



## 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: Rockingham County

Program Title: Development Tracker

Program Category: Communication; Informatoin Technology; Community Development; Customer Service

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

Name: Trish Davidson

Title: Assistant County Administrator

Signature: 

# Development Tracker Application

Rockingham County, Virginia

Department of Community Development

Located in the Shenandoah Valley, Rockingham County lies between the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east and the Allegheny Mountains to the west. Rockingham County is the third largest county in Virginia by land area, encompassing 853 square miles – approximately 545,920 acres – of dense forests, mountaintop vistas, meandering rivers, and rich agricultural valleys.

Rockingham County has a population of 84,394. Between 2010 and 2020, Rockingham County grew by 9.8%. (US Census 2020). The County was the 29th fastest growing jurisdiction in the Commonwealth during this time, and the second fastest growing jurisdiction in the Shenandoah Valley, surpassed only by Frederick County. According to the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, the growth rate is projected to slow slightly between 2020 and 2030 due to a statewide decline in birth rates, but then continue to increase in future years due to potentially high rates of in-migration.

Along with this population and economic growth comes change and an increase in commercial, residential, and industrial development, sparking residents' curiosity and public inquiry. Last year the Department of Community Development identified a need for the community to have additional access to development information, including land use decisions on rezonings, special use permits, site plans, and building permits. Creating a platform for this information to be stored and available to the public would increase transparency and service to the public, decrease inquiries, and increase department efficiency.

For these reasons, Rockingham County launched a new resource to track development activity occurring throughout the County. The [Development Tracker](#) application tracks

rezoning and special use permit requests under review and approved, site plans under review and approved, building permits under review, projects under construction, and recently completed building projects. The application is user-friendly and easy to navigate, providing the public with a clear vision of the County's development pipeline.

The purpose of the Development Tracker is to assist the public in staying informed, involved, and engaged in their community's development. In 2023, Rockingham County received 31 rezoning requests; 35 special use permit requests; over 65 site plans that were reviewed by County staff and outside agencies; and almost 2,000 commercial and residential permits were issued through the building division.

The success of this project rested solely on the ability of department and division staff to work together. Once the concern was identified (loss of staff time due to a notably number of public inquiries), staff from both the Department of Community Development and the Department of Engineering, which includes the divisions of Planning, Zoning, Building, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and Environmental Services met to brainstorm a solution that ultimately resulted in the creation of the Development Tracker.

Each division had an incentive to innovate, and each division had a role in its success. The Division of Planning processed rezoning applications and would have to update rezoning data in the Development Tracker. The Division of Zoning processed special use permit (SUP) applications and would have to update SUP data in the Development Tracker. Likewise, the Department of Engineering managed the site plan review process, and the Divisions of Building and Environmental Services would have to update data pertaining to inspections and building permits. All of this information would need to be updated regularly to ensure accuracy and consistency to the public.

During the innovation stage, many decisions had to be made. For example, how long should the data stay current on the application; how often should it be updated; what data should be included to keep the application user-friendly while also enticing members of the public who want to know more to contact staff; how could transportation projects and applications also be tracked? Everyone on the innovation team contributed. The result was a simple application with minimal information that staff was confident could be updated regularly and accurately. Further detailed information not listed would be sourced by contacting the appropriate staff, allowing for additional education and positive contact with the public. It was recognized early on that this application had the potential to decrease the number of “curiosity calls” and increase the depth and quality of other calls.

The Division of GIS created the application and became the ongoing manager. Through some trial and error, the updating process was established and consisted of a shared spreadsheet that would be updated on Monday of each week by a representative in each division and by Friday of the same week updates would be incorporated into the application by the GIS Manager. This relatively simple maintenance process involved constant and consistent teamwork, commitment, and communication. Each representative must work with their division team to keep listed projects on the spreadsheet updated. To do this consistently and on time, representatives had to stay engaged and see the value of the project.

To include transportation projects, GIS staff worked with VDOT to embed their existing GIS transportation project layer within the Development Tracker, creating a “one-stop” location for a lot of information, and a consistent mode of updating transportation information.

The implementation stage of the Development Tracker was just as crucial as

identifying the problem, creating a solution, and establishing a process for maintaining the solution. First, the Development Tracker link was shared with staff within the contributing departments. Staff was instructed to bookmark the link and share with all those who inquired about land-use decisions, building projects, or other related subjects. Secondly, the link was emailed to a contact list of area developers, contractors, engineers, and builders. Third, a press release was sent to area media contacts. Fourth, the link was shared with all County employees. Lastly, the link was placed within department presentations that would be given over the next year to community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Realtor Association, Shenandoah Valley Builders Association, Virginia Building Association, etc.

Throughout this process, a strong team was created and barriers to collaboration established over years of divisions operating independently of one another were broken. This project not only fulfilled a community need and better utilized existing GIS technology, but it also laid the foundation for an increase of team projects, collaboration, and innovation. Staff members were engaged and proud of their work. The team ownership established during the creation and implementation of the application has greatly contributed to a high degree of data accuracy. Staff members are still excited about the application and share it regularly - the best form of advertising!

A surprising result of the Development Tracker that was not considered at the time of implementation was how helpful it would be in the training of new staff members. This tracker has become vital in teaching the “big picture” and the complex, multiple-stage development process to new teammates representing a diverse range of professional backgrounds. It has also been used regularly by staff to demonstrate the land use concepts and area designations within the County’s Comprehensive Plan and Stone Spring Urban Development Area Plan.

Members of staff use the Development Tracker weekly, if not daily, to answer questions, educate the team and the public, and report to County Administration.

Overall, the Development Tracker uses technology to better serve the community. Many design and building professionals use it regularly to bid for jobs, collaborate with neighbors, and assist in reporting. Those who use it have a better understanding of the County's most valued resource - land - and become more informed citizens. Collectively, staff is proud of their work and this pride has noticeably contributed to a positive workplace culture.

## Executive Summary

To better serve the public, Rockingham County launched a new resource to track development activity occurring throughout the County. The [Development Tracker](#) application tracks rezoning and special use permit requests under review and approved, site plans under review and approved, building permits under review, projects under construction, and recently completed building projects. The application is user-friendly and easy to navigate, providing the public with a clear vision of the County's development pipeline.

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“The Development Tracker helps to enhance our efforts to give the public more opportunity to be informed about land use matters coming before the Rockingham County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors” - County Administrator Stephen King.

The Development Tracker is located on the home page of Rockingham County's website ([www.rockinghamcountyva.gov](http://www.rockinghamcountyva.gov)). Information is updated weekly. For development questions beyond the scope of the Development Tracker, please contact the Rockingham County Department of Community Development at 540-564-3030.