



# ROANOKE COUNTY VA



Reimagine Oak Grove



## COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



*Cover Photos (from top left)*

*Wood Haven Technology Park, Richfield Living interior (courtesy Richfield Living),*

*Roanoke County Rural Broadband Initiative, Carilion Children's*

*Oak Grove Town Center (courtesy RVTV-3), Blue Ridge Bike Center at Explore Park*

*Joe Goodpies restaurant in Vinton, Vistar Eye Center.*



# ABOUT THE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Roanoke County's 2016 Community Strategic Plan was designed as a five-year plan to guide the pursuit of seven key Strategic Initiatives within the budget and resource limits available to the County. Annual Community Strategic Plan Updates provide Roanoke County's citizens with information about the many projects, programs, and activities that support the Strategic Initiatives of this community-based plan. This 2021 Community Strategic Plan Update marks five years since the original plan's adoption by the Board of Supervisors on August 9, 2016, and also features highlights of accomplishments from previous years. To view the original 2016 Community Strategic Plan and annual reports, please visit [Roanoke County's Community Strategic Plan website](#).

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# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAIRMAN

There's never been a better time than now to work, live and play in Roanoke County. By all measures, our five-year Community Strategic Plan has been a successful effort by County staff and leadership, our regional partners, and our citizens.

In the five short years since the Board of Supervisors approved the Community Strategic Plan, the County has seen new developments, a local economy that proved resistant to a global pandemic, and new award-winning services and programs designed to better serve our citizens.

We also made investments in making our collective futures brighter. Some of these investments include

- Completion of the first phase of site improvements for the Wood Haven Technology Center,
- Implementation of projects in accord with corridor plans for Route 419, Oak Grove, and the Hollins areas that are already yielding results,
- Approving the bonding for Roanoke County Public Schools to begin renovations to William Byrd High School,
- Fostering new technology and lifelong learning through Roanoke County's Public Library,
- Improving access to broadband and high-speed Internet for our residents,
- Continuing to partner with VDOT for road improvements, greenways, and new transportation infrastructure,
- Working to make Explore Park the region's key regional outdoor recreation destination.

I'm also pleased to mention our investments in Roanoke County's staff, who make our lives safer, our facilities top-notch, and our services best-in-class. And we've made all of these incredible investments, and more, in our community's future without increasing taxes - something few communities can say in this day and age.

Lastly, I'd like to once again thank all the citizens who invested their time and effort at the many focus groups and community meetings necessary to create this plan. You are truly citizen servants who believe in the future of Roanoke County. As I reflect on the Vision Statement created in 2016 for our community, I am proud of the fact that we live in a vibrant and scenic community that takes innovative approaches to improve the quality of life for its citizens.



*P. Jason Peters,  
Vinton Magisterial District  
2021 Board of Supervisors Chair*

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## Vision Statement

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

*Roanoke County Board of Supervisors - January 2016*

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# COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Five years after the completion of Roanoke County's 2016 Community Strategic Plan, I am happy to present this 2021 annual report on our progress towards completing the plan's goals. Within this document, you'll find a recap of the original Community Strategic Planning process that involved input from hundreds of residents through engaging public outreach and visioning sessions. You'll also see summaries of our accomplishments since 2016, and details of our most recent progress toward fulfilling the Strategic Initiatives outlined in the original plan.

As I look back on all the achievements made in previous years, I am amazed at how much progress has been made toward achieving the goals and desires set forth by our community.

Many plans never see the light of day after being approved on paper. American businessman Peter Drucker once said that without hard work, plans are only good intentions. I am happy to report that Roanoke County has been hard at work implementing the plan's Strategic Initiatives since day one.

Throughout the past several years, Roanoke County's staff has sought out opportunities to partner with other departments and outside agencies in their efforts to improve our public services, public facilities, economic outlook, and increase our opportunities for lifelong learning.

Roanoke County's staff has been able to deliver these successes despite the challenges of budget shortfalls, changes in our society, and the disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our staff continues to demonstrate a dedication to improving our community, knowing that their efforts make a difference in people's lives. This knowledge helps make Roanoke County an employer of choice in the greater Roanoke Valley and helps us retain and hire quality staff year after year.

Although we've reached a five-year mark of the plan, it's my hope that the momentum behind its Strategic Initiatives lives on for years to come.

Roanoke County is continuing our community-focused planning efforts with the Roanoke County 200 Plan, a 15-year update to our Comprehensive Plan that will mark the County's bicentennial in 2038. This will be a major update to Roanoke County's Comprehensive Plan that will create an overarching community vision and goals for 11 community planning areas within the County and the Town of Vinton. The Roanoke County 200 Plan will guide public policies about land development, public services, and resource protection for years to come. To learn more about how you can be a part of this planning process, please visit the [Roanoke County 200 Plan website](#).



*Dan O'Donnell,  
Roanoke County Administrator*

# COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN BACKGROUND

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.

At a planning retreat in January 2016, the Board of Supervisors established six focus areas for community input, including economic development, transportation, quality of life, education, community health and well-being, and public safety. The Board also created a vision statement to help guide the overall development of the Community Strategic Plan process.



Above: Citizens attended 18 public focus group meetings to determine priorities for the Community Strategic Plan.

## Engaging the Community

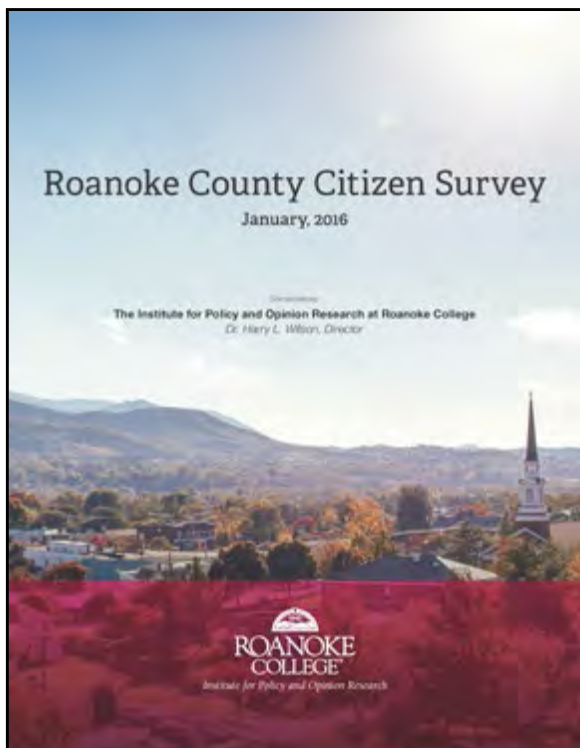
Understanding the needs of the community is vital to any community's strategic planning process and civic engagement is an essential element to the plan's success. Community input was embraced throughout the process and various methods were used to gain the public's input, including a Citizen Telephone Survey to more than 600 Roanoke County residents; a series of 18 public Focus Group Meetings that included 276 participants over nine weeks.

Public outreach about the plan's progress included news releases and social media outreach, on-air television interviews with staff and leadership, public service announcements, staff presentations to civic, business, and County organizations, e-newsletters, and email updates; and a dedicated Community Strategic Plan website.

The Board of Supervisors also held a 30-day Comment Period on the Draft Plan and a public hearing to receive public comments before approving the plan on August 9, 2016.

The Board of Supervisors also held a 30-day Comment Period on the Draft Plan and a public hearing to receive public comments before approving the plan on August 9, 2016.

Left: In the fall of 2015, Roanoke County commissioned a telephone survey to begin the process of documenting residents' desires and needs. The results were published in January 2016 and helped the Board of Supervisors create the vision statement that guided the development of Roanoke County's first Community Strategic Plan.





# COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS

A Community Strategic Plan 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. 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. Focus groups met to determine strategic topics, goals, and objectives for each focus area. Each group reached a consensus on the most important topics, goals, and objectives for each focus area. A steering committee of several lead staff facilitators reviewed and consolidated the input received from each focus group.

What emerged was a clear picture of common themes and overlapping priorities among the focus groups. These common themes were used to develop seven broad Strategic Initiatives that helped shape Roanoke County over the next five years. This report is organized by the seven Strategic Initiatives listed below.

- Connect Roanoke County to the World
- Position Roanoke County for Economic Growth
- Promote Neighborhood Connections
- Ensure Citizen Safety
- Be a Caring and Inclusive Community
- Promote Lifelong Learning
- Keep Roanoke County Healthy, Clean, and Beautiful



## IMPLEMENTING THE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The formal approval of the Vision Statement and Strategic Initiatives occurred with the adoption of the Community Strategic Plan by the Board of Supervisors on August 9, 2016. Since adoption, the implementation of the Community Strategic Plan has been an ongoing effort by Roanoke County's leadership, staff departments, and agencies.

County departments have used the Strategic Initiatives to inform their annual business plans to better reflect the needs and desires of Roanoke County's citizens. In turn, each year's budget process has included reviews of each department's budget requests in light of the

Vision Statement and Strategic Initiatives within the plan. Annual department reports measure progress toward achieving the work outlined in each year's business plans.

Each year Roanoke County has taken information reported by departments to prepare and publish annual updates on the overall progress to achieving the Vision Statement within the Community Strategic Plan.

For more information about the Community Strategic Plan process, focus group notes, and past year's reports, visit [www.roanokecountyva.gov/csp](http://www.roanokecountyva.gov/csp).

# CONTINUAL PROGRESS DESPITE A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

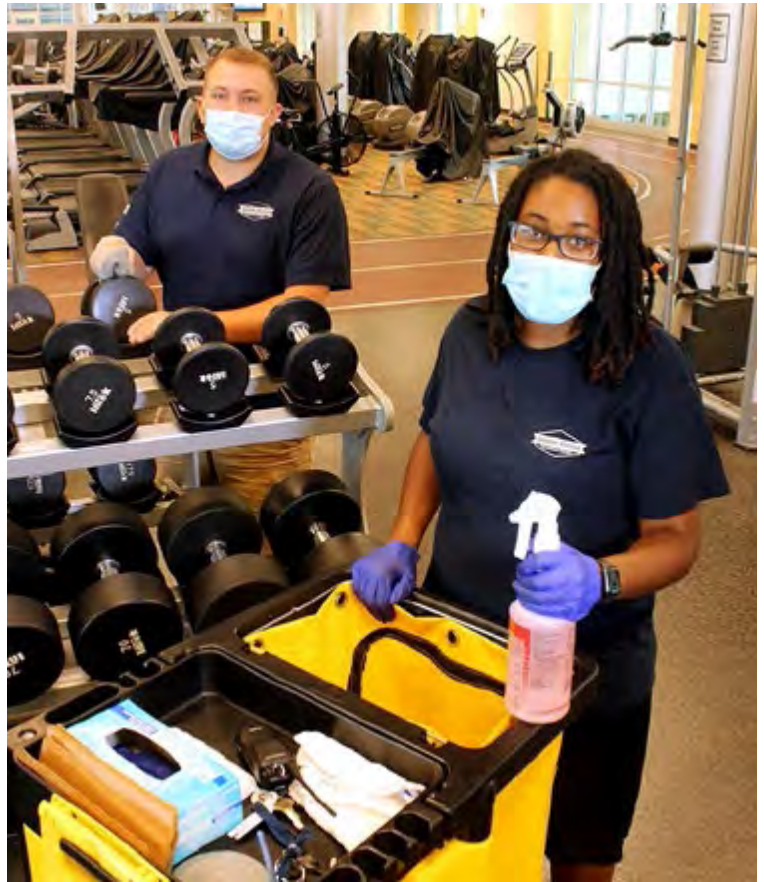
Despite the closure of public buildings in early 2020, Roanoke County provided continual access to vital services throughout the spring and summer with social distancing, online services, and appointments with staff. While public facilities and amenities began reopening in summer 2020, the use of masks, social distancing, and remote access continued throughout the year as the County sought to create healthy and safe spaces for both employees and citizens.

