervisors as a gateway to the County and the entire Roanoke Valley, Shenandoah Valley, Central Virginia, and the Virginia Highlands. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail passes through this area, bringing hikers to the front door of the county. A 2015 Market Study and a 2016 area plan—adopted into the County's comprehensive plan—formally envisions this place as an attractive multimodal, multiuse district supportive of a variety of housing, commercial, and employment opportunities. The county took advantage of a once-in-a-generation VDOT redesign of the corridor to launch efforts to realize the vision.

To implement this vision, County staff worked with consultants to develop a set of zoning tools that lessen burdensome development standards, incorporate urbanist principles, and set a vision for development types in the Gateway Crossing Area. The Gateway Crossing Overlay is a zoning tool that allows a very specific place in the county—identified as a growth area through its designation as an Urban Development Area—to develop with more urban design, without altering countywide zoning districts that would drastically change the more rural areas of the county. As the majority of Botetourt County is rural, it was important to find a method to allow more urban development patterns in a place that can and should support growth, without unduly impacting development types outside of the Gateway Crossing Area.

Staff worked to refine the Gateway Crossing Overlay zoning text in close collaboration with area partners, including landowners, local citizens, elected officials, business owners, and other department staff. This collaboration was in the form of direct engagement through working



groups with landowners directly impacted by this change, larger community meetings, work sessions with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, local tv and radio interviews, and online web tools.

The final overlay text accomplishes several objectives to support the Gateway Crossing Area Plan. It adds several new uses to the area, allowing property owners to undertake economic development projects without seeking a rezoning or special approval in many cases. It requires walkability and pedestrian infrastructure to be added along public road frontages for new developments, supporting multimodal access in an automotive-oriented area. It promotes an appropriate level of density by removing impervious surface and floor-area ratio requirements, as well as reducing overall parking requirements. Furthermore, voluntary design guidelines are included to provide developers a better understanding of expectations for development in the overlay area.

To date, the Botetourt County Department of Community Development has received multiple applications that embrace the spirit of the overlay and are made possible through the easing of some development standards. Two large multifamily developments, a hotel, a mixed-use building, and at least 5 new commercial uses have either administrative and or legislative approvals or are in the process of receiving approvals by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, proving the functionality of the overlay as a redevelopment tool.



Persons and Organizations Involved:

Planning is a collaborative and creative process. This project utilized tools granted by the Code of Virginia, years of forward-thinking by elected officials and county staff, and community input directly implemented into the final text. The Commonwealth consistently promotes economic development, new housing opportunities, and improvements in vehicular and pedestrian safety. This project meets all those objectives, highlighting the ability of planners to take statewide identified needs and apply them to local opportunities.

Expected Outcomes and Results:

The Gateway Crossing Zoning Overlay is a regulatory framework that encourages pedestrian-oriented design. This overlay does so by incentivizing development supportive of a variety of access, increase in density, opening the area to new types of developments, and reducing many regulations found in the existing ordinance. While the vision is set and the regulatory framework has been adopted, it comes down to the community—both business owners and residents—to achieve that vision.

The Gateway Crossing Area at Exit 150 is the primary entrance into the County from the south. It is the center of growth and development in Botetourt and, as such, needs the tools to encourage responsible and attractive development patterns. The Gateway Crossing Overlay, approved at the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors Meeting on September 27, 2022, is an additional chapter in the County's zoning ordinance that intends to do just that, by providing an overlying set of



standards promoting walkable, pedestrian-oriented design that creates a sense of place rather than a disjointed and disconnected series of individual developments.

This zoning overlay is an opportunity instead of more regulation. There is NO new tax, taxpayer cost, or budget associated with the zoning change. The Overlay will allow for:

- Bypassing the public hearing requirements for rezoning and some special exception permits by expanding the types of uses that are allowed in the area.
- Reducing and eliminating burdensome lot development standards (such as the impervious surface requirements, the Floor Area Ratio removal, reduction in parking, increase in by-right height, reduction in setbacks, etc.)

Beneficiaries of the Program:

The Gateway Crossing Zoning Overlay project will enhance the corridor and make the area more attractive and successful for our residents, businesses, and visitors. This project is an example of what can be achieved when planners recognize a community need, work with the public to understand possible solutions, utilize creative problem solving to develop solutions to those problems, and refine the solution to best satisfy all the interested parties.

Replication:

In order to replicate this zoning overlay, a Community Development Department must do their due diligence by doing research, and working with consultants to develop a set of zoning tools



that lessen burdensome development standards, incorporate urbanist principles and set a vision for development types. Overlay is a zoning tool that allows a very specific place in the county—identified as a growth area through its designation as an Urban Development Area—to develop with more urban design, without altering countywide zoning districts that would drastically change the more rural areas of a county.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the Gateway Crossing Zoning Overlay is an example of what can be achieved when planners recognize a community need, work with the public to understand possible solutions, utilize creative problem-solving to develop solutions to those problems and refine the solution to best satisfy all the interested parties. The Gateway Crossing Overlay project is a testament to the power of creative, community-driven planning and design. By prioritizing redevelopment, economic development, and pedestrian mobility, the project is taking steps to transform an underperforming area into a thriving, sustainable, and inclusive community that will serve as a model for urban planning and design for years to come. We are proud to announce that this project has already been awarded the inaugural Holzheimer Economic Development Award by the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association. It is our honor to submit this project for your consideration for a VACO Award in the category of Community and Economic Development.

To learn more about the Botetourt County Gateway Crossing Zoning Overlay, visit:

www.botetourtva.gov/gatewaycrossing.