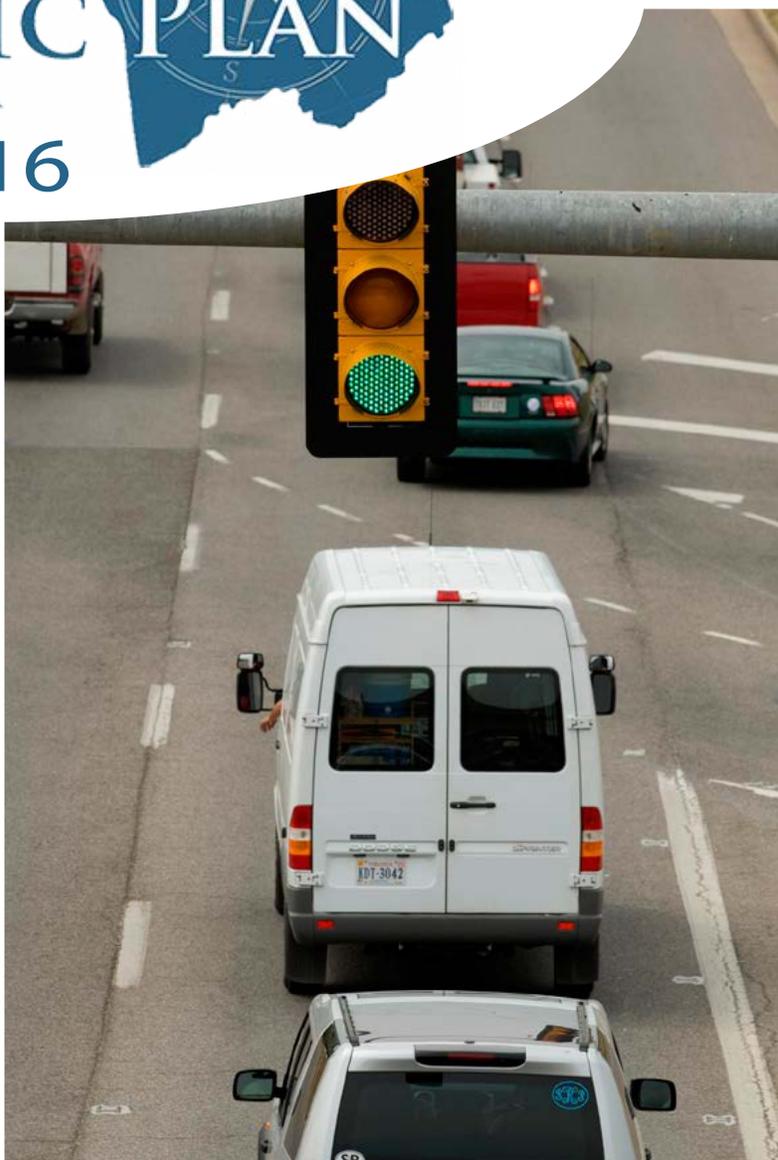


COMMUNITY
STRATEGIC
ROANOKE COUNTY, VIRGINIA
2016



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Community Strategic Plan

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Introduction

In September 2015, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors met to discuss the County's first-ever Community Strategic Plan. The Board agreed that a primary objective for the process would be gathering input from the community that would help shape the strategic direction of Roanoke County for the next five years. This Community Strategic Plan is the culmination of the community-based planning process that resulted from that initial discussion.

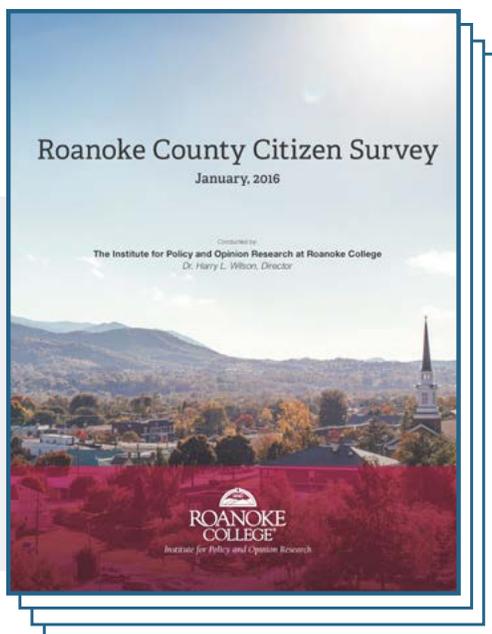
Engaging the Community

Understanding the needs of the community is vital to a community strategic planning process and civic engagement is an essential element to the plan's success. Community input was embraced throughout the process and various methods were utilized to gain the public's input including:

- [Citizen Telephone Survey](#);
- [Focus Group Public Meetings](#);
- 30-day Comment Period on the Draft Plan;
- [Community Meetings](#); and
- [Public Hearing](#).

In addition to engaging the community, keeping the public informed about the strategic planning process over several months was also a priority. Public outreach about the plan's progress included:

- Press releases and social media outreach;
- On-air television Interviews;
- Public service announcements;
- Staff presentations to civic, business, and County organizations;
- E-Newsletters and email updates; and
- A dedicated [Community Strategic Plan website](#).



Civic Engagement By The Numbers

- 604 telephone survey responses
- 276 focus group participants
- 18 focus group meetings held over nine weeks

What is a Strategic Plan?

