2021–2022 Preservation Trust Fund
Public Access Grant Application

Applicant Information
Organization
Town of Bridgewater, Virginia
Contact person
Alexander M. Wilmer, Assistant Town Manager
Phone number
(540) 908-4212
Email address
amwilmer@bridgewater.town
Mailing address
201 Green Street, Post Office Box 72, Bridgewater, Virginia 22812

Type of applicant/partner organization
- Individual
- Non-profit*
- Local*
- State
- Regional
- Tribal
- VOF
- Other

*If you are a registered non-profit, provide documentation that you are registered and in good standing with the State Corporation Commission. The URL of the organization's SCC Business Entity Details page will suffice: https://cis.scc.virginia.gov/EntitySearch/Index

To qualify for a PTF Public Access grant, the open-space land must be protected through a property interest conveyed to a locality or VOF. For more information on the appropriate property interest, please refer to the Application Guide. Select the type of project the application is for:

- ☑ A locality acquiring a property interest under the Open Space Land Act.
- ☐ Person/organization conveying to VOF a property interest under the Open Space Land Act.

Partner (required if applicant is a person or organization):
Please provide documentation of partner support. If requesting VOF as holder of real-estate interest, please contact VOF at grants@vof.org before submitting the application. VOF will review request and determine if they are best partner.

Project Information
Project name
Riverwalk, Phase III

Project location (latitude/longitude required,* other location info such as street address or tax parcel ID optional)
Latitude 38°22'46.9"N
Longitude 78°58'43.0"W

GIS shapefile of property available?
- Yes
- ☑ No

Total acres to be protected
3.25 acres

Grant funding request (min. request $10,000; past grants have averaged $100,000)
$55,000

Would you like to be considered for any other VOF grant program if eligible?
- ☑ Yes
- ☐ No

*See application guide for directions on using Google Maps or contact grants@vof.org to ask for help getting lat/long coordinates.
This application requests funding for the purchase of land and right-of-way for the construction of Phase III of the Town’s Riverwalk project. Riverwalk is a shared-use path along the edge of the North River that will eventually span over two miles and create an east-west pedestrian and bicycle connector across the Town. Two phases have been funded already, and with this grant we’d begin work immediately on Phase III.

### Public Access Characteristics

#### Calendar
- ✔️ The project site will be open to the public daily (excluding nights/holidays).
- [ ] The project site will be open to the public at least 75% of the year.
- [ ] The project site will be open to the public 50-75% of the year.
- [ ] The project site will be open to the public less than 50% of the year.

**Additional information:**

The completed sections of Riverwalk are open to the public daily, seven days a week. Phase III will follow the same schedule for being open to the public.

#### Area
- ✔️ 100% of the project site will be open to the public.
- [ ] At least 75% of the project site will be open to the public.
- [ ] At least 50% of the project site will be open to the public.

**Additional information:**

The entire project site will be open to the public.

#### Accessibility (select all that apply)
- ✔️ The project site is accessible by foot, bike, scooter, etc. (connected to sidewalk or an existing public park).
- ✔️ The project site is accessible by public transportation.
- ✔️ The project site has public parking.

**Additional information:**

Riverwalk Phase III will be fully accessible by foot, bike, and scooter as it will connect to the existing Phase I of Riverwalk. The current path is, and the new path will be, fully ADA-accessible. The project is within walking distance of a bus stop. Phase III also connects to two existing public parking lots at Phase I of Riverwalk.
Plan Alignment

Indicate which of the following plan goals the project supports (select all that apply)

- Local comprehensive plan or master plan  
  Date of plan: 2019 Comp. Plan  
  Page #: 14-15

Copy and paste relevant plan excerpt below, or provide a URL if you have one:

Our Town Comprehensive Plan, updated in 2019, addresses the need to add additional sidewalks and bike lanes to existing neighborhoods. It also specifically lists an objective of installing a "multi-use path along North River from Sandy Bottom to Wildwood Park." (Bridgewater Comprehensive Plan, 2019, p. 15)

- Regional plan  
  Date of plan: Plan Pending  
  Page #: 

Copy and paste relevant plan excerpt below, or provide a URL if you have one:

We further hope to outline Riverwalk through the Harrisonburg-Rockingham MPO Bike-Ped Plan, which is still under development. We recently shared our Riverwalk master plan with the MPO and our regional Commonwealth Transportation Board member, and anticipate Riverwalk being one of several regional trails in the Shenandoah Valley.

