



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** 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: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Category: \_\_\_\_\_

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# 2024 VACO Achievement Awards Entry

I. Program Title  
Ridgedale Special Focus Area Plan

II. Award Category  
Community & Economic Development

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## IV. Abstract of the Program

In 2022, Chesterfield County initiated a Special Focus Area (SFA) Plan for the Ridgedale area. The SFA plan is a long-range plan providing detailed development guidance to areas undergoing change or having a high potential for change. The SFA plan serves as a guide for future growth, land development and redevelopment decisions, programs, ordinances, and policies. The SFA plan relies on strategies for the redevelopment of key properties through detailed design guidelines and placemaking strategies. This SFA plan is a component of the countywide Comprehensive Plan. The SFA plan provides rezoning guidance does not change the existing uses or zoning of properties.

## V. Problems, Challenges, or Situations Faced by the Locality

Several factors prompted the initiation of an SFA plan in the Ridgedale area. The prior existing land use plan for the area emphasized commercial, office, and light industrial uses that are often less desirable in the modern economic and workforce landscape.

The county recognized an opportunity to reexamine the possibilities for an area that is a distinct gateway to the county. This gateway area presents several opportunities for redevelopment that could meet community needs.

The area includes the currently vacant Chippenham Crossing Shopping Center, which formerly had a grocery store as an anchor tenant. Ridgedale Parkway is home to both public and private recreational facilities as well as apartment complexes and J. G. Hening Elementary School. Undeveloped or underutilized parcels in the area present opportunities for both infill development and redevelopment projects. There are also opportunities to improve bike and pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, strengthening the community as a place. The interstate East Coast Greenway has long been proposed through this area, providing opportunities for trail-oriented economic, recreational, transit, and housing opportunities. Additionally, the county owns several larger parcels along a major thoroughfare and a reservoir, which provides opportunities for the county to shape future development more deliberately within the SFA.

### A. Responding to Economic Downturn

Key parcels within the SFA boundary remain vacant, including a vacant grocery store and parking lot for a shopping center that never materialized. Existing residents do not have a market, grocery, or other food options. Existing

zoning and prior land use would have excluded or made it difficult to build enough new housing for the number of residents likely needed to make businesses within the SFA economically viable.

## B. Connecting Communities with Diverse Needs

The land use policy and human-oriented design guidance was designed to meet the needs of residents and visitors of a variety of ages and economic situations. The plan's focus on connectivity and walkability between neighborhoods provides trails and pedestrian infrastructure that decreases car dependency and promotes health via access to recreational facilities. The policy provides more flexibility in residential development to create a variety of housing options that might allow people to remain in their neighborhoods and enjoy the amenities through different stages of life. For example, there is existing senior and assisted living housing with no public or private community spaces within walking distance. Students who live in multifamily and single-family homes have very little existing infrastructure to safely get to school without hopping in a car, even for a short geographic distance. The SFA plan addresses these needs.

## VI. Innovation/Model for Other Localities

The Ridgedale Special Focus Area Plan provided a nimble approach to reimagining an area of Chesterfield County through policy change. The timeline for the project was approximately one year, which means the plan took effect within memory of the start of the process.

Citizens and other stakeholders provided input throughout the process, including during existing condition assessment, conceptual visioning, document drafting, and public hearings. This allowed staff and decision-makers to respond to concerns early.

Future land use categories were consistent with existing categories throughout the county rather than creating unique land uses for one small area; this keeps the planning process shorter and the end land-use designations simpler for both the public and county officials and employees to navigate.

Design guidance stayed at the neighborhood and block level while avoiding getting bogged down in creating specific architectural or design styles. This simplified the planning process while focusing on big-picture ideas such

as creating parameters for development that serves residents and recreation users within walkable, connected neighborhoods. This was also appropriate for an area without a distinct architectural history.

## VII. How the Program was Carried Out

### A. Program Financing and Staffing

The Ridgedale Special Focus Area Plan was developed using Chesterfield County staff and resources. It was coordinated by the planning department with expertise provided throughout the planning process by citizen, business, and organization stakeholders and county departments including economic development, community enhancement, transportation, utilities, and environmental engineering.

Individual implementation items may involve future, unknown costs (e.g., feasibility study for a pedestrian bridge).

### B. Results/Success of the Program

The Ridgedale Special Focus Area Plan has a 15 to 30-year outlook. However, examples of the SFA's more clearly defined guidance include policy support for approval for a new development incorporating housing variety and connections to existing neighborhoods and policy discouragement of allowing zoning exceptions to a proposed by-right drive-through.

## VIII. Executive Summary

In 2022, Chesterfield County initiated a Special Focus Area (SFA) Plan for the Ridgedale area. The SFA plan is a long-range plan providing detailed development guidance to areas undergoing change or having a high potential for change. The SFA plan serves as a guide for future growth, land development and redevelopment decisions, programs, ordinances, and policies. The SFA plan relies on strategies for the redevelopment of key properties through detailed design guidelines and placemaking strategies. This SFA plan is a component of the countywide Comprehensive Plan. The SFA plan does not change the existing uses or zoning of properties.

The SFA plan provides future land use plan policy, conceptual plans, design guidance, rezoning guidance, and implementation steps.

- The SFA Future **Land Use Plan** lays out the desired future land use pattern through recommendations for the location and intensity of development. The Land Use Plan's guidance provides flexibility that the prior land use designation lacked.
- The **conceptual plan** embodies an overall vision using the guidelines of the SFA. The conceptual plan focuses on the development/redevelopment of key properties and aims to enhance and maximize the experience of residents and visitors in Ridgedale.
- The **design guidelines** emphasize connectivity between parcels and neighborhoods, pedestrian-oriented blocks, building orientation and materials, green and public spaces, housing variety, and trail-oriented considerations.
- The SFA provides rezoning guidance for stakeholders and staff to easily find the starting points for desired future land use.
- Finally, the implementation section identifies projects mostly associated with land development. As departments throughout the county undertake various projects, policies, and ordinances within their spheres of influence, the plan will be used to provide direction and guidance where appropriate.