Many facilities were renovated using CARES Act funding to install plexiglass barriers at public service counters, make changes to heating and air conditioning systems, and create safe entry and access to public buildings. Roanoke County also implemented a Daily Health Assessment to screen employees for possible COVID infections and prevent infected employees from coming into public buildings. These measures all helped to keep both the workforce and the public safer during the height of the pandemic and throughout the year.

While state mandates limited public gatherings, public meetings from the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, and other groups were held virtually or televised online. Roanoke County made accommodations for citizen input and participation during these meetings through email, telephone calls, or other means. Roanoke County's Library and Parks, Recreation and Tourism departments also created new procedures to sanitize facilities and materials that allowed these buildings to reopen to the public slowly as public gathering limits were lifted over the summer and fall of 2021.

On June 22, 2021, the Board of Supervisors rescinded the local declaration of emergency enacted on March 17 the previous year and fully reopened Board meetings to the public.

Although the pandemic affected County services in many ways, it's important to recognize the adaptability of Roanoke County and its staff that enabled residents to safely access services such as permitting and licensing, tax payments, socially distanced appointments with staff, and access to libraries and recreational amenities.



*Above: Staff at Green Ridge Recreation Center created new sanitizing procedures that enabled the facility to safely reopen to the public.*





# CONNECT ROANOKE COUNTY TO THE WORLD



***"Computing is not about computers any more. It is about living."***

***- Nicholas Negroponte***



## **Broadband Initiative Begins Connecting Households**

Roanoke County continues to seek opportunities to extend broadband service to its unserved and under-served residents. Availability of high-speed Internet has a significant impact for residents' access to virtual learning, telehealth, and telework options. These projects also support the growth of home-based and small businesses within the County.

With the pandemic, Roanoke County's strategy for the Rural Broadband Initiative shifted to using federal CARES Act funds to expand broadband access to County without service.

Roanoke County's Rural Broadband Initiative has completed projects on Newport and Blacksburg roads, Merriman Road from Colonial Avenue south to the Franklin County line, Franklin Road south to the Franklin County (including Webb Road), Ridgelea Estates and Lost drives, and Pitzer, Horse Shoe Bend, and Brookridge roads. These projects included 112 locations that now have access to high-speed Internet services.

Current active projects are underway for Bradshaw, Timberview, and Cove Hollow roads in the north end of the County, and Starlight Lane. New projects are also underway within the Bent Mountain community. Once complete, these projects will enable 309 more households to enjoy broadband access.

Roanoke County's Communications and Information Technology Department has submitted four applications for the 2022 Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) grants which will be announced in December 2021. These projects will help connect outlying households in the Windsor Hills, Cave Spring, and Catawba area, including Barley Drive, Garth Road, Morgan Conner Lane, and West Riverside Drive. Roanoke County has also formed a partnership with Franklin County to better connect communities on each side of the counties' borders. If approved, these projects will help enable 1402 additional households to connect to high-speed Internet services.

Future allocations of the federal American Rescue Plan funding may also provide some additional opportunities to expand broadband to unserved or under-served parts of the County in the future.

The Rural Broadband Initiative has the goal of achieving universal availability and access to high-speed Internet services for all Roanoke County's residents. Project Updates can be found on the interactive map on the [Rural Broadband Initiative website](#).





### Online Services Earn National Recognition for Roanoke County

The County's Communications and Information Technology's GIS staff received both a Comp/TIA Solution Award and a National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award for its Public Access Portal for Online Permitting website that supports the Development Services' permitting process for citizens and contractors. Permits and inspections for home renovations, new construction, and other projects can now be obtained faster and with fewer delays with this service.

GIS staff also received NaCo Achievement Awards for the PlanView, Scanned Plans, and ParkView web applications. These applications streamline County data for both residents and businesses alike, allowing instant access via computer or mobile device.



*Above: Roanoke County once again placed as one of the top Digital Counties in the nation by the Center for Digital Government and the National Association of Counties.*

These applications are part of a growing suite of GIS applications dedicated to improving citizen services and government transparency and can be found on [Roanoke County's GIS website](#).

These achievements and other projects led Roanoke County to place third nationally on the [Center for Digital Government's Digital Counties Survey for 2021](#).

### Carilion Clinic IRONMAN 70.3 Brings the World to Roanoke County



*Above: The 2021 Carilion Clinic IRONMAN 70.3 Virginia's Blue Ridge brought thousands of visitors to the Roanoke region. Photo courtesy of Virginia's Blue Ridge.*

The inaugural Carilion Clinic IRONMAN 70.3 Virginia's Blue Ridge on Sunday, June 6, 2021, drew more than 1,600 athletes from all fifty states and seven countries to the Roanoke region. The race's estimated \$3.8 million impact to the local economy highlights how Virginia's Blue Ridge's tourism initiatives connect travelers from across the country to Roanoke County's outdoor recreation amenities.

The 2022 Carilion Clinic IRONMAN 70.3 Virginia's Blue Ridge race will be Sunday, June 5, 2022, with swimming at Carvins Cove Reservoir, a bicycle course along the Blue Ridge Parkway, and running along the Roanoke River Greenway. See more information at the [Carilion Clinic IRONMAN 70.3 Virginia's Blue Ridge website](#).





## Highlights of Previous Accomplishments



### Fiscal Year 2017

- The Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority officially lights a 25-mile core fiber network around the Roanoke Valley, connecting the County of Roanoke with fiber networks in Roanoke City and the City of Salem.
- Roanoke County creates a new marketing brand featuring a hiker and prominent profile of McAfee's Knob to highlight outdoor recreation and complement regional tourism and marketing initiatives.
- Through a partnership with Virginia's Blue Ridge, the water tower at Green Recreation Center marks the entrance to Roanoke County and the greater Virginia's Blue Ridge region.



### Fiscal Year 2018

- New travel options for rail and air travel into and out of the Roanoke Valley are announced.
- A new Open Data Portal is launched to allow prospective businesses, residents, and visitors a way to connect with Roanoke County through publicly available data. The project receives both the 2018 Governor's Award and a 2018 National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award.
- New gateway signs are installed on major roads featuring the County's outdoor-focused brand established in 2017.



### Fiscal Year 2019

- Interstate 81 improvements begin between exits 141 and 143.
- MtnNet connects the Bent Mountain community to wireless broadband.
- Roanoke County launches its new website focused on citizen service in June 2019.
- Roanoke-Blacksburg announces more travel options, its Airport Master Plan, and the development of new facilities to improve air travel into the Roanoke Valley.
- Carilion Clinic's IRONMAN 70.3 announcement and Virginia's Blue Ridge's "Be A #Trail-setter" campaign strengthens Roanoke County as an outdoor destination.

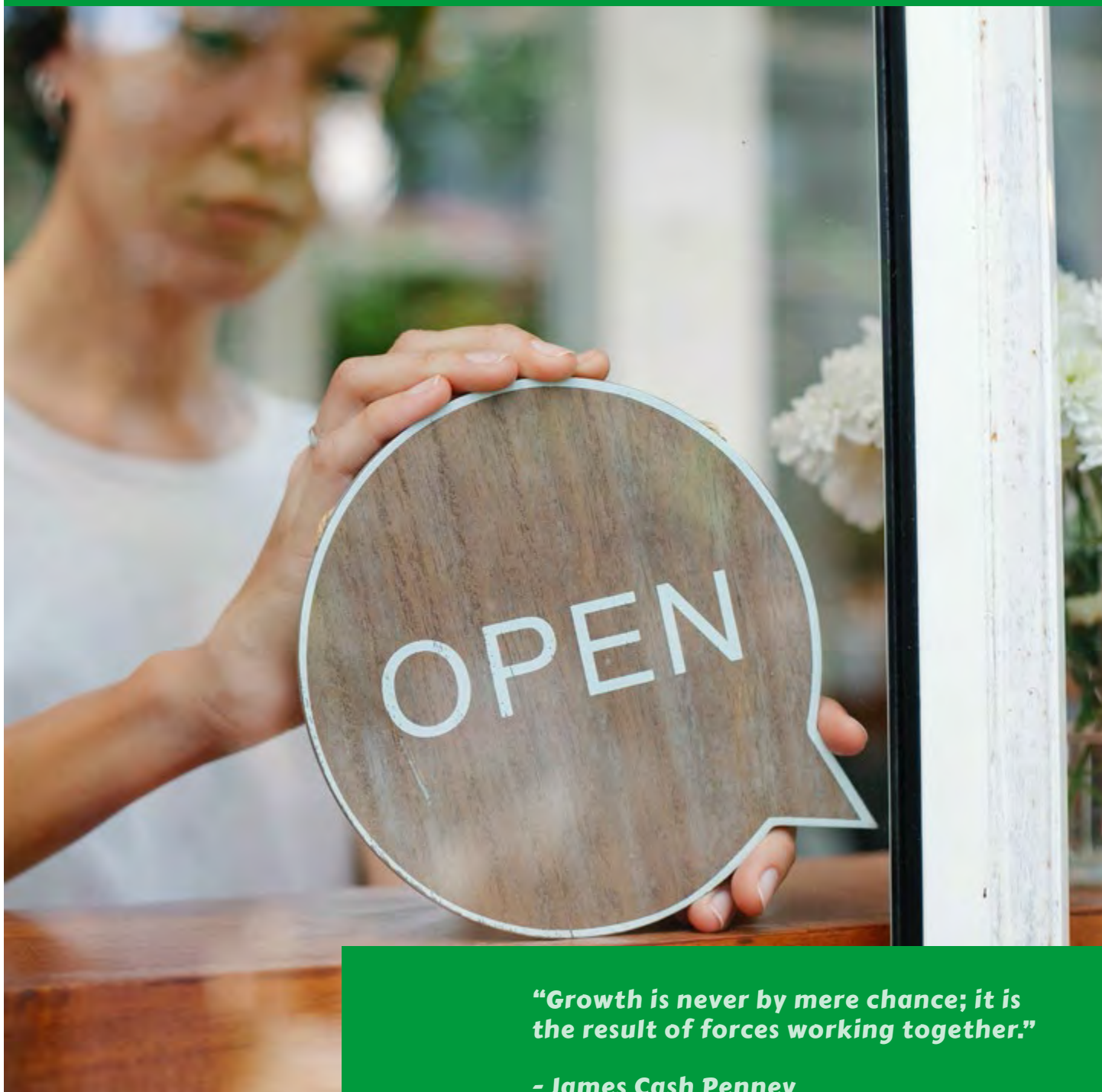


### Fiscal Year 2020

- Broadband Study begins with a survey mailed to County residents in December 2019 to identify unserved and under-served areas. Public-Private Partnerships allow the first stages of Roanoke County's Rural Broadband Initiative to bring high-speed Internet to homes without broadband access.
- The RoCo Mobile app launches, giving residents faster access to County services on their mobile devices.
- Roanoke County earns the 2020 Pinnacle Award from the National Association of Government Webmasters (NAGW) for its overall design, citizen focus, and ease of use.



# POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH



***"Growth is never by mere chance; it is  
the result of forces working together."***

***- James Cash Penney***



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Wood Haven Technology Park Takes Shape

The Wood Haven Technology Park is a regional effort of Roanoke County, Roanoke City, and Salem City to enhance our shared economic base and encourage economic development through the Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority.

Basic utilities, infrastructure extensions, and rough grading have been completed at Wood Haven. A 53-acre pad has been designed and fully permitted to provide a fast and efficient development process for future builders.

Wood Haven Technology Park is currently under review by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to designate the project as a Tier 5 site, the highest level in the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program. The tier system is used to indicate a property's readiness for development, which means Wood Haven is available to meet the need for large, shovel-ready projects that seek a home in Southwest Virginia.

The project's final grading will also allow site investors to showcase their facilities and brands to millions of travelers along Interstate 81 each year.



*Above: The Wood Haven Technology Park is classified as a certified, shovel-ready project site in the Virginia Business Ready Sites Program, one of the top sites in the state primed for development.*

### Opportunity Zone Prospectus Created to Market Wood Haven Technology Park



*Above: The Opportunity Zone Prospectus can be downloaded from [www.yesroanoke.com](http://www.yesroanoke.com).*

Roanoke County Economic Development published a new Opportunity Zone Prospectus to promote the zone located at the intersection of I-81 and I-581 that includes the Wood Haven Technology Park. The prospectus provides a high-level overview of the Opportunity Zone, program features, and benefits for investors, while highlighting why Roanoke County is a great place to do business. For more information, download the [Opportunity Zone Prospectus](#) from the [Economic Development Department's website](#).





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

### 419 Town Center Development Gains Momentum



On March 18, 2021, Roanoke County Economic Development held a virtual forum entitled “Join the Momentum: Investing in the Future of Tanglewood” to engage citizens and businesses to discuss investment potential at Tanglewood. Nearly 80 attendees participated in the forum and engaged with the speakers to better understand the scope of investment opportunities at the revitalized Tanglewood property.

### Carilion Children’s Opens at Tanglewood Mall

Carilion Children’s officially opened in September 2021 inside the former JCPenney location at Tanglewood Mall. The new operation will feature 14 pediatric specialties; Child Life Specialists; imaging and laboratory services; 120 exam rooms and multiple consult rooms, along with pediatric and adult dentistry. Carilion Children’s estimates 1,200 - 1,500 patients, physicians and staff members from a 100-mile radius will visit the facility each day.

Carilion’s Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) practice, for both adults and children, will also have a location inside Tanglewood Mall. In total, Carilion has redeveloped 150,000 square feet to house its new operation.



*Above: Carilion’s investment in Tanglewood Mall increases the potential for developing nearby parcels at the mall and generates consumer activity to help energize the Reimagine 419 Plan.*



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH



Above: Some of the new restaurants and businesses open now or coming soon to Tanglewood Mall.

### Tanglewood Outparcels Will Feature New Businesses this Year

Two new outparcels outside Tanglewood will house five new businesses this year, including Panda Express, Jersey Mike's, Blaze Pizza, Chipotle, and Aspen Dental. Chicken Salad Chick has joined the slate of new businesses at Tanglewood in the former Applebee's space. Blackwater Resources recently announced that Popeye's Louisiana Kitchen and Chili's Grill and Bar will also develop new locations at Tanglewood.

### Fallowater Square Moves Forward

Fallowater Square is a new office redevelopment project on the 419 corridor that began this year. The two-story building will be the new home for Long & Foster and the National Spine and Pain Centers. This development provides net new office space along Route 419, helping to bring new businesses to the corridor.



Above: A conceptual image of the new Fallowater Square development announced for the 419 corridor.

### Grant Enables Development Standards for the 419 Town Center Plan

In 2019, Roanoke County adopted the 419 Town Center Plan to meet demand for a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use town center with a main street setting to redevelop the outdated commercial area and mall. The 419 Town Center Plan recommends a dynamic, new urban design for the Route 419 corridor over the next twenty years. In 2021, Roanoke County received a grant through the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment to develop design guidelines or standards for the 419 area. Other steps currently underway include planning and funding transportation projects in the corridor; marketing the plan to property owners and developers, and communicating new developments in the 419 area to the public. Learn more by visiting the [419 Town Center website](#).



### Reimagine 419 Plan Wins Roanoker Magazine Award

The Reimagine 419 Plan won the Platinum award for the "Best Idea for the Valley's Future" category in the Roanoker Magazine's Best of 2021 issue. The plan leverages nearly \$50 million in state funding for improvements in the area, including multi-modal transportation options, multi-use development, and revitalizing the area around Tanglewood.





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Award-Winning Town of Vinton Revitalization Project

Roanoke County's Economic Development Department received two awards for the Town of Vinton Business District Revitalization Project, including a 2021 Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Achievement Award, and a 2021 Excellence in Economic Development Award from the International Economic Development Council (IEDC). The project received the Bronze Ranking from IEDC, from a field of more than 500 award submissions from four countries.

The Revitalization Project includes the Billy Byrd apartments, Roland E. Cook Lofts, former Vinton Library, Vinyard Station, and Gish Mill redevelopment projects. The 5 projects include a total of \$21.7 million in taxable new investment, with \$533,500 in annual tax base enhancements, and over 129 new jobs.



2021 EXCELLENCE  
IN ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
AWARDS

### Vinton Announces Gish Mill Redevelopment Project

Redevelopment projects continued in the Town of Vinton with the County and Town partnering to redevelop the historic Gish Mill property, the "founding structure" of the Town of Vinton. A public-private partnership between the Town of Vinton, Roanoke County, and a private development group was created to redevelop the Mill property into a mixed-use commercial hub for local dining, entertainment, and lodging. The project will generate \$2.8 million in new investment, create approximately 42 new jobs, and is planned to open in the summer of 2022.



Above: The Gish Mill was built prior to 1838, making it a "founding structure" that would reflect Vinton's heritage for nearly 200 years.

### New Downtown Hotel Project Coming to Vinton



Above: Roanoke County and Vinton have partnered to bring a future hotel to Pollard Street in Vinton to offer downtown lodging.

Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton joined in a public-private partnership to help establish the development of a new 90-120 room Hotel in Vinton's downtown business district. The project represents a \$16 million investment at the gateway entrance to Vinton's downtown. The hotel project will add to the ongoing revitalization of the downtown area and will help generate new tourism and business growth for the area.





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Vinyard Station Opens with Joe Goodpies

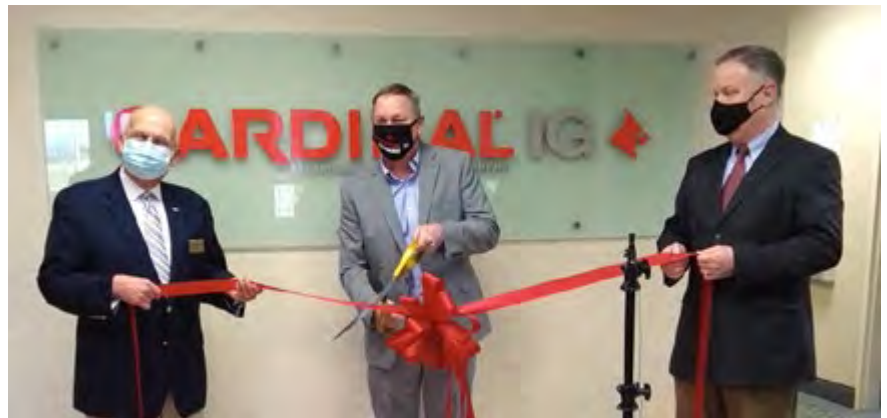


Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton partnered to redevelop the former Vinton Motors Building into Vinyard Station, a multi-tenant, general business establishment. Joe Goodpies, a local pizzeria serving a variety of dishes, opened as the first operating tenant with RND Coffee opening soon. The Vinyard Station redevelopment project represents a \$2.7 million investment that will bring more than 24 new jobs to downtown.

*Left: Joe Goodpies became the first tenant to open in Vinton's newly redeveloped Vinyard Station. RND Coffee is expected to open soon, with other tenants to be announced in the future.*

### Cardinal Glass Expansion in Vinton Brings New Jobs

Cardinal Glass Industries in Vinton held a grand opening in January announcing their 26,000 sq. ft. expansion in the Vinton Business Center. Cardinal Glass invested \$8 million into the expansion that will create 60 new jobs. The Virginia Economic Development Partnership supported the project through its Virginia Jobs Investment Program (VJIP), which provides consultative services and funding to companies creating new jobs.



*Above: Vinton Mayor Brad Grose (left) and Roanoke County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jason Peters (right) at the opening of Cardinal's new facility.*

### Town of Vinton Sees More Business Expansions

The Bank of Botetourt opened a new branch at 410 South Pollard Street this year. The branch offers services from the Bank's mortgage company, Virginia Mountain Mortgage and financial services division, Botetourt Wealth Management, as well as their normal banking services.

Rosie's Gaming Emporium in the Town of Vinton is expanding to feature new games, a new high-limit area, and a new parking garage. The expansion will add 15,000 square feet to Rosie's footprint and create approximately 40 new jobs.



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Richfield Living Celebrates Two Grand Openings in 2021



*Above: Supervisor Martha Hooker and Chairman Jason Peters celebrated the opening of two new developments at Richfield Living this year, including a new Town Center project and a new Health Center. These expansions enable Richfield Living to provide high-quality healthcare and quality of life options for seniors. Photos courtesy of Richfield Living.*

Richfield Living held two grand openings at their Salem campus in Glenvar in May and June of 2021, in coordination with Roanoke County's Economic Development staff. Richfield's first grand opening in May was for its Town Center, a 25,000 square foot development featuring amenities open to both residents and the public, including dining by the lake, a wellness and fitness center, a hair salon, and an integrated chapel.