- Virginia Outdoors Plan  
  Date of plan: 2018 Va Outdoors Plan  
  Page #: Chapter 8

Copy and paste relevant plan excerpt below, or provide a URL if you have one:

Chapter 8 of the 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP) outlines the importance of recreational trail opportunities for Virginians. The VOP further explains the strong economic impact of trails across Virginia, and we have already begun to see the benefits with the addition of Riverwalk. We have noticed more residents visiting Bridgewater because of Riverwalk, particularly as many indoor activities have been curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Use the space below to briefly describe any other plans that support this project, including relevant excerpts:

Questionnaire & Supplemental Material

For questions 1–18, please limit responses to the spaces provided. Up to 20 pages of supplemental material, 5 digital photos, and/or 5 minutes of digital video/audio may be submitted to support the project proposal. The purpose of the additional material should be to inform VOF about the unique qualities of the project and the community benefitting from the project. Please do not submit full versions of local, regional or statewide plans, organizational reports or tax documents. Anything, beyond 20 pages will not be considered. See application guide for additional information and examples of support material.

Supplemental material included?  Yes  No

Questionnaire begins on the next page
Project Description

1. Describe the property, including the existing conditions (size and composition of property, natural resource values, recreational, scenic, and cultural resources, and/or significant landscape features).

The project site for the Riverwalk Phase III path is approximately 1,000 feet in length. It will require the acquisition of four easements and the purchase of one parcel of land. Four of the easements are located on East Riverside Drive, spanning about 375 feet. This will be for the installation of a sidewalk along East Riverside Drive, as no sidewalk currently exists on the south side of the street. The Town also needs to acquire a parcel of real estate to create another 625 feet of shared-use path. This parcel is 3.112 acres in size and has an assessed value of $9,300. The lot is undeveloped, part open space and part wooded land, which also includes a small island on the North River. Purchasing the lot would protect the land along the river in its natural, wooded state. We would preserve the lot as it is, perhaps creating a scenic overlook on and around the island in a future grant. The lot is a beautiful landscape feature that would be an attractive addition to the Riverwalk path. Its acquisition would protect and create a recreational and scenic feature for the Town.

2. Describe the planned method of land protection for this project (i.e., how the PTF requirement for a conveyance of real estate interest to VOF or a locality will be met)

The Town will purchase a 3.112 acre parcel of land that will be used for the Riverwalk path and additional land which will be preserved as open, public park space. The land will be conveyed to the Town by deed, with the purchase price paid through this grant. The Town will also purchase four easements between this 3.112 acre parcel and Edgebriar Park, which is already owned by the Town. Those easements will be appraised, with the purchase price paid through the proceeds of this grant.

3. List the proposed goals and objectives of the project.

The goal of this public access grant is to allow us to purchase and preserve green space while allowing us to expand our Riverwalk walking and bicycle path further east across Town. There are several objectives to the Riverwalk project. One is to create a safe, accessible walking and bicycle path between Wildwood Park on the west side of Bridgewater and Sandy Bottom Park on the east side of Bridgewater. This distance spans approximately two miles. With Riverwalk we hope more people will use it to travel across Town, reducing the need to drive a vehicle. A further benefit is to encourage people to walk or bike, which encourages better health of our residents. Another benefit of the Riverwalk path is to serve populations that may not have a vehicle and are reliant either on public transportation or walking to reach their destination.
4. Is this project part of a larger movement (e.g. Have other projects of a similar nature happened near this one? Is this one of many that are ongoing in this area?)

Yes, this would be Phase III of the Town's Riverwalk project. Phase I installed a 1,000 foot path connecting four of our parks along the North River. Phase II will continue the project westward through another park and connecting another neighborhood. Phase III would extend the path another 1,000 feet to the east. The master plan will create a Riverwalk multi-use path connecting Wildwood park on the west side of Bridgewater with Sandy Bottom Park on the east side, with a total length of about two miles. A growing number of residents and visitors enjoy walking and biking around Bridgewater for recreation. Others rely on sidewalks and shared-use paths to get to work, pickup groceries, or visit Bridgewater businesses. Phase I has been heavily used for recreation and getting around Town, so we anticipate future phases being used even more as Riverwalk connects more neighborhoods.