As this is Roanoke County's first-ever Community Strategic Plan, it is important to clearly define what the plan is and how it will be used. A Community Strategic Plan is much more than a document. Rather, **it is a systematic process of engaging community leaders and citizens to envision a desired future for the community and translating this vision into broadly defined goals and measurable objectives to achieve those goals.**

Important concepts in this definition are the following:

"Engaging community leaders and citizens"

Throughout the strategic planning process, the County utilized a variety of methods to engage community leaders and citizens to help shape the future direction of the County.

"Envision a desired future"

As part of the strategic planning process, the following Vision Statement was developed in January 2016:

Vision Statement

Roanoke County is a vibrant, innovative, and scenic community that values its citizens, heritage, and quality of life.

The Vision Statement recognizes that a successful future for Roanoke County depends on:

- facilitating positive change;
- recognizing and promoting our great natural beauty, outdoor-oriented lifestyle, and amenities;
- including people from all segments of the community;
- cherishing the traditional values of our community; and
- recognizing and promoting the overall excellent quality of life enjoyed by citizens.

"Broadly defined goals and measurable objectives to achieve them"

The broadly defined goals of the Community Strategic Plan are the result of the public input received, and have been developed into Strategic Initiatives found later in this document. Specific actions and performance measures used to gauge progress toward these initiatives will be included in future departmental business plans.

Relationship to Other Plans and Documents

The Community Strategic Plan will influence other County planning efforts. Its purpose is to provide guidance and consistency as policy makers and staff develop more specific plans, programs, and activities to serve the needs of the public. Some of the other plans that will be revised, developed and implemented are as follows:

Comprehensive Plan

The [Comprehensive Plan](#) is a blueprint for the future growth and development of the County. It provides direction and guidance, for both the public and private sectors, in making decisions about land development, public services, and resource protection. State law requires the County to review its Comprehensive Plan every five (5) years. Since 2005, the County has reviewed and updated the Comprehensive Plan by developing [Community Plans](#). These have included plans for Route 220, Route 221, Mount Pleasant, Hollins, Vinton, and Glenvar. While the Community Strategic Plan does not plan land use, it does provide overall guidance on how the community wants to develop in the future.

Annual Fiscal Plan and Capital Improvement Program

Every year the Board of Supervisors approves an annual budget for the upcoming fiscal year beginning July 1. The budget is the [Annual Fiscal Plan](#) and allocates county funds to departments, programs, and projects. Roanoke County's annual budget also contains a ten-year plan for capital projects known as the [Capital Improvement Program \(CIP\)](#). Although only the first year of the CIP has funds appropriated in the budget, it is the long-range plan for buildings and equipment with a lifespan of ten years or more and a cost of over \$100,000.

Organizational Strategic Plan

Roanoke County is in the process of creating an internal [Organizational Strategic Plan](#). The Organizational Strategic Plan will identify strategies to be used by departments and employees to align the County's organization with the initiatives found within this Plan. To realize the vision of the Community Strategic Plan, it is vital to have an efficient organization dedicated to providing the services desired by our citizens.

Relationship to Other Plans and Documents

Departmental Business Plans

As part of the annual budget process and development of the [Annual Fiscal Plan](#), County departments will use the initiatives from the Community Strategic Plan to plan major activities in upcoming fiscal years. Performance measurements developed in these departmental plans will help measure Roanoke County's progress in achieving the community's vision and desires reflected in the Community Strategic Plan.



Strategic Planning Process

First Retreat, September 2015

On September 15, 2015, the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator, and senior staff met to discuss the creation of a Community Strategic Plan. It was agreed at that time to move forward with the community strategic planning process.

Telephone Survey, October–December 2015

Roanoke College’s Institute for Policy and Opinion Research conducted a [statistically valid telephone survey](#) in the fall of 2015. The purpose of the survey was to determine what citizens believed were the major strategic issues facing the County along with rating the importance and quality of County services. Six hundred and four citizens responded to the telephone survey.

The survey data showed that:

- improving economic development, ensuring a high-quality education system, and strong public safety services were the top citizen concerns;
- over 90 percent believed the overall quality of life was good or excellent in Roanoke County;
- the County should maintain its high quality of life by concentrating on economic development, education, and promoting the County’s outdoor amenities;
- improvements to the transportation system are needed; and
- most County services were rated high in importance and quality, with public safety and education services rated very high.

Second Retreat, January 2016

In January of 2016 the Board of Supervisors held a second retreat to review the telephone survey data and discuss the values reflected in the results. The Board developed the Vision Statement for the plan and established the six focus areas for community engagement at this retreat.



Strategic Planning Process

Focus Group Meetings, February–April 2016

Six community-based [focus groups](#) were established to receive public input for the Community Strategic Plan, one for each of the six focus areas established at the January 2016 retreat.

Each focus group was hosted by one or more Board members or the Superintendent of Schools, with two senior staff members serving as lead facilitators for each group. County staff from several departments served as small-group facilitators or recorders for each focus group meeting.

Focus groups met three times from February 29 through April 7 to determine strategic topics, goals, and objectives for each focus area. The focus groups worked in small breakout sessions and engaged in active discussions regarding their respective focus areas. Group consensus was reached on the most important topics, goals, and objectives for each group. A steering committee of several lead staff facilitators reviewed and consolidated the focus group information.