In June, Richfield Living celebrated the grand opening of its Health Center adjacent to the Town Center area. The Richfield Health Center offers a household model of care, which provides residents with freedom, dignity, and the ability to live more independently. The Health Center features a skilled nursing facility and four households, each with a kitchen, living room, laundry room, four-season porch, and private bedrooms.

These expansions allow Richfield Living to provide high-quality healthcare and quality of life to residents, making Roanoke County a great place for seniors and their families. Roanoke County supported Richfield's campus growth by enabling a \$99 million bond for the project.



*Above: Supervisor Martha Hooker and Chairman Jason Peters present Richfield Living's CEO Cherie Grisso with a print of McAfee's Knob to commemorate the openings of Richfield's Town Center and Health Care Center. Photos courtesy of Richfield Living.*







## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Oak Grove Center Plan Adopted by the Board of Supervisors

On March 23, 2021, the Board of Supervisors adopted the Oak Grove Center Plan as part of the County's Comprehensive Plan, which will guide the area's development over the next 20 years. An extensive community engagement strategy and collaboration with Roanoke City, Roanoke County Schools, along with adults and students from the community helped create recommendations for future developments in the area.

The Oak Grove Center planning process launched in May 2018, with over 1,300 residents, businesses, property owners, and area employees contributing to the plan. Attention generated by the new plan has already increased development in the area, including several new restaurants and businesses. The final plan, along with presentations, summary reports, and additional information can be found on the [Oak Grove Center website](#).



*Above: The Oak Grove Center Plan outlines future development goals along Electric Road in the Oak Grove area of Roanoke County.*



*Above: Several new businesses have opened in the area during the Oak Grove Center Plan development.*



### Roanoke County Launches 200 Plan

The Roanoke County 200 Plan is a major, 15-year update to the Comprehensive Plan to mark the County's bicentennial in 2038. The plan will express an overarching community vision and unique goals for 11 community planning areas and the Town of Vinton. The plan will guide public policies about land development, public services, and resource protection. It will also allow decision-makers to study the long-term consequences of current decisions and recognize how today's actions may impact the County for years to come. Public engagement for the plan included twelve community meetings in late 2021, dozens of stakeholder meetings and presentations throughout

the year, and a complex marketing strategy including an equity and inclusion review by community members. The Roanoke County 200 Plan is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2022. For more information, view the [Roanoke County 200 Plan website](#).





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Vistar Eye Center to Join New Businesses in the Hollins Area

Vistar Eye Center celebrated a groundbreaking ceremony on July 13, 2021, for its new office on Airport Road. The state-of-the-art facility will feature 26,355 square feet and energy-efficient technologies to minimize environmental impact. The Hollins area has gained the interest of several businesses this past year, including Old Virginia Outpost, Luttrell Staffing Group, and Jersey Mike's.



Above: Vistar Eye Center joins other new businesses in the Hollins Area this year with the groundbreaking of its new office on Airport Road.



Above: LewisGale Regional Health System broke ground in April 2021 on a new, freestanding emergency room on Route 460 in east Roanoke County.

### LewisGale Emergency Room Comes to East County

LewisGale Regional Health System broke ground in the Bonsack area on April 26, 2021, to celebrate the future location of their second freestanding emergency room in the County. This project represents a \$12 million investment with the creation of 30 new jobs and full ER services for Roanoke County residents along the Route 460 corridor.

### ELEVATE 2026 Strategic Plan Focuses on Future Growth



Above: Download the ELEVATE 2026 Strategic Plan at [www.yesroanoke.com](http://www.yesroanoke.com).

This past year the Economic Development Department began developing the County's 5-year Economic Development Strategic Plan, Elevate 2026, to help guide future economic growth in Roanoke County. The yearlong planning process included insights and recommendations from various community stakeholders and will be published at the end of 2021. Learn more about the plan on the [Roanoke County Economic Development Department's website](http://www.yesroanoke.com).



# STRATEGIC INITIATIVE POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

## Highlights of Previous Accomplishments



### Fiscal Year 2017

- Roanoke County named as a Top 10 Mid-Sized Community for 2017 in the Fourth Economy Index.
- New business announcements include Tru by Hilton, Texas Roadhouse, a new LewisGale Emergency Room, and a new American National Bank Office.
- Plastics One announces an expansion and 20 new jobs.
- Explore Park's Adventure Plan promotes facilities and improvements needed to create a premier destination for outdoor activity. The plan later receives the 2017 Virginia Municipal League (VML) Innovation Award.

### Fiscal Year 2018

- The Wood Haven Technology Park, a joint development of Roanoke County, Roanoke City, and City of Salem through the Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority, receives a GO Virginia grant for utilities.
- Metis Holdings announces new tenants for the \$6 million redeveloped former Allstate building on Electric Road.
- Magnets USA, Blue Ridge Beverage, Cardinal Glass, and Ardagh Packaging announce expansions.
- Two new "Reimagine" community-based planning studies were launched in 2018 to help revitalize the Oak Grove and Hollins areas.

### Fiscal Year 2019

- Carilion Children's announces its new facility at Tanglewood Mall.
- New redevelopments VFP, Inc., and Metis Holdings host grand openings.
- The Board of Supervisors adopts the 419 Town Center Plan to guide development of the 419 corridor over the next 20 years.
- Tru by Hilton and The Billy Byrd redevelopment project in Vinton host grand openings, while Richfield Living breaks ground on a new expansion.
- Planning Services staff earns a 2019 Achievement Award from the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) for the Public Schools Planning Workshop portion of the Oak Grove Center Plan.

### Fiscal Year 2020

- Mack Trucks opens its new facility in Roanoke County, a \$13 million investment with a potential for 250 new jobs.
- First Team Volkswagen completes its expansion, SpringHill Suites by Marriott announces a new construction, and the County receives a Community Development Block grant to develop the marketing prospectus for the Wood Haven area.
- Roanoke County and Vinton administers \$1.1 million in grants to local businesses as part of the federal CARES Act.
- Roanoke County's Economic Development Department is featured in Virginia Town & City Magazine for creating place-making strategies to encourage redevelopment and transportation funding.
- The Board of Supervisors adopts the Hollins Center Plan to create recommendations about future land use, community facilities, transportation, and streetscape improvements for the area over the next 20 years.





## PROMOTE NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS



***“The need for connection and community is primal, as fundamental as the need for air, water, and food.”***

***- Dean Ornish***





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PROMOTE NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

### Interstate 81 Expansion Continues

Although Interstate 81 is a major artery through Roanoke County, the highway also plays a vital role in connecting separate communities within the County.

The project to widen Interstate 81 between Exits 141 (Route 419) and Exits 143 (I-581) is currently under construction with a completion date anticipated in early 2022. When finished, this section of highway will improve safety from Exit 141 to I-581, and improve access to the greater Roanoke Valley. On the southbound side, the new lane will ease congestion with merging traffic coming off I-581.

Preliminary engineering is now underway for the next phase of Interstate 81 widening in both directions between Exit 141 and Mile Marker 136, with an anticipated start in 2022. Expansions between Mile Marker 144 and Exit 150 are also expected to begin in 2025.

### Connecting Communities by Rail

This past spring, Amtrak announced an expansion to provide a second train to Roanoke by 2022 and service to Christiansburg by 2025. These connections are vital to increasing connections between communities and maximizing transportation options both into and beyond Roanoke County.



*Above: New lanes on Interstate 81 will make accessing I-581 into the heart of the Roanoke Valley safer.*

### Changes Coming to Route 460

Improvements to Route 460 at West Ruritan Road Intersection will construct a through-cut at the intersection of Route 460/Challenger Avenue and West Ruritan Road to prohibit traffic from crossing Route 460. Traffic will instead make U-turns at Blue Hills Village Drive and Valley Gateway Boulevard. The West Ruritan Road intersection modifications will result in a traffic signal phase reduction. Pedestrian signals and crosswalks are also included in the project.

An additional project will address traffic at four Route 460 intersections, including Carson Road, East Ruritan Road, Country Corner, and Huntridge Road. In the median across from these side roads "Innovative Intersections" will keep side road traffic from directly crossing Route 460 but still allow U-turn access within several hundred feet. The goal of these improvements is to reduce the risk of collisions when crossing Route 460 while improving the flow of traffic during peak periods. For more information, see the Primary Highways section of the online [Transportation Story Map](#).



## Changes to Electric Road Support the Goals of the 419 Town Center Plan

A large part of the 419 Town Center Plan addresses the future transportation needs of a mixed-use and revitalized commercial corridor envisioned by the plan. Recent and upcoming changes to Electric Road and the 419 corridor will remake the existing area to improve connections, reduce congestion, and increase safety.

Construction continues on Electric Road between Ogden Road and Route 220 to add a third lane between Ogden Road and the Route 220 South off-ramp, including sidewalks and bike lanes on both sides of the road, adding pedestrian signals and crosswalks at three intersections, and consolidating three bus stops into one bus shelter at Copper Croft Apartments. Completion is anticipated by the end of 2021.

Route 419 Streetscape Improvements, Phase II, will include bicycle lanes, sidewalks, conversion of the shoulders to through/right turn lanes, and installation of a through-cut intersection at Starkey Road with pedestrian crosswalks and signals. The schedule for this project is not yet set.

The Fallowater Lane Extension will create a public road to facilitate access from Route 419 to Chevy Road and a development area called The Ridges, as identified in the 419 Town Center Plan. A sidewalk will be installed along the western side of the roadway. Completion is anticipated in Spring 2022. View more information about the project on the County's [Fallowater Lane Extension website](#).

## Route 419/220 Diverging Diamond Construction Slated for 2024

The Route 419/220 Diverging Diamond project will reconstruct the Route 419 (Electric Road) and Route 220 interchange to a Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI). The project will eliminate the northbound Route 220 circular ramp and shift drivers to the opposite side of the road to use the other existing northbound ramp to Route 220.

A sidewalk will be constructed to complete the gap between a planned sidewalk along the north side of Franklin Road from Tanglewood Mall to the City of Roanoke. Bicycle facilities will connect future bicycle lanes on Route 419 to existing bicycle lanes on Franklin Road.

Preliminary engineering for the project is now underway, with construction anticipated to begin in 2024. Learn about [Diverging Diamond Interchanges](#) and view more information at [Roanoke County's Route 419/220 DDI website](#).



Above: A conceptual design for the Route 419/220 Diverging Diamond project slated to begin in 2024.



## Hollins Area Sees Traffic and Pedestrian Improvements

Reducing congestion and increasing pedestrian safety were key parts of reimagining the Hollins area through the [Hollins Center Plan](#), adopted on July 28, 2020, by the Board of Supervisors.