5. How will this area be managed in the future?

The Town will maintain this portion of Riverwalk, along with all other current and future portions of Riverwalk. The Town Public Works Department will keep the path clear, handle mowing and landscaping of the area around Phase III.

Community Description

6. Describe the community being served by this project. Describe the importance of this project to the community and address how this project will better serve the community.

Riverwalk (this phase and all current and future phases) serve three different subsets of the Bridgewater community. One, it serves residents looking for recreational activities. Phase I of Riverwalk connects four different town parks, including the Town’s recreational park. Phase III extends the use of recreational use, connecting two additional neighborhoods to create a longer walking path.

Second, Riverwalk helps individuals who have limited access to transportation. By creating a path to walk across Town, Riverwalk helps individuals gain access to Main Street, which already has sidewalks throughout the rest of its span through Bridgewater. Phase III further builds on this public access network. The addition of Riverwalk Phase III would better serve the residents in this neighborhood. The average home prices of the properties in this corridor ($106,380) rank in the bottom quarter of property values in the Town. While recent income levels were not available at the time of this application, household income levels in this neighborhood are likely in the bottom third of Bridgewater residents based on the average home prices noted above along with the higher percentage of apartments and rental properties in this neighborhood. We have spoken to some residents who live here who do not have vehicles, so they rely upon walking or public transportation to get around. Installing the sidewalks and shared-use paths in this neighborhood will improve connectivity and likely boost property values in this neighborhood.

Finally, Riverwalk is tourist attraction, as people visit the Town to walk the path. As the path gets longer, it further connects portions of Town and lends itself better to visits by tourists.
7. Describe how the community has been involved in the development of this proposal and/or will be involved in the implementation of this project. Describe how community support is shown for this project.

The Bridgewater community has been active in the development of the Riverwalk project. Public information meetings were held for Phase I (2016) and Phase II (2018), and another meeting will be held for Phase III in September 2021. Public support for Riverwalk has been very strong, as members of the community and visitors have actively used Phase I since its completion in January 2021. Also, there have been dozens of residents who have called or emailed the Town approving of Phase I and are in support of adding additional phases to the Riverwalk project.

Phase I was dedicated in the memory of the late Roscoe Burgess, the first African-American resident to serve on the Bridgewater Town Council. Its dedication in May 2021 was well attended and further publicized the park, and the popularity of Riverwalk has continued to grow. Attached to this application are letters of support for Riverwalk, which reflects the growing support for additional walking and bicycle paths in Bridgewater.

8. How does this project address a specific need in the community or provide a unique service to the community?

It addresses several specific needs in the Bridgewater community. One, there is a demand for recreational access to parks and neighborhoods. Riverwalk addresses this, as the long-term plan will be to connect the most western and eastern parts of Bridgewater through the roughly two mile Riverwalk path. There is a strong demand for walking and bike paths, so Riverwalk Phase III builds upon the existing network and connects additional neighborhoods to the path. Second, there is a need for pedestrian and bicycle access as a means of transportation for residents to work and accessing businesses. By creating a safe, ADA accessible path, we are giving residents better access to Main Street, which is the primary location of most of the Town's businesses along with three bus stops of our regional bus network. Some residents in the Riverwalk Phase III neighborhood do not own vehicles, so improving pedestrian access to Main Street is of great importance and value to those residents. Finally, the Town receives many tourists who visit the Town, and Riverwalk is an attraction that is visited by many outside of the Town. Lengthening Riverwalk will make it even more so a tourist destination as visitors walk the path and enjoy the natural beauty of the North River.

9. List any partners or partnerships related to this project. These do not have to be groups that are financially invested in the project, just those that participate or help with any aspect of the project. Please briefly describe their involvement.