What emerged was a clear picture of common themes and overlapping priorities among the focus groups. These common themes were used to develop several broad Strategic Initiatives that will shape the direction of the community over the next five years. At the fourth combined focus group meetings, staff presented proposed Strategic Initiatives developed from each focus group's priorities and received public comment on these proposed initiatives.

Focus Group Areas



[Economic Development](#)



[Transportation](#)



[Quality of Life](#)



[Education](#)



[Community Health and Well-Being](#)



[Public Safety](#)

Strategic Planning Process

Community Meetings, June 2016

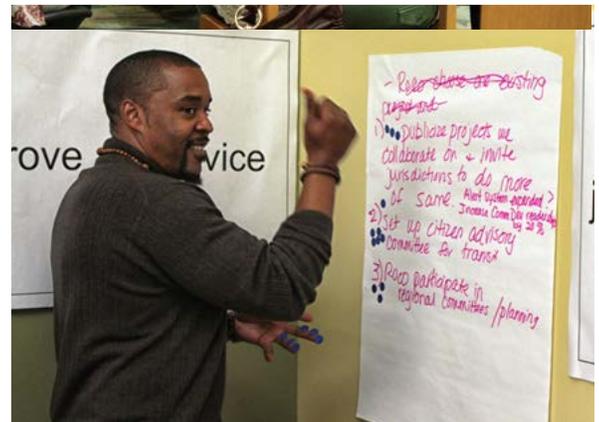
Two open house-style community meetings were held to receive additional comments on the proposed plan and initiatives. Comments were submitted at the meetings listed below, and on our website from June 3, 2016 through July 3, 2016.

The community meetings are scheduled for:

- Thursday, June 16
Vinton War Memorial
3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
- Monday, June 27
South County Library
3 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Work Session and Public Hearing, July-August 2016

A work session on the proposed Community Strategic Plan has been scheduled for July 19, 2016. A public hearing on the proposed Community Strategic plan has been set for August 9, 2016.



Strategic Initiatives

Throughout the strategic planning process, many citizens provided valuable input on the issues facing the County. This input was instrumental in helping to shape the future direction of the County and was used to develop several Strategic Initiatives that will guide the County over the next several years. These initiatives will be used to realize the County's Vision and measurable indicators will be developed to gauge progress toward these initiatives over time. The seven Strategic Initiatives are:

[CONNECT ROANOKE COUNTY TO THE WORLD](#)

[POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR
FUTURE ECONOMIC GROWTH](#)

[PROMOTE NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS](#)

[ENSURE CITIZEN SAFETY](#)

[BE A CARING AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY](#)

[PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING](#)

[KEEP ROANOKE COUNTY HEALTHY,
CLEAN, AND BEAUTIFUL](#)

Each Strategic Initiative is comprised of several major components. These major components will be the focus of their respective Strategic Initiative over the next five years. The major components for each Initiative are described on the following pages.



Connect Roanoke County to the World

Improve Communications and Data Technology in Both the Business Sector and in Residential Settings

To keep Roanoke County economically viable in the future, it is important to improve communications connectivity for both the business and residential communities. High tech businesses are faced with increased needs to move data efficiently, and people who work in these businesses demand wireless voice and data capabilities at home, even in rural areas. Businesses and residents in many areas of the County are currently under-served by the existing communications infrastructure. Improving broadband availability to the business community and improving wireless connectivity in residential areas will be pursued to ensure Roanoke County's economic future.

Support Improvements to the Regional Transportation Network

Improving the regional transportation network, including highways, air service, and commuter rail is a crucial component of connecting Roanoke County to the world. Although Roanoke County has little direct financial investment in the regional transportation network, the County will continue to participate in regional agencies such as the [Roanoke Valley Transportation Planning Organization](#) and the [Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport Commission](#) to improve these services. Roanoke County will also coordinate with local [Commonwealth Transportation Board](#) members and [Virginia Department of Transportation \(VDOT\)](#) staff regarding community priorities for future transportation projects. Roanoke County will work to create regional strategies that improve the transportation network that connects Roanoke County to the world.