The Plantation Road Bicycle, Pedestrian and Streetscape Improvement project includes Plantation Road from Interstate 81 to Williamson Road. One of the primary goals of the project is to connect Walrond Park with the Tinker Creek Greenway and the extensive network of trails at Carvins Cove Natural Reserve. While Phase I of the project was completed in October 2018, a sidewalk is currently being installed along Plantation Road between Walrond Drive and Gander Way as part of this project's second phase. Pedestrian crosswalks and signals will be installed at the Gander Way/Friendship Lane traffic signal. Completion of this part of the project is anticipated in Spring 2022.

In December 2020, improvements to the intersection of Plantation Road at Lila Drive were completed with the installation of a traffic light to provide better access to nearby businesses. Pedestrian accommodations were also added to improve safety along this busy corridor. See more informa-



*Above: A new stoplight and improvements at the intersection of Plantation Road and Lila Drive provide safer vehicle and pedestrian access to area businesses.*

tion about these projects on the [Plantation Road Project website](#).

Pedestrian improvements to the other side of the Hollins Center Plan area are underway as well. A sidewalk is being constructed along Williamson Road between Peters Creek Road and North Roanoke Assisted Living, on the west side of the road. Pedestrian crosswalks and signals will be installed at the Peters Creek Road intersection. Completion of this project is anticipated by the end of 2021.

## Additional Pedestrian Improvements Coming Soon

A sidewalk is also being installed along West Main Street between Alleghany Drive/Garman Road and Technology Drive, on the south side of the street. Pedestrian crosswalks and signals will be installed at the Alleghany Drive/Garman Road and Daugherty Road intersections. Completion is anticipated in December 2021.

Progress also continues with improvements to the West Roanoke River Greenway, the East Roanoke River Greenway, and pedestrian access to McAfee Knob and the Appalachian Trail on Route 311. For the latest information about these and other bicycle, pedestrian, and greenways projects, visit the [Transportation Story Map](#).



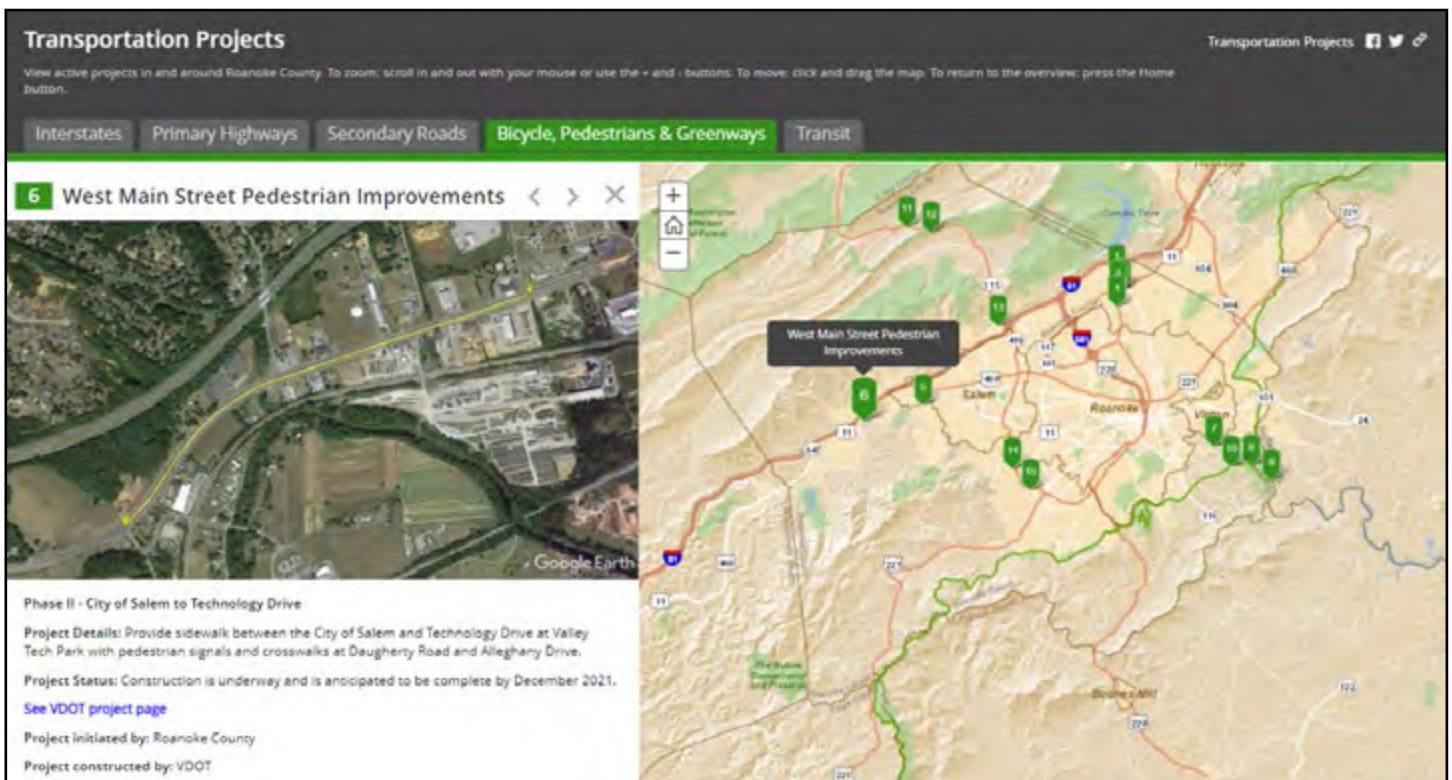


## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PROMOTE NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

### Transportation Story Map: Your Guide to County Transportation Projects

Roanoke County offers citizens a comprehensive view of transportation projects through its [Transportation Story Map](#). The map is a one-stop visual guide to current and future projects across the County. Separate tabs on the website allow viewers to see projects for the Interstates, Primary Highways, Secondary Roads, Greenways, and other initiatives.

Each project contains a brief description of the project and its status or projected completion date, along with links to Roanoke County or Virginia Department of Transportation web pages where available.



Visit Roanoke County's Transportation Story Map to see details about these upcoming projects and many more transportation initiatives.

- Route 311/Route 419 Intersection Safety & Congestion Improvements
- Valleypointe Parkway Realignment and Widening
- Route 220 Corridor Intersection Improvements
- Starkey Road/Buck Mountain Road Intersection Improvements
- Huffman Lane Reconstruction
- Orange Market Park and Ride/Parking Lot Improvements
- Oak Grove Pedestrian Improvements



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PROMOTE NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

### Highlights of Previous Accomplishments



#### Fiscal Year 2017

- The \$4.2 million Plantation Road Bicycle, Pedestrian and Streetscape Improvement Project begins.
- Adaptive traffic signals on Route 220 implemented to ease congestion.
- The redeveloped Roland E. Cook Elementary in Vinton opens as urban housing with convenient access to downtown restaurants, businesses, and the Vinton Library.
- Macado's announces its redevelopment of the former Vinton Library into a restaurant.
- New pedestrian projects approved for Plantation Road and West Main Street.



#### Fiscal Year 2018

- The approved Fallowater Lane Extension is identified as a major connector to the 419 Town Center Planning Area.
- The Lila Drive Turnaround off Plantation Road is completed and accepted into the VDOT Secondary Road System, providing public access to Elbit Systems (formerly Harris Corporation) and Wells Fargo.
- Funding approved to extend the Roanoke River Greenway through Explore Park to Rutrough Point.
- Redevelopment of former William Byrd High School in Vinton begins to convert the building to urban apartments.
- Route 311 / Route 419 Roundabout project approved with construction scheduled to begin in 2022.



#### Fiscal Year 2019

- Phase I of the Plantation Road Bicycle, Pedestrian and Streetscape Improvement Project is completed from Williamson Road to Walrond Drive, including a shared-use path for pedestrians and bicyclists, street trees, a "Welcome to Hollins" gateway sign, and drainage improvements.
- \$17.5 million Diverging Diamond Interchange near Tanglewood announced.
- The \$12 million redevelopment of the former William Byrd High School into The Billy Byrd apartments is completed.



#### Fiscal Year 2020

- Construction begins to add extra lanes both northbound and southbound Interstate 81 between exits 141 and 143 to ease congestion and improve access to I-581.
- Construction begins on Electric Road between Ogden Road and Route 220, including a third lane between Ogden Road and the Route 220 ramp, sidewalks, bike lanes, pedestrian crosswalks and a bus shelter.
- Funding approved for pedestrian crosswalks and signals on Electric Road at Carriage Lane and Grandin Road in the Oak Grove area, and pedestrian improvements to Williamson Road from North Roanoke Assisted Living to Dent Road.
- Improvements to Route 460 at West Ruritan Road and along Route 460 from Carson Road to Huntridge Road receive SMART SCALE funding.
- Phase II of the Plantation Road Bicycle, Pedestrian and Streetscape Improvement Project begins with completion expected in Spring 2022.







## ENSURE CITIZEN SAFETY



***"True public safety requires a collaboration between law enforcement and the community."***

***- Betsy Hodges***





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ENSURE CITIZEN SAFETY

### New Pay Structure Helps Police Recruit New Officers

When the community spoke about its desires for public safety during the creation of the Community Strategic Plan, concerns about staffing levels and staff retention rose above all others.

This past year, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors voted to approve a new pay structure that addresses police officer recruitment and retention. Human Resource personnel worked with Public Safety administration to create a pay structure to compensate officers based on their years of service and rank. The complete pay structure will be implemented over three years. Similar pay structures have been implemented for the Sheriff's Office and Fire & Rescue Department as well.

The department has already seen the benefits of the new pay structure program, as it has made the department's pay competitive enough to attract experienced, certified officers this summer.

For more information about opportunities within the police force, see the [Police Department's website](#).

### Continued Focus on Mental Health

Mental Health has been a topic of concern among law enforcement leaders over the past several years, mostly due to the negative public perception of police.

While Roanoke County's Police Department enjoys support from its community, officers are not immune from the same stressors affecting other public safety agencies across the nation. Roanoke County Police created a Life Coach position this past year to assist and support officers through the emotional and mental challenges of working in law enforcement. The Police Life Coach will provide support services, training, and serve as a mentor to officers.



*Above and below: Roanoke County Police combines traditional recruitment approaches, such as job fairs, with digital and social media promotion to attract new talent into the ranks. A newly approved pay structure has also allowed the department to be more competitive when recruiting experienced, certified officers from other agencies.*





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ENSURE CITIZEN SAFETY

### Providing Officers the Training and the Tools Needed for Success

In 2020, all sworn personnel received Implicit Bias Training to raise awareness of unconscious bias and teach officers what steps to take to prevent biased attitudes and behaviors from interfering with workplace decisions and interactions. This training, along with Crisis Intervention, Cultural Diversity, and Ethics training sessions, teaches officers some of the most important skills they use during every encounter with citizens.

The Department also purchased a small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) during the past year. The sUAS aids in search and rescue operations, crime scene photography, accident reconstruction, hazmat scene deployment, major disaster scenes, storm damage, fire scenes, and tactical situations.