If this grant is received, we will begin work immediately, with the Town funding the costs of installing the path along Phase III. Receiving this grant will allow us to move forward with additional phases of Riverwalk, which we will likely partner with VDOT for additional funding. We have already received a grant from VDOT which was used for constructing Riverwalk, Phase I, and we just received approval from VDOT in Fall 2020 for funding Phase II of Riverwalk. We are in the process of applying for additional funds for Phase III of Riverwalk through a Transportation Alternatives grant that is due in October 2021.

We have used volunteers in the past to help with some landscaping at some of our parks. For example, we have worked with Bridgewater College student groups that have come to help us with weeding and planting flowers. We will most likely continue to work with groups like Bridgewater College at Riverwalk.
10. Provide any other information about this project that makes it unique/special. If the area has special significance to the community, please describe it here.

The North River is one of the most recognizable natural landmarks around Bridgewater. The first bridge over the North River was built in 1820, hence our town’s name “Bridgewater.” Having a shared-use path along the river encourages people to enjoy the natural beauty of the North River and our parks. Riverwalk also functions to allow people to safely walk from one side of town to the other without having to walk across the heavily-traveled Main Street. As we build onto Riverwalk, we believe it will become an attraction in of itself and encourage visitors to check out all of our 13 parks, movie theater, ice skating rink, restaurants and businesses that call Bridgewater home.

Schedule

11. Describe the timeline/plan of work for this project. Include who is expected to do the work and when. Work that has already been completed toward the project should be mentioned here.

If the PTF grant is received, the Town will purchase the real estate and easements needed for Riverwalk, Phase III immediately. We will work with our Town attorney to handle the acquisition of real estate and easements along the Riverwalk, Phase III path. Once the land is purchased and easements acquired, the Town will begin construction of Phase III. The Town would likely perform some of the work ourselves, although we would probably hire a subcontractor for installing the pavers used for the path. We would anticipate completing Phase III within 9 months of receiving this grant. No work has been completed at this point on Phase III of Riverwalk.

Budget

12. Total cost of the project: $ 355,000

13. Total amount of funding in hand (other grants awarded, donations, in-kind services). Provide hours, rates, and values where possible.

Current funding in-hand: $0
14. Amount requested from PTF: $55,000

15: Amount requested from other funding sources: $300,000

16. Describe how funds will be budgeted for this project. If the scope of the project is larger than the PTF-PA request, include any additional funding from partners, grants, volunteer hours, or materials or services donated. Note which values are requested versus secured. Provide hours, rates, and values where possible.

The budget for the project includes the purchase of real estate and easements, attorney's fees, and the installation of the Phase III path. The path will consist of a concrete sidewalk or a permeable paver path. The Town will use this grant to fund the purchase of real estate and easements, which will total about $55,000. The remaining costs of the project will be for the installation of the sidewalk and paths. The Town is applying for a VDOT Transportation Alternatives grant for $300,000 for engineering costs and construction of the path. Volunteers will be used to help with landscaping along the Riverwalk path.

17. Explain if the grant funding is a key component to getting the project started or completed.

This PTF grant would be a key component to getting Phase III of Riverwalk started. Receiving this grant would allow us to immediately purchase the land and easements necessary to begin the project. With those funds secured and easements in hand, we will be able to begin building the Phase III path immediately. If this PTF grant is not funded, we will not begin Phase III until further funding is secured.

Starting Phase III with this grant will allow us to begin work now on additional phases of Riverwalk.

18. Address how reduced funding would impact the scope of the project. Please address viability and scope at 75% and 50% of the requested funding.

Riverwalk, Phase III would still be viable with 50% or 75% grant funding. We would need to budget for this cost difference, but could adjust our FY2022 budget for those additional costs. While a 100% grant for the funds requested in this application would be optimal, we would be very appreciative of any funding that could be used to begin this project. Phase III of Riverwalk will not begin until we receive some type of grant funding, either through this grant or some other grant application.
Conservation Grant Program Manager  
Virginia Outdoors Foundation  
900 Natural Resources Drive, Suite 800  
Charlottesville, VA 22903  

Re: Virginia Outdoors Foundation Public Access Grant Application for Riverwalk  

On behalf of the Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition (SVBC), I am writing to enthusiastically support the Town of Bridgewater’s Virginia Outdoors Foundation Public Access Grant Application to acquire land, right-of-way acquisition, and engineering design for the construction of Phase III of the Town’s Riverwalk Project. Once completed, the Riverwalk project will enable community members to access the North River as well as connect two of the Town’s major parks with a safe and accessible corridor for walking and biking.