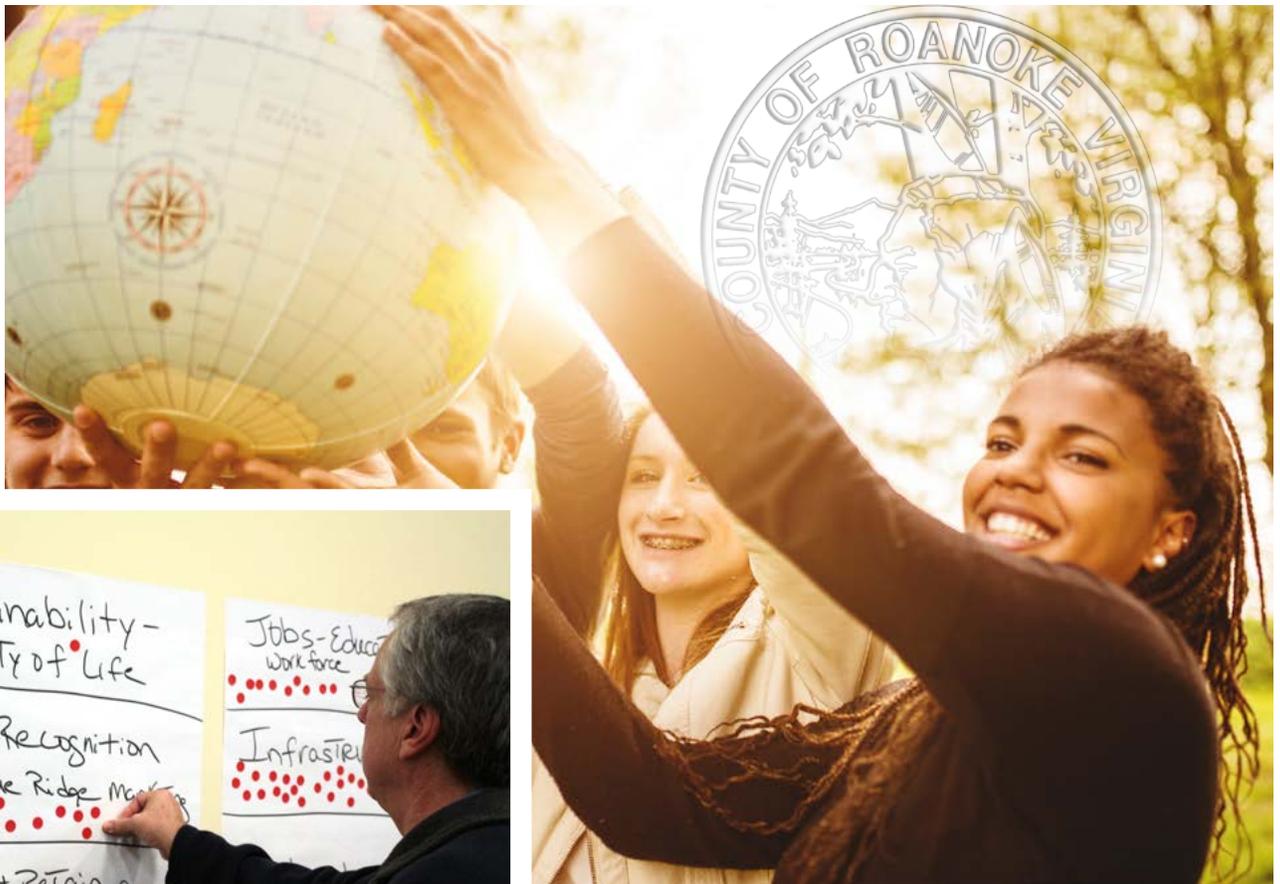


Public input from Economic Development, Transportation and Quality of Life focus groups was used to develop CONNECT ROANOKE COUNTY TO THE WORLD.

Connect Roanoke County to the World

Regional Cooperation and Marketing

The Roanoke Valley is gaining recognition for its excellent quality of life, outdoor amenities, and educational advantages. Several regional partners are branding and marketing these attributes to attract young professionals to the area. Roanoke County will work to complement regional brands that highlight the high quality of life, abundant outdoor amenities, low cost of living, and educational opportunities available in the region. Roanoke County will also proactively market the community with these factors in mind to encourage people to visit, relocate, and establish businesses within the County.



Position Roanoke County for Future Economic Growth

Infrastructure and Site Development

One of the key components of economic growth is having infrastructure in place for development. It is imperative to have appropriately zoned, graded commercial and industrial sites available that have access to water, sewer, high speed communications, and transportation options. Commercial and industrial sites will be developed both within Roanoke County and regionally, in collaboration with the Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority. Roanoke County will also work to prepare smaller parcels for development within the County as opportunities arise.

Business-Friendly Development Process

Also important for positioning Roanoke County for future economic growth is ensuring that the review and approval process for permitting development is fair, efficient, and easily navigable for all customers. While Roanoke County has an obligation to ensure safe and environmentally sound development, a balance must be achieved between regulation and a straightforward development approval process for both the business community and County citizens. Roanoke County will work to simplify the development process to promote a business-friendly environment.



Public input from Economic Development, Transportation, Quality of Life and Education focus groups was used to develop POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR FUTURE ECONOMIC GROWTH.

Position Roanoke County for Future Economic Growth

Workforce Development/ Technical Education

Economic growth can be encouraged by aligning educational resources with business needs. A wide array of technical education resources are available to Roanoke County businesses and citizens, including the [Burton Center for Arts and Technology](#), [Virginia Western Community College](#), the [Roanoke Higher Education Center](#), and nearby colleges and universities including [Virginia Tech](#), [Jefferson College of Health Sciences](#), [Roanoke College](#), and [Hollins University](#). Roanoke County will help connect these educational resources with the business community in order to train the workforce needed by existing and future employers.



