

2017 VML Innovation Award

Economic Development Winner: Roanoke County

In 2013, Roanoke County acquired the property of a failed living history museum adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway. The county re-opened [Explore Park](#) as a passive recreation facility but saw greater opportunity. After significant community outreach, Roanoke County developed a master plan to spur economic development through adventure- and recreation-based tourism on the property. In addition to a business plan and an environmental study, the plan has maps, renderings, and conceptual placements of desired attractions. A phasing report depicts a timeline for planning, design, and construction of amenities within the park over the next 20 years. These efforts have already yielded positive returns for Roanoke County. A request for proposals to develop the park generated substantial interest from local and national businesses.