The Town of Bridgewater continues to execute projects to improve bicycling and walking infrastructure leading to a safer and more comfortable experience whether on bike or foot. This project will further increase the comfort and safety of people walking and biking. By completing phase 1 of the Riverwalk and securing funding for phase 2, Bridgewater has demonstrated its commitment to building a better community centered on access to the outdoors coupled with the freedom to safely walk or bike as part of daily life.

As the former Safe Routes to School Coordinator for Rockingham County Public Schools, I know firsthand the importance the Town of Bridgewater and the community place on access to the outdoors and nature. By providing dedicated space for residents and visitors to enjoy the outdoor assets of the community, the Town of Bridgewater continues to work towards the community’s vision for accessible and dedicated places to walk and bike.

I am confident in the utility and need for this Riverwalk project. We know it will significantly increase access to the North River and create a crucial connection between Wildwood and Sandy Bottom Parks. Our Shenandoah Valley communities strive for more greenway type connections that empower residents and visitors to experience nature and travel without a car. The Bridgewater Riverwalk is an example of a town taking initiative to achieve this vision. The Coalition fully supports this proposal, and hope you will, as well. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kyle Lawrence  
Executive Director Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition Board of Directors  
Kyle@SVBCoalition.org  
(571) 277-8121
August 18, 2021

Virginia Outdoors Foundation  
Preservation Trust Fund Public Access Grant  
600 East Main Street, 4th Floor  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Virginia Outdoors Foundation Administrator,

I am writing to support Bridgewater’s grant application to fund land, right-of-way acquisition and engineering design for the construction of Phase III of the Town's Riverwalk project. I have been a resident of Bridgewater since 1996 and am an active and frequent user of the town’s park system. I am thrilled with the addition of the Phase I of the Riverwalk. The walkway along the North River is the talk of our region and is enjoyed by many people. To complete the full length of the Riverwalk from Wildwood Park to Sandy Bottom Park would create a two-mile shared use path. Phase III is necessary for this completion. The Riverwalk has value for the following reasons:

- It provides recreational and wellness opportunities to Bridgewater residents and others from the region. Because of its beauty and location, Riverwalk Phase I is already heavily used by many people from Bridgewater and the surrounding cities and counties. Phase II and III would only enhance the benefit and usage.
- It builds a sense of community by bringing people of different walks of life together along the Riverwalk.
- It provides a safe route that links several of Bridgewater’s most popular parks.
- It increases the home values of Bridgewater residents by improving the quality-of-life offerings of Bridgewater.
- It is an economic engine attracting people to Bridgewater where they spend money on food and supplies for their activities.

I hope you will approve Bridgewater’s grant proposal for this project. It would increase the enjoyment of the current the Riverwalk by contributing to expanding its length, usage and impact on the town and region.

Sincerely,

Richard Harris
Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing a letter in support of Phase 3 of the Town of Bridgewater’s ongoing River Walk project. Yesterday, a friend and I ate lunch at a picnic table at Edgebrier Park in Bridgewater. The recently completed Phase 1 of the River Walk passes through Edgebrier and continues on to Bridgeview Park. Already the well-made, brick pathway was active with walkers and bike riders. Youngsters with their parents and several adult cyclists passed on the pathway, persons of all ages. They came from both directions, heading up or downstream. Clearly, Phase 1 is a complete success and will only become more popular as Phases 2 and 3 extend the River Walk east and west.

Phase 3 will be the longest pathway/connector. Walkers, bikers, joggers, runners, birdwatchers, river lovers and others—the entire community really—will enjoy our River Walk to the max!

Thank you for your support of this most valuable town project, a benefit to our entire area.

Sincerely,

Robert Bersson
The intersections of Old River Road and North River Road with North Main Street present problems for motorists. Tractor trailers entering onto North Main Street must block traffic both directions in order to make turning movements north and south. Traffic attempting to enter Main Street during peak use hours is often backed up for significant amounts of time. The location of several industrial complexes in this area suggests traffic conflicts can be expected to continue or increase in severity.