*Above: The small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) is Roanoke County Police Department's latest tool to enhance public safety, equipped with cameras and infrared technology to assist officers day or night.*

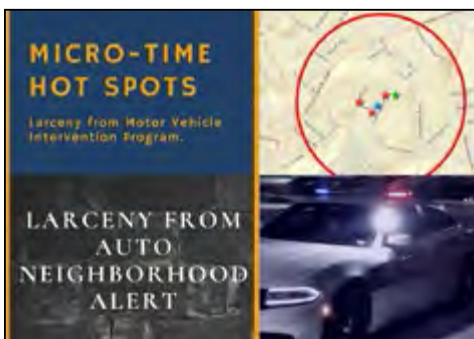
### Roanoke County Criminal Justice Academy Graduates Officers and Jailors

The Roanoke County Criminal Justice Academy serves as the primary resource for Police, Sheriff, Jailors, and 9-1-1 officers. Since July 2020, the Roanoke County Criminal Justice Academy graduated 10 new Police officers, five Sheriff's Deputies, and 12 Jailors for the Western Virginia Regional Jail. The current Law Enforcement Class will graduate in January 2022 and currently has five Roanoke County Police recruits enrolled. Eight additional Jailors for the Western Virginia Regional Jail will graduate in November 2021. The academy also trained nine Communications Officers for Roanoke County's Emergency Communications Center.



*Above: Badges for Roanoke County Criminal Justice Academy graduates. Photo (c) Patrick Perkins Photography.*

### Micro-Time Hot Spot Program Helps Reduce Vehicle Larcenies



The Micro-Time Hot Spot program analyzes crime data from a small area, helping to identify hyper-local trends of criminal activity so officers can increase patrols in these areas. Roanoke County Police also use various methods to alert the surrounding neighborhood about recent activity and explain what measures can be done to prevent future crime. In 2020, Roanoke County Police reported a 30% decrease in vehicle larceny by using the Micro-Time Hot Spot program.



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ENSURE CITIZEN SAFETY



*Above: Cones With A Cop helps build community relations and fosters goodwill for law enforcement within the community.*

### **Community Outreach Remains a Priority for Roanoke County Police**

This year Roanoke County Police continued its “Cones With A Cop” community outreach programs. At these events, community youth and their families enjoy free ice cream and conversations with police officers.

The first event was held at, and sponsored by, Brewster’s Ice Cream on August 16th. Another event sponsored by First National Bank was held on August 24 at North Market Village.

### **Sheriff’s Office and Courts Overcome Pandemic Challenges**

During Fiscal Year 2020-2021, many changes within the courts and jail were a direct result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Admittance to the jail was halted for all civilians which caused a loss of volunteer inmate services, cancellation of all in-person interviews between attorneys and inmates, and halting of video telephone services between inmates and family from the jail lobby.

At the early onset of the pandemic, court hearings were delayed or canceled to minimize exposure to the COVID-19 virus. Additional video conferencing setups were added to four courtrooms last year to allow court hearings to proceed without inmates leaving the jail. This same system was used state-wide, which reduced the number of inmate transports from other jails to Roanoke County’s courts. A video system was set up which allowed inmates to receive mental health, educational, and religious services without close contact to volunteers. These two changes helped ensure continuity of service for the jail population, regardless of changing health guidelines during the pandemic.



*Above: Video systems installed in Roanoke County’s courtrooms allowed hearings to proceed despite restrictions on gatherings and social distancing requirements.*

As mandates were relaxed, the jail lobby was reopened to the public for video visitation to inmates in the County jail and the Western Virginia Regional Jail.

The Sheriff’s Office’s Inmate Services division continued to expand with a partnership between the jail and the Bradley Free Clinic’s Hope Initiative which provides resources to inmates upon their release from incarceration.





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ENSURE CITIZEN SAFETY

### New Hiring Initiatives Brings in New Fire & Rescue Recruits

To ensure that Roanoke County Fire & Rescue system can continue to address the growing needs of citizens, the department began a new hiring initiative in Spring 2021 to recruit career staff into its ranks. The new hiring campaign included videos, social media outreach, and other activities focused on recruiting new paramedics, EMTs, and firefighters. As a result of these efforts, 16 new candidates made it through the hiring process to begin their academy training on October 18, 2021. Soon these new recruits will take their place in the field alongside academy graduates from April and May, 2021.



Above: Twelve new firefighters and EMTs joined the ranks of Roanoke County Fire & Rescue at the April 2021 academy graduation pictured above. An additional four career member joined in May 2021, with another 16 members beginning their training in October 2021.

### Employee Health and Safety

Most of Roanoke County's Fire and Rescue Stations now have a diesel exhaust filtration system. The system is designed for firehouse bay areas. The exhaust removal system is ceiling-mounted in the bay area to protect firefighters from breathing exhaust emissions and off-gases. Its multi-stage filtration process incorporates a unique Photo-Catalytic Oxidizer that effectively neutralizes toxic gases. It also uses germicidal UV light to kill airborne viruses and bacteria. The units operate automatically to continuously filter out contaminants and disperse clean, purified air throughout the facility. This is an effort to reduce carcinogens in the workplace for Fire and EMS personnel.



Above: New air filtration units at most Fire and Rescue stations filter cancer-causing fumes and contaminants to help keep staff and volunteers healthy.



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ENSURE CITIZEN SAFETY

### Fire & Rescue's Pandemic Response Continues

Although the County's pandemic declaration of emergency ended in June 2021, the response related to the virus continued throughout 2020 and 2021. One of the most important steps occurred on December 23, 2020, when local fire chiefs were among the first in the valley to receive their vaccines.

Since then, Roanoke County's Emergency Management Team has continued to work closely with local, state, regional, and federal partners to coordinate the delivery of vaccines to employees and residents of Roanoke County. Another crucial part of the pandemic response was the county's establishment of a Medical Control Unit that set up an accredited virus testing site for the employees of Roanoke County to ensure the continuity of County services and keep County facilities safe for the public.

### Grants Enable Purchases of New EMS Tools

During the past year, grant funding allowed several new pieces of medical equipment to be deployed for Rescue workers. Every run response area in the county now has a Lucas device, an easy-to-use chest compression device that helps deliver high-quality, consistent chest compressions to cardiac arrest patients. New cardiac monitors were also purchased to replace older models, while McGRATH video laryngoscopes were placed in service that help paramedics perform lifesaving intubations in the field.

### Volunteers

The first four months of 2021 brought the graduation of the first Volunteer Fire Academy held jointly with Botetourt County Fire and EMS. On March 23, 11 volunteer firefighters graduated from training and were ready to serve their communities.



*Above: Graduates of the first joint Roanoke County and Botetourt County Volunteer Fire Academy.*





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ENSURE CITIZEN SAFETY

### Public Safety Academy Resumes Classes

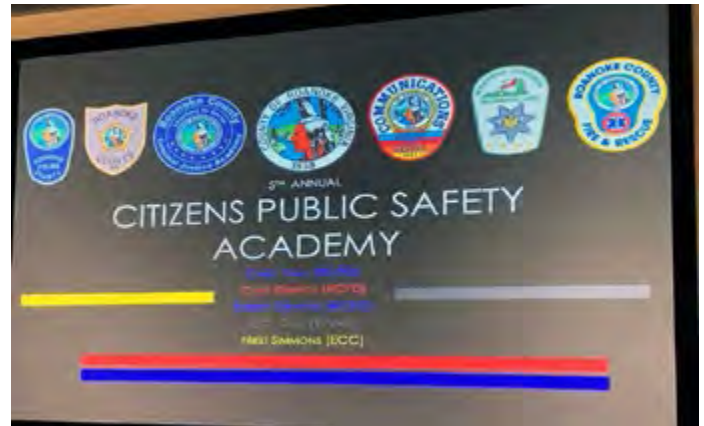
In August 2020, the Public Safety Academy for citizens returned after a previous cancellation by the COVID-19 pandemic. Twenty citizens attended the academy and received training that helps them understand the missions, training, and procedures used to keep Roanoke County safe. The Public Safety Academy also helps Roanoke County's public safety agencies build stronger relationships within the community.

The goal of the Public Safety Academy is to educate citizens on why and how our agencies carry out their missions while working together as a team. Citizens learn about everything related to public safety in Roanoke County. Topics will include patrol, budget, community service officers, school resource officers, driving range, firing range, K9, S.W.A.T, VICE, criminal investigations, evidence collection, and more.

Participants are also allowed hands-on exercises to learn more about Roanoke County Fire & Rescue equipment, rescue techniques, and firefighting methods.

The Sheriff's Department instructs participants about jail history, jury selection, court security, civil process, criminal law, and offers a jail tour to academy attendees.

Each year generally features presentations by the Roanoke County Emergency Communications Center, Virginia's Department of Wildlife Resources, and a tour of the Western Virginia Regional Jail. For more information, visit the [Citizen's Public Safety Academy website](#).



Above: This summer saw the 5th Annual Citizen's Public Safety Academy. The academy is generally lasts 22 weeks and is held at various public safety facilities across the County.



Above and below: Citizens participants get hands-on practice using Fire & Rescue equipment, and even participate in exercises at Roanoke County's firing range and driving course.







## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ENSURE CITIZEN SAFETY

### Highlights of Previous Accomplishments



#### Fiscal Year 2017

- Eleven new Firefighter/EMT positions made available through a \$1 million SAFER grant.
- SOAR (Sober On All Roads) Task Force created through grant funding to combat drunk and drugged driving in the valley.
- Fire & Rescue receives \$1.74 million to replace SCBA breathing equipment and thermal imaging cameras.
- Police establish a South County substation near Cave Spring Middle School.
- Police begin new community outreach with “Coffee with a Cop” and “Cones with a Cop” programs.



#### Fiscal Year 2018

- The Mobile Incident Command application launches to help Police and Fire & rescue manage large-scale emergency incidents. The app receives a 2018 Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Achievement Award and the 2018 National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award for innovation.
- Fire & Rescue creates a new drone program to assist in rescue operations in remote areas.
- Masons Cove Fire & Rescue Station is renovated to support on-duty personnel and volunteers.
- Security enhancements are made to the Roanoke County Courthouse Complex to ensure safe access.
- Public Safety Academy launches to educate citizens on how the Police, the Sheriff's Office, and Fire & Rescue carry out their missions.
- A Regional Threat Assessment Community Partnership is created to help businesses and large organizations to identify report potential threats before an incident occurs.



#### Fiscal Year 2019

- Roanoke County receives the National Weather Service StormReady Designation, in recognition of a community that takes a proactive approach to severe weather preparation and response.
- Vinton Fire/EMS merges with Roanoke County Fire & Rescue.
- Police Chief Hall and Assistant Police Chief Chapman inducted into Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame at George Mason University for implementing research and best practices into the department.
- The City of Salem joins the Roanoke Valley Radio System.
- Regional PSAP system allows Roanoke Valley jurisdictions to integrate 911 systems.