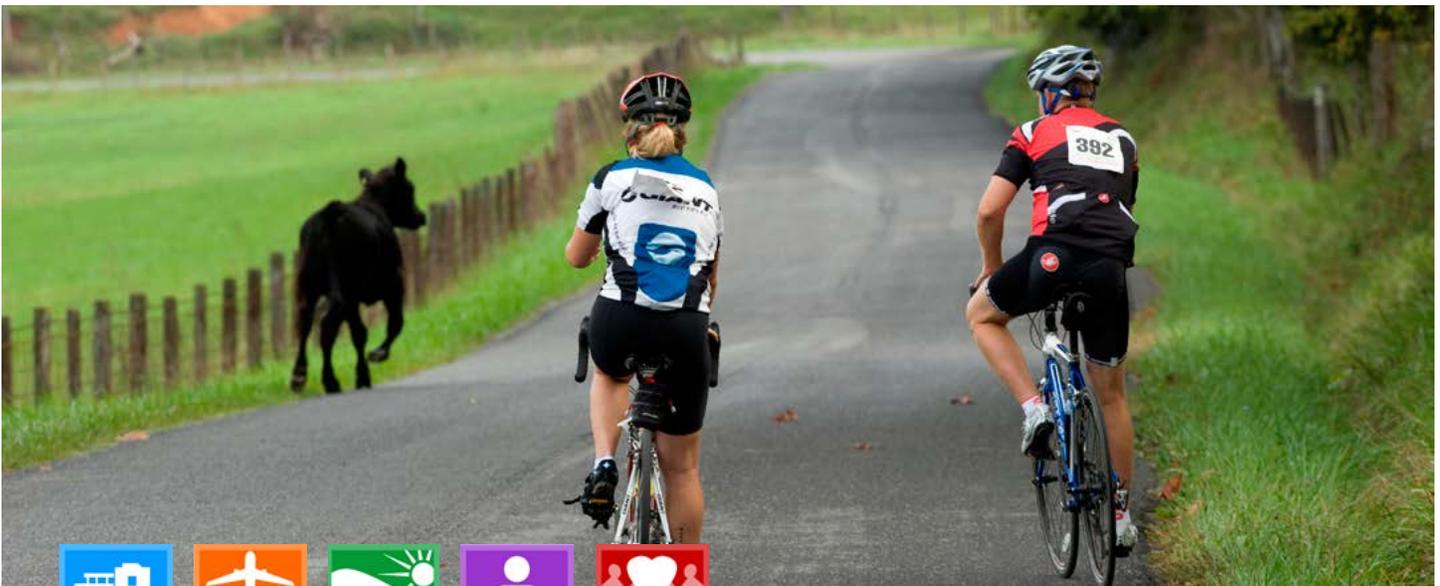
Promote Neighborhood Connections

Encourage a Multi-Modal Transportation Network

Roanoke County was primarily developed in the era of the automobile, but people today want a greater choice of transportation options. Local transportation networks will be planned to encourage different modes of transportation including bicycle, pedestrian, mass transit, and motor vehicles.

[Greenways](#) are a high priority for pedestrian and bicycle transit while expanded bus service and [CORTRAN services](#) are needed within the County.

Developing interconnecting and multi-modal local transportation options will help alleviate traffic issues and improve air quality throughout the community. Roanoke County will seek to develop multi-modal local transportation options by updating its development regulations, collaborating on transportation planning, and by leveraging funding opportunities to expand the local transportation network.



Public input from Economic Development, Transportation, Quality of Life, Education, and Community Health and Well-Being focus groups was used to develop PROMOTE NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS.

Promote Neighborhood Connections

Plan for Mixed-Use Development and Redevelopment Opportunities

Roanoke County has a very limited amount of land zoned for commercial and industrial uses, leaving redevelopment and building up, instead of out, as the best opportunities for new growth. Roanoke County will encourage and promote mixed-use development and redevelopment that ties residential and commercial uses together. Roanoke County staff has identified several areas for mixed-use development and redevelopment in the near future, and staff will create plans for each of these areas to enhance citizen usage and accessibility while expanding opportunities for business.



Ensure Citizen Safety

Public Safety Staffing

It is clear from public input that our citizens value the safety of their community. One area of concern was ensuring adequate staffing for Public Safety agencies, especially for [Fire and Rescue](#) and [Police](#). School safety was also emphasized as a concern in both the telephone survey and in focus group meetings. Roanoke County Public Safety agencies will develop multi-year staffing plans based on current needs and future trends. Any future staffing needs analysis will look not only at Roanoke County's personnel, but also how to best work regionally. Public safety issues often cross local borders and efficiencies can often be achieved through enhanced regional cooperation.

Facilities and Equipment

Roanoke County has several aging Fire and Rescue stations, which presents an opportunity to either renovate these stations or rebuild them in more efficient locations. Attention will also be given to deploying Police personnel effectively based on the Data Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety (DDACTS) program. The County will consider the feasibility of jointly staffing Police precincts with Fire and Rescue stations in core areas. Another area of concern is the age and effectiveness of the County's public safety equipment, especially for Fire and Rescue. A facility study will take into account what equipment is best suited to serve the community and provide a plan for its acquisition. Improvements to water availability for fire response were also discussed, including expanding dry hydrants and determining alternatives to serve rural areas of the County. Water distribution for fire services will be part of the public safety analysis of infrastructure, facilities and equipment.



Public input from Public Safety, Quality of Life, Education and Transportation focus groups was used to develop ENSURE CITIZEN SAFETY.

Ensure Citizen Safety

Citizen Engagement and Inclusion

As public safety is a partnership between the local government and its citizens, engaging and educating citizens of all ages is critical. County public safety agencies will consider how best to refine and possibly combine public safety citizen academies and improve public outreach to engage the community in keeping our neighborhoods, schools, and streets safe. Engaging citizens in public safety education helps prevent issues before they occur.



Be A Caring and Inclusive Community

Coordination of Services for Vulnerable Populations

Vulnerable populations are defined as the elderly, at-risk youth, non-English speaking residents, and citizens with mental illness or physical disabilities. While the community has a large network of services for vulnerable populations, these services tend to be fragmented across agencies. Roanoke County will help provide coordination and marketing of these available services to increase public awareness. Roanoke County will also coordinate the efforts of County agencies and local non-profits to identify service gaps and build partnerships to fulfill these needs for our vulnerable populations.