Many roadways within the Town were constructed to rural-road standards prior to annexation by Bridgewater. The older roadways lack curb and gutter and sidewalks, and some are built to narrower widths than urban road standards. Most Town roadways have good pavement conditions. A plan establishing bike lanes throughout town has been approved by the Town Council. The Town is currently responsible for maintaining approximately 35.91 lane miles of secondary and 12.60 lane miles of primary highways.

Amtrak service is available in Staunton, approximately twenty-five minutes south of town. Railway freight services are available in Harrisonburg. Commercial passenger air services are available at the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport in Weyers Cave, approximately fifteen minutes southeast of Bridgewater.

**Goal: Promote a balanced, safe, and efficient transportation system serving the Town.**

**Objective: Maintain and upgrade the roadway system as needed to accommodate both vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic.**

- Identify needed improvements to existing roadway widths and construction of sidewalks. Priorities for improvements should be established and coordinated with long-range highway improvement plans and Town capital improvement projects.

- Redesign selected intersections to promote safe and efficient traffic flow, particularly in the vicinity of North River Road and Mount Crawford Avenue.

**Objective: Promote safer and more efficient truck access to industrial sites.**

- Town officials, local industry representatives, VDOT officials, and local residents should work together to obtain the construction of a truck road between North Main Street (Route 42) and Dinkel Avenue (Route 257).

- VDOT officials should assist in the study of key North Main Street intersections to determine the need for roadway widening, signalization, or other improvements.
• The Town should work with Perdue and Marshalls to close Quality Street and reroute truck traffic to Old River Road. A traffic signal and appropriate turning lanes should be installed at this intersection to allow easy truck access to and from the industrial sites.

• VDOT officials should assist in the study of key North Main Street intersections to determine the need for roadway widening, signalization, or other improvements.

Objective: Ensure that new development includes roadways designed to serve anticipated traffic volumes and pedestrian needs.

• Enforce adopted design standards for roadway widths, entrances, and construction specifications.

• Develop and implement strategies ensuring that new developments must integrate with the townwide transportation system. For example, new developments should connect to one another and not simply shunt all traffic to Main Street or Dinkel Avenue.

Objective: Encourage alternatives to vehicular use.

• Install bicycle lanes and bicycle or walking trails in targeted areas.

• Install a multi-use path along North River from Sandy Bottom to Wildwood Park.

• Install safe, modern crosswalks where needed on busy streets. Take other such measures as necessary to make Main Street more walkable.

• Work with VDOT and Harrisonburg to establish bike trails between Bridgewater and Harrisonburg.
Images above of the 3.112 acre parcel that would be purchased with the Virginia Outdoors Grant. Forested land will be preserved, with the addition of a walking path to connect to Riverwalk.
Another photo above of the 3.112 acre parcel that would be purchased with the Virginia Outdoors Grant. Parcel also includes land on a small island that would be preserved as natural space, possibly connected by a pedestrian bridge in a future grant.

A photo of Phase I of Riverwalk. A similar path made of permeable pavers would be constructed on the 3.112 acre parcel if acquired by the Virginia Outdoors Grant. (Path would be constructed through funding by a VDOT Transportation Alternatives Grant which we’re applying for in October 2021.)
Riverwalk Project - Town of Bridgewater, Virginia

RIVERWALK, PHASE I
(Completed January 2021)

RIVERWALK, PHASE II
(Funded by VDOT, est. 2023)

RIVERWALK, PHASE III
(Va Outdoors Grant)

Wildwood Park
Sandy Bottom Park
Bridgewater College
Green outlined parcel represents Edgebriar Park, the terminus of Riverwalk, Phase I.

Red outlined parcels represent property owners we will purchase easements from through the Virginia Outdoors Grant to connect Phase I of Riverwalk as part of Phase III.

Purple outlined parcels represents the 3.112 acre parcel the Town will purchase through the Virginia Outdoors Grant. Riverwalk Phase III will run across the red-outlined parcels across the purple outlined parcel. Path starts at the orange star and ends at the green star. A future grant may fund a path to connect a walking trail to the island.