#### Fiscal Year 2020

- Police implement “micro-time host spot” policing strategy to reduce crime.
- The Sheriff upgrades the control room at Roanoke County-Salem Jail to better ensure safety for staff and inmates.
- Fire & Rescue receives ballistic gear to protect first responders during crisis incidents.
- Fire station renovations include a new diesel exhaust system at Clearbrook Fire Station.
- Grant funding allows for the purchase of new thermal imaging cameras and battery-operated extraction tools to help personnel remove victims from remote and tight spaces.





## BE A CARING AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY



***“Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community.”***

***- Anthony J. D'Angelo***





## **CARES Act Grants for Citizens Distributed by Social Services**

Roanoke County Social Services distributed more than \$860,000 in CARES Act funding to help citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic. The department quickly developed policies and procedures to ensure appropriate funding reached the citizens of Roanoke County, Vinton, and Salem in need of assistance.

These grants were crucial in helping many families maintain a stable living environment during the pandemic. Staff processed over 650 applications for assistance, and helped more than 450 residents and families that suffered income loss due to the pandemic. Direct payments to vendors between July and December 2020 enabled these families to stay current on their utilities, rent, and mortgage expenses, and in many cases helped families with additional food assistance. An additional \$10,000 in CARES Act provided 250 food boxes for clients, with staff collaborating with Kroger to package and deliver these boxes to families.

## **New Improvements to Kinship Foster Program**

In late 2020, Roanoke County's Department of Social Services began a complete overhaul of its Kinship practices for youth in the foster care system. The department adopted best practices from across the region to make a new Kinship program that uses a specialized MATCH team to identify, create, and maximize opportunities to engage with a child's prior connections when foster care becomes a risk.

The new Kinship program is making a difference in the lives of foster children. In the six months between December 2020 and June 2021:

- 57 youth were placed in Kinship instead of Foster Care;
- 790 contact letters were sent seeking connections for youth entering Foster Care;
- 1099 cold calls and messages were sent seeking connections for youth in Foster Care;
- 25 identified kinship connections were assessed for approval as a foster home;
- 13 youth in Foster Care found permanent homes out of foster care;
- 15% of all placements made by Roanoke County Social Services utilized Kinship.





## Technology Helps Connect Clients with Services

No one could have predicted the impact COVID-19 would have on the citizens and employees of Roanoke County. Employees of the Roanoke County Department of Social Services were committed to ensuring quality customer service on all fronts during this unprecedented time.

Staff was able to continuously provide services to vulnerable populations through technology provided by Roanoke County's Communications and Information Technology department, which enabled Social Services employees to safely interacting with clients and securely document information for services. By way of secure virtual platforms and remote connectivity, the Department of Social Services' staff was able to comply with state and local mandates concerning the protection and prevention of child and elder abuse.



*Above: New technology allows Social Services workers to connect with clients and deliver services faster. Applications for benefits can be securely received and processed faster, which helps ensure clients' basic needs are met during the pandemic.*

## New CORTAN Partnership with Via Improves Services

In January, Roanoke County began offering its CORTAN services through a partnership with Via. CORTAN services are available to preapproved, eligible County of Roanoke residents who are either at least 70 years old, or who have a disability, and need transportation to and from destinations within the County of Roanoke, Town of Vinton, the City of Salem, and the City of Roanoke.

CORTAN services can be scheduled using a convenient mobile app and many aspects of the program are now digital. For more information about CORTAN and eligibility requirements, visit the [CORTAN website](#).



*Above: A partnership with Via gave Roanoke County's CORTAN program a new look, a new fleet of vehicles, and convenient access to services.*





## Highlights of Previous Accomplishments



### Fiscal Year 2017

- Social Services creates a new Community Outreach Coordinator position to increase foster care awareness and participation.
- Three new Family Support Specialists positions are created to improve the delivery of services.
- Roanoke County increases funding for the Children Services Act (CSA) program.
- Roanoke County Police implements its Mental Health Diversion program to help people in crisis.
- Roanoke County's front line staff receive training in mental health awareness to help better serve citizens in distress.
- Construction of ADA accessible fishing platform at Green Hill Park is completed, along with renovations and drive-through services to the Social Services building.

### Fiscal Year 2018

- Social Services adds four new benefit program specialists with state funds in preparation for Medicaid expansion.
- Social Services staff train with Roanoke County police to increase awareness of dangerous situations to help ensure their safety during their fieldwork.
- Sheriff's Office begins GTO (Growth Through Outreach) program to provide life skills training for young adults with special needs.

### Fiscal Year 2019

- Roanoke Valley STARS and Kinship Fostering programs help youth receive services and while staying within their communities.
- The Virginia Initiative for Education and Work (VIEW) program helps clients with physical, medical, and substance abuse issues access job readiness training to achieve self-sufficiency.
- Medicaid expansion allows many new applicants to apply for services and benefits from Social Services, with more than 2,000 additional applications received and processed by staff.
- Sheriff's Office partners with Roanoke College to create the Inside-Out program, and partners with the Regional Center for Animal Control and Protection to allow inmates to help train dogs for future adoption.

### Fiscal Year 2020

- Social Services continues to serve clients throughout the entire pandemic through its drive-through window and online services, the only DSS in Virginia able to offer this level of service.
- Roanoke County Elections office moves to Craig Center in Vinton to provide a safe and accessible location for the 2020 General Election.
- General Services completed renovations to many County buildings and facilities during the pandemic to ensure the health and safety of staff and citizens while providing for the continuation of vital County services to everyone.



# PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING



***“Education is not preparation for life;  
education is life itself.”***

***- John Dewey***



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

### Roanoke County Public Libraries Make a Shift to Online and Virtual Programs

Roanoke County Public Library's mission is to "guide you from your now to your next." This mission took on a new and ambitious meaning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Last summer, libraries opened their parking lots for curbside services in June to allow patrons to pickup and drop-off holds, sign up for the Summer Reading Program, and pick up craft/STEM kits to do at home. As the year progressed, staff were able to begin reopening libraries for patrons in September 2020.

### Supporting Other Agencies Throughout COVID-19

In addition to transitioning to new online and virtual services and updating library facilities to accommodate COVID-19 protocols, the Library provided key support for first responders, the Treasurer's office, Roanoke County Public Schools, the Census Bureau, the Registrar's office, and the Virginia Department of Health.

The Library hosted three in-person voter registration drives and spent over 140 hours supporting the Virginia Department of Health by making phone calls to help residents register for vaccines. Roanoke County Public Library also circulated 215 Internet hot spots, making it possible for children to do their homework and adults to work from home. To assist taxpayers, drop boxes for tax payments were installed at three libraries while permanent renovations to a former cafe created a drive-up window and satellite office for the Treasurer's Office. More than 4,000 people used the drive-up window last year to pay their taxes.

### Keeping Relevant and In-Touch with Patrons' Needs

Library staff members have been available by telephone seven days a week to deliver reference services, and instituted a "Let's Stay in Touch" program where patrons scheduled weekly calls with library staff to keep connected.



*Above: Roanoke County Public Libraries' community outreach with virtual programs, call-in services, and new online services helped keep residents connected with the resources offered by Library staff.*

Staff also created original programming on YouTube, ranging from storytimes to database tutorials, and worked with Roanoke Valley Television to record children's storytimes for people without Internet access.

New programs such as Couch Trivia, Take & Create craft kits for all ages, and STEM-themed crafts for families all became popular additions to the growing schedule of library programs.

Roanoke County Public Library has continued to offer popular virtual services, adding 10 new databases and more than 2,500 e-books to its collection, ushering in a 133% increase of use in elec-





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

tronic resources, and growing the social media impressions for the Library by 76%.

Reference librarians gathered “Resources for Resilience,” lists of helpful links and organizations for those needing access to health, unemployment, and other critical information.

The Library offered 670 programs drawing 11,500 participants, and distributed take-home crafts and learning kits to over 18,000 patrons of all ages to help alleviate boredom, learn, and entertain themselves while under quarantine.

### Virtual Author Talks and Events

In September, South County Library became the first library in the valley to reopen its doors to patrons as it continued to add services, hours, and staff. Even after reopening, attendance at online programs grew and the library capitalized on the opportunity to add more authors and more topical discussions to its menu of virtual programs.

Zoom allowed staff to host virtual author talks to commemorate several events this year. To help add perspective to Black History Month, Larry



*Above: Virtual author talks via Zoom replaced live events at Roanoke County's Public Libraries this year. Several other events, including Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the 19th Amendment Celebration, and Black History Month were hosted via Zoom as well.*



*Above: Roanoke County Public Libraries began reopening for patrons in September 2020, beginning with reservations at the largest library locations.*

Palmer, author of the memoir *Scholarship Boy*, spoke about his experience of attending an elite private school as a young Black man in the mid-20th Century. Staff also moderated discussions on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, delving into five of his speeches and how his words impact us today.

This year's 19th Amendment Celebration included the Library Director interviews of several leaders from local government, businesses, and non-profits organizations about how women make a difference in our community.

In May, hosted authors Lucinda Robb and Becca Boggs Roberts held a virtual meeting to discuss their new book, *The Suffragist Playbook*, in which they encourage teens to draw from lessons of Suffragists that can be applied to advocacy today, something of growing importance to young people.



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

### **Libraries Become Centers for Community Outreach**

When weather permitted, in-person programming was hosted outdoors to accommodate social distancing. Clever children's librarians designed PVC candy chutes so children could experience Trick-or-Treating in the library parking lots, and hosted a drive-through "Santa on the Rooftop" event.

In addition to printed and audiovisual materials, the library also circulated Happy Lights to patrons, and these have become one of the most popular items offered. Over the past year, media coverage about these efforts has raised public awareness of the value of Roanoke County Public Libraries beyond its brick-and-mortar buildings.

Throughout the pandemic, library staff worked to strengthen connections with its patrons and furthered its reach into the community. All the programs important to patrons before COVID-19 became even more so during the pandemic. By adapting its services, while adding more in re-



*Above: Roanoke County Public Libraries hosted curbside Trick-or-Treating for children last year to give children a safe and socially distanced way to celebrate despite the pandemic.*

sponse to real-time patron needs, Roanoke County Public Library grew its reputation as an agency dedicated to lifelong learning.

### **Roanoke County Public Libraries Receives 2021 VACo Award**



Roanoke County earned recognition for its role in civic engagement by providing continual services to citizens amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The staff transitioned to new service delivery models, increased electronic resources and virtual programs, instituted curbside services, used 3D printers to make face shields for first responders, and adapted their drive-through windows for use by the Treasurer's office.

*Left: Roanoke County Public Libraries received a 2021 Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Achievement Award for its submission "From Crisis to Transformation: Local Solutions to a Global Pandemic."*



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

### Roanoke County Public Schools: A School Division of Innovation

Lifelong learning begins at an early age. From the moment a student walks through the door in preschool or kindergarten, teachers at Roanoke County Public Schools work to help students do more than just learn – our students experience education through “deeper learning,” learning that is engaging and purposeful.