Accessibility of Services for All Populations

Accessibility of services is another issue that was identified as needing improvement. Improved transit and paratransit services to provide transportation across the valley is needed, along with expanded hours of availability. Improvements to available transit services in general were also identified as a significant need. Access to healthy recreational opportunities from all areas of the County is also a high priority for citizens. Roanoke County will work to improve the accessibility of services for all populations.

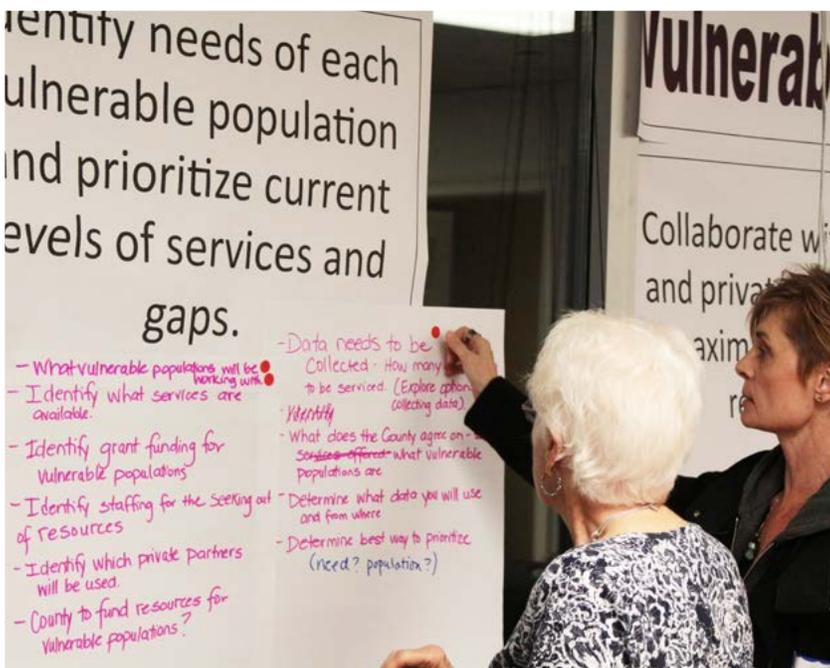


Public input from Community Health and Well-Being, Quality of Life and Transportation focus groups was used to develop BE A CARING AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY.

Be A Caring and Inclusive Community

Education Regarding Available Services

Many citizens are unaware of existing community resources that provide information about assistive services. Promotion of existing community resources, including the [2-1-1 system](#), was considered very important. Roanoke County will promote both the coordination of services for vulnerable populations and the accessibility of available services. This support will be achieved by marketing existing and new services through public information outlets.



Promote Lifelong Learning

“K to Gray” Continuum of Educational Resources

The concept of “K to Gray” education was discussed and supported throughout the planning process. Roanoke County has an excellent educational network of [local public schools](#) and nearby colleges and universities. Roanoke County will continue to encourage lifelong learning through these institutions as well as through the [Library](#) system and [Parks and Recreation](#) programs. In addition to workforce development and retraining for economic development purposes, Roanoke County will continue to support lifelong learning, art, and cultural educational opportunities. As education is a vital component of Roanoke County’s overall quality of life, support for “K to Gray” educational opportunities will reach beyond workforce development programs.

Educational Partnerships

Roanoke County will develop and strengthen its educational partnerships among the region’s educational institutions. Apprenticeships and job shadowing are ways to strengthen the ties between businesses and educational institutions. Workforce development is vital to economic development and alternative methods of training young people through practical opportunities in the workforce are recommended. Other partnerships, including collaboration with public safety agencies, will be developed over the next several years.



Public input from Education, Quality of Life and Economic Development focus groups was used to develop PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING.

Promote Lifelong Learning

Market Educational Resources

Employers looking to expand or relocate are interested in communities that have comprehensive and highly-rated educational systems. Roanoke County will market its excellent educational resources both locally and as part of the region's branding efforts. The County will also market the entire "K to Gray" continuum of educational resources available throughout the region.



Keep Roanoke County Healthy, Clean and Beautiful

Outdoor Recreation and Natural Resources

Roanoke County’s abundant outdoor recreational opportunities are seen as a means to market the County’s high quality of life to young professionals, an increasingly important part of the equation in attracting entrepreneurial businesses to the region. Outdoor recreation that capitalizes on increasing the number of visitors to the area while providing healthy alternatives for citizens is a high priority. Roanoke County will continue to expand and promote the County’s outdoor recreational advantages, especially amenities such as [Explore Park](#), [greenways](#), and blueways.

Solid Waste and Recycling

Solid waste management is an important component of maintaining and improving the scenic beauty of the community. Roanoke County needs to improve its overall cleanliness by providing high quality solid waste practices. The County will review its solid waste management practices, including expanded recycling opportunities for residents, removing plastic bags from the waste stream, and encouraging composting and other sustainable practices in the community.

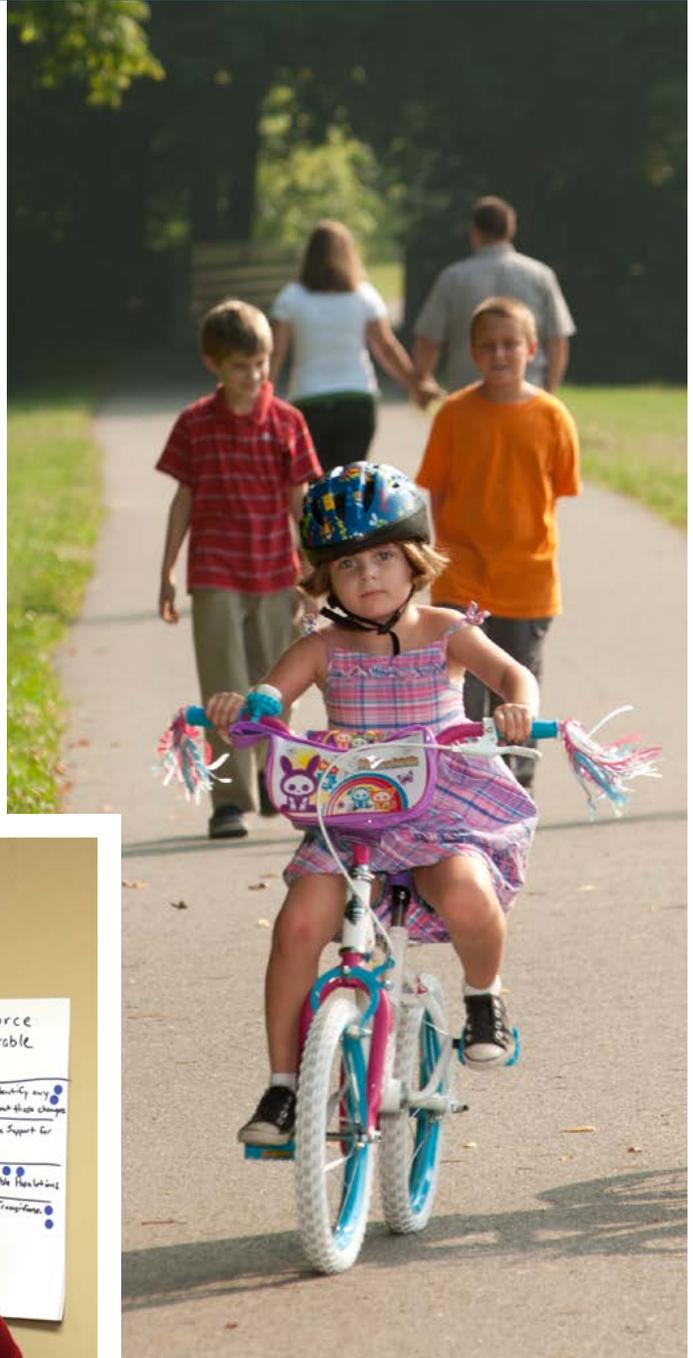


Public input from Quality of Life, Transportation, Community Health and Well-Being, Education and Economic Development focus groups was used to develop KEEP ROANOKE COUNTY HEALTHY, CLEAN AND BEAUTIFUL.

Keep Roanoke County Healthy, Clean and Beautiful

Environmental Stewardship

Environmental stewardship and protecting natural resources is important to keeping Roanoke County healthy, clean and beautiful. The scenic beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains, along with the regional streams and rivers of the region, are what set Roanoke County apart from other communities. The County will continue to preserve and improve these irreplaceable features that are so vital to ensuring an attractive and healthy community for future generations.



Tying Strategic Initiatives to the Vision

As mentioned earlier, the following Vision Statement was developed to guide the community's planning process:

“Roanoke County is a vibrant, innovative, and scenic community that values its citizens, heritage, and quality of life.”



Initiatives in the Community Strategic Plan seek to make Roanoke County **vibrant and innovative** through improving communications, technology, and transportation networks both locally and regionally. Building the local economy and educational resources to best meet the needs of all ages will further enable Roanoke County to remain **vibrant and innovative**. It is important to take advantage of and promote Roanoke County's **scenic resources and cultural heritage** through enhancing our

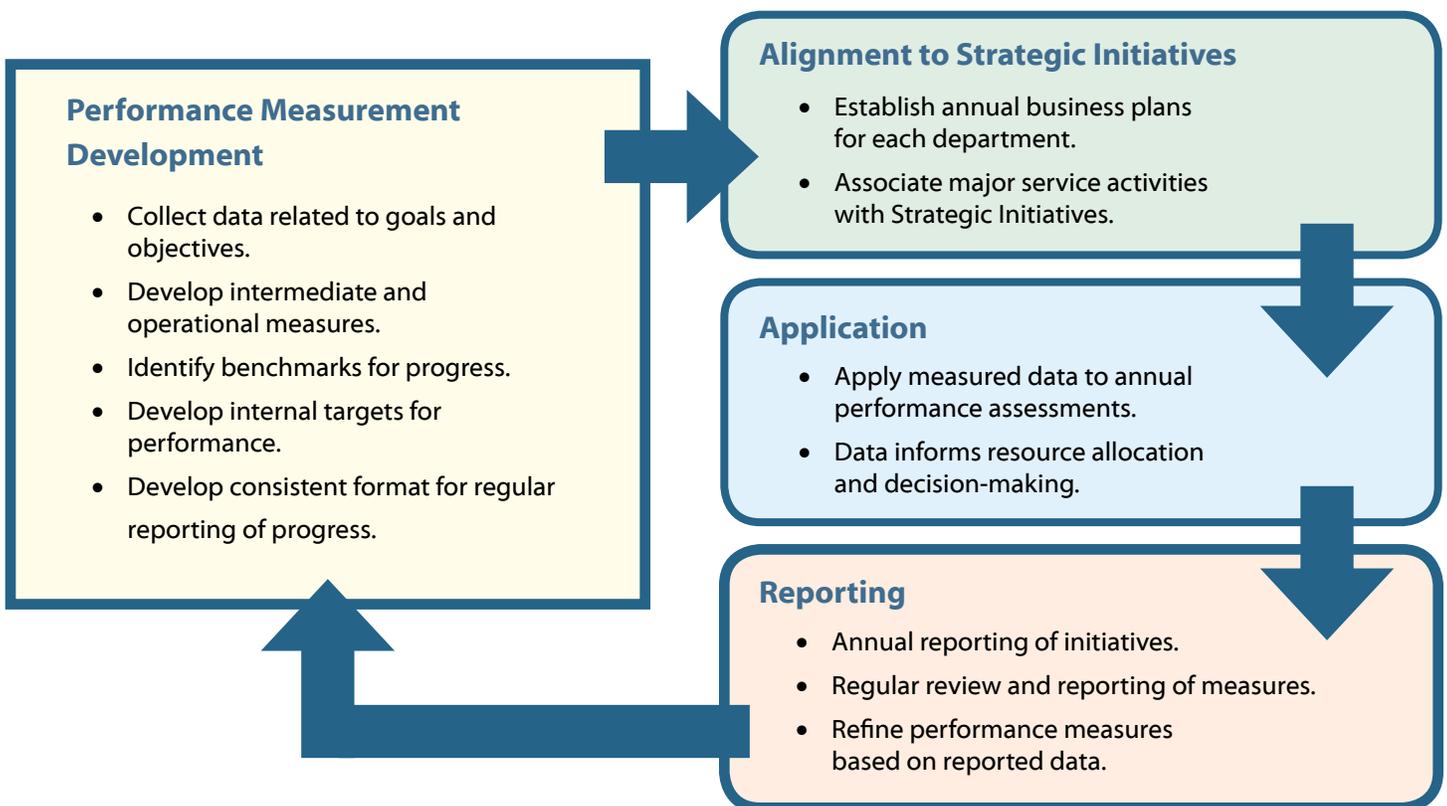
abundant outdoor recreational possibilities, and use proper authority to care for and protect natural resources. Roanoke County **values its citizens** by ensuring services and programs are inclusive for all citizens, and the County will continue to provide high quality public safety services. Creating plans, programs, policies and actions that are consistent with this strategic direction is how Roanoke County can ensure that the **high quality of life** the community enjoys today is available for many years to come.

Community Strategic Plan Implementation

The formal approval of the Vision Statement and Strategic Initiatives occurs with the adoption of the Community Strategic Plan by the Board of Supervisors. The implementation of the Community Strategic Plan will be an ongoing effort of Roanoke County's departments and agencies. Performance measures will be developed and aligned with the Strategic Initiatives in this Plan and will be incorporated into the County's departmental business plans.

The County's annual budget process will include review of the departmental requests for operating and capital funds in light of the vision and strategic direction provided by the community through the civic engagement process. Data on the progress toward these performance measures will be collected, reviewed, reported and used to make adjustments to County services and programs. Roanoke County will also prepare an annual report on the progress to achieving the vision set forth in the Community Strategic Plan.

Although the main body of this document is written at a broad strategic level, the individual topics, goals, and objectives prioritized by the 276 participants in the focus group process are included in the supplemental materials and will be used by staff and regional partners to craft individual business plans, project plans, and budgets that implement the County's vision over the next five years.



Acknowledgments

Roanoke County's first-ever Community Strategic Plan is the product of a community partnership involving citizens, elected and appointed officials, regional agencies, County staff, and all others interested in the growth and prosperity of the County. Thanks and appreciation is offered to all those who participated in the Community Strategic Plan.

Roanoke County Board of Supervisors

P. Jason Peters, Chairman, Vinton Magisterial District
Joseph P. McNamara, Vice Chairman, Windsor Hills Magisterial District
George G. Assaid, Cave Spring Magisterial District
Al Bedrosian, Hollins Magisterial District
Martha B. Hooker, Catawba Magisterial District

Roanoke County Public Schools

Michael Wray, Chairman, Roanoke County School Board
Dr. Gregory Killough, Superintendent
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Supplemental Materials on the Web

Additional information about the Community Strategic Plan

www.RoanokeCountyVA.gov/CSP

Telephone Survey Results

www.RoanokeCountyVA.gov/CSPSURVEY

Focus Group Schedules, Meeting Presentations and Meeting Notes

www.RoanokeCountyVA.gov/CSPFOCUS

Additional Roanoke County Planning Documents

Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan

www.RoanokeCountyVA.gov/ComprehensivePlan

Roanoke County Community Planning Areas

www.RoanokeCountyVA.gov/PlanningAreas

Roanoke County Annual Fiscal Plan

www.RoanokeCountyVA.gov/AFP

Roanoke County Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

www.RoanokeCountyVA.gov/CIP

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Twitter

[@RoanokeCounty](https://twitter.com/RoanokeCounty)



YouTube

www.youtube.com/RoanokeCounty





COMMUNITY

STRATEGIC PLAN
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2016



For additional information about the Community Strategic Plan,
please visit www.RoanokeCountyVA.gov/CSP.

DRAFT DOCUMENT