In 2021, Roanoke County Public Schools was among the first school districts in the Commonwealth to earn the distinction as a “School Division of Innovation” by the Va. Department of Education. RCPS is committed to spreading the promise of deeper learning to every student, in every school and in every classroom. The district is in the process of embedding existing curriculum with exemplar deeper learning experiences that are mapped to key skills of citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking.

By the time students graduate, their normal progress through the curriculum will take them through engaging curated lessons designed to push the limits of their creativity and critical thinking. At graduation, students have a portfolio of their work which will demonstrate that they are “Opportunity Ready” and prepared to take advantage of whatever opportunity comes their way.

### Emphasizing the Positive

We are working to develop and promote a culture of kindness, respect and responsibility in our schools. Roanoke County Public Schools is implementing a nationwide program called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS, an evidence-based prevention and intervention program that supports the academic, social, emotional and behavioral competence of all students. There are three main tenants of the PBIS program at Roanoke County Public Schools – *Be Safe, Be Respectful* and *Be Responsible*.

With these three goals in mind, the PBIS program focuses on social and emotional learning, school safety, trauma, school equity, substance abuse prevention, bullying prevention and suicide prevention. Together with our community partners, we are also expanding our bullying prevention efforts with a program called Expect Respect. Through the Expect Respect program we’re helping students understand the basic tenants of being respectful: appropriate behavior, language, personal space, making people feel safe and comfortable. It’s all about creating a great environment for learning that leads to academic success.



*Above: “Deeper Learning” that serves a purpose while engaging students has earned the Roanoke County School district the recognition as a School Division of Innovation.*





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

### Blue Ribbon Achievements

In 2020, we recognized Hidden Valley High School as one of the nation's Blue Ribbon Schools, the most prestigious award any school can receive. Hidden Valley is one of eight schools in the state and the only high school in Virginia to receive this award for 2020. Other past Blue Ribbon schools in Roanoke County are, Cave Spring High School (1983), Clearbrook Elementary (2012), Glenvar High School (1989), Green Valley Elementary (2016), Hidden Valley Middle School (1984), Mountain View Elementary (1988), and Oak Grove Elementary (1986).



*Above: Masking, social distancing and other measures in Roanoke County Public School helped mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in schools.*

### Teaching and Learning During a Pandemic

When school first began for the 2020-2021 school year, Roanoke County Public Schools began with a plan to provide full-time, in person learning for all students in preschool through second grade – one of only a handful of school districts in Virginia to do so. Students in grades 3-12 began the year on a hybrid schedule, which included in-person learning two days a week and online learning three days a week, with an option for 100% online learning. Throughout the school year, we expanded our full-time in-person learning plan to include third grade in late October and fourth grade in late January. By the end of March, all hybrid students in grades 5-12 had returned for in-person learning four days a week.



*Above: Through both online learning and hybrid schedules that returned students to schools, the goal of Roanoke County Public Schools is to give each student the support they need to academically succeed.*

Although there were confirmed cases of COVID among both students and staff during the 2020-2021 school year, contact tracing has shown that nearly every case has been contracted outside of the school setting. The safety measures implemented in our district has helped mitigate the spread of the virus within in our schools.

Recognizing that some students struggled during the previous school year, Roanoke County Public Schools developed the WIN (What I Need) program to help meet the remediation needs of students who may have fallen behind. As the school year progresses, faculty are revising Roanoke County Public Schools' remediation programs in an effort to help students get back on track.



## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

### Highlights of Previous Accomplishments



#### Fiscal Year 2017

- Funding approved for Cave Spring High School renovations.
- New partnerships with Roanoke County Fire & Rescue, Carilion, Radford University, and AEP create new Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs at the Burton Center for Art and Technology (BCAT).



#### Fiscal Year 2018

- Roanoke County Public Library introduces Pepper the Humanoid Robot into programs designed to inspire children and adults.
- New technology programs debut at the Library focused on coding, robotics, and technology classes.
- Medical curriculum at BCAT expands in partnership with Carilion and the Claude Moore Foundation.
- Roanoke County Public Schools has its first Apprentice Signing Day Ceremony and launches its Student Registered Apprentice Program.



#### Fiscal Year 2019

- Roanoke County Public Libraries receive Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Award for "Igniting Wonder Through Technology."
- Libraries expand technology programs through partnerships with Girls Who Code, RobotLAB, Code Club Roanoke, Roanoke Robotics, Makers Club, and Noke Codes.
- Roanoke County Public Libraries recognized with the 2019 Top Innovator Award from the Urban Libraries Council.
- The Library expands technology classes for adults to include Photoshop, Python, Arduino, Linux, and other popular subjects.
- Roanoke County Public Schools releases its 2020 Vision Plan and Opportunity Ready initiative to help students develop creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking skills.



#### Fiscal Year 2020

- Roanoke County Public School adapts to COVID-19 with online learning through the RCPSONline Learning Academy and hybrid school schedules.
- Roanoke County Public Schools receives recognition as a "School Division of Innovation" by the State Board of Education for implementing alternatives to traditional instructional.
- The \$43 million renovation and expansion of Cave Spring High School is completed.
- Roanoke County Public Libraries shift to online platforms to continually provide services throughout the year, including daily Storytime on YouTube, Teen Drama Club on Zoom, Trivia Nights, Book Clubs, and more.
- Library staff implements "Let's Stay In Touch" phone call service for patrons wanting to chat or access live reference assistance, and Zoom sessions to assist people with technology or reference databases.
- Roanoke County Public Libraries add cellular "Hot Spots" to their check-out materials to assist those without Internet connections at home.







# KEEP ROANOKE COUNTY HEALTHY, CLEAN, AND BEAUTIFUL



***"The mountains are calling  
and I must go."***

***- John Muir***





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE KEEP ROANOKE COUNTY HEALTHY, CLEAN, AND BEAUTIFUL

Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism staff continued to provide exceptional and unique recreational services to our citizens this past year. While many existing recreation programs were modified to increase the safety and well-being of citizens, new programs and facilities debuted to help keep both children and adults engaged in healthy activity.

### Day Camps for Children

RoCo Cares Camps were established last year to provide a space for remote learning and recreation-based play for the children of Roanoke County and Roanoke County Public School employees. Designed for children grades three through seven during remote learning days, RoCo Cares Camps were held at Green Ridge Recreation Center, Brambleton Recreation Center, and three school sites across the County. Nearly 300 students attended RoCo Cares Camps during the 2020-2021 school year.

Summer camp returned to Roanoke County in 2021 with the "Passport to Fun" theme. More than 1,200 children ages three to 14 participated in day camp programs at Camp Roanoke, Explore Park, Brambleton Recreation Center, and Green Ridge Recreation Center.

### Parks Grow in Popularity

Parks remained open despite the global health crisis, and according to trail counter data from greenways, trails and parks, the County's parks became more popular than ever before. Explore Park saw a 26% increase in park visitors, and the mountain bike trails experienced a 91% increase in bikers from 2019 to 2020. The Roanoke River Greenway at Green Hill Park had a 46% increase in users, while the Wolf Creek Greenway in Vinton



*Above: Roanoke County's parks, trails, and outdoor amenities became more popular than ever before as people sought safe and open venues for leisure and sport.*

saw a 48% increase in 2020. These statistics show the highest increases of 2020 park usage took place in March, April, and May, and were sustained throughout the summer and fall of 2020.

### Tournaments and Races Support Roanoke County's Economy

Sports marketing efforts continued to provide athletic fields and recreation spaces for tournaments and races in 2020 and 2021. These events stimulate economic development as families and athletes travel to play, stay in local hotels, and shop in businesses throughout the County. The Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association recently signed a four-year extension to host the CIAA Cross Country Championship at Green Hill Park.





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

# KEEP ROANOKE COUNTY HEALTHY, CLEAN, AND BEAUTIFUL

## Explore Park – Where Adventure Begins

### Treetop Quest Sees 10,000 Visitors



Treetop Quest offered a safe and exciting experience for Explore Park visitors with modified operation in 2020 and 2021. In its third year of operation, the aerial adventure course saw over 10,000 visitors. Night zip lines were introduced in 2020 with 237 participants soaring through the trees at night. This experience returned in 2021 with 126 participants through two events. Five more twilight zip line events are scheduled for Fall 2021.

### Explore Park Gets Infrastructure Improvements

Explore Park infrastructure improvements help make the park a destination for citizens and regional visitors. Paving and street light installation along the roadways and parking lots concluded in November 2020, just in time for over 40,000 visitors to enter the Park during Illuminights. Boat ramp improvements finished up in January 2021 at Rutrough Point to improve vehicle access for individuals launching canoes or kayaks into the Roanoke River. These and other improvements continue to expand the community vision for Explore Park as a premier destination for outdoor recreation.

### Camping, Tubing & Camping Rentals Grow

Blue Mountain Adventures continued its success at Explore with 715 campsite bookings this past year, with the addition of five new Whitewater Canopy campsites. Blue Mountain Adventures also expanded its rental options in 2021 to include kayaks, paddle boards, and mountain bikes. Don's Cab-Inns also saw growth in cabin and yurt rentals at Explore Park, with 2,910 nights booked in fiscal year 2021.

### New Mountain Bike Features Added

The Blue Ridge Bike Center at Explore Park opened to the public in June 2021. This marked the completion of the first phase of a progressive bike skills park, which includes a skills loop and intermediate connector trail. Trail design, engineering and construction for this project were funded through a Recreational Trails Program grant from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. Explore Park's Voyager Trail also opened in June, and this advanced trail was constructed with the help of a community partner, Blue Ridge Off-Road Cyclists.







## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

# KEEP ROANOKE COUNTY HEALTHY, CLEAN, AND BEAUTIFUL



## Illuminights Shines Bright in 2020

Illuminights returned to Explore Park on November 20, 2020, and the 36-night event took place through January 2, 2021. In 2020, attendance was 40,319, despite COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing measures in place. Explore Park's Winter Walk of Lights will return in 2021 for 35 nights, from November 20, 2021, to December 30, 2021.

## Keeping Our Community Clean & Healthy

Roanoke County's Solid Waste staff works every day to help keep Roanoke County free from trash and garbage. Last year, the County's 23 trash trucks operated along 36 routes each week and in fiscal year 2021, Solid Waste collected 4,314 tons of total waste from the curbs outside Roanoke County homes.



Above: Roanoke County's Solid Waste Workers were recognized during June's Waste & Recycling Workers Week for all they do to keep our community clean.



Above: Staff from Lionberger Construction and Saint Francis Service Dogs proudly display their Stormwater Clean Award banner.

In May 2021, Roanoke County's Development Services Department recognized Lionberger Construction's Saint Francis Service Dogs Pavilion project with the Stormwater Clean Award. Recently, the department recognized both AEP's Glenmary Substation Project and the Tanglewood Shops A&B Project by EDC with Stormwater Clean Awards.

Since 2017, these awards have recognized contractors that work to protect the County's natural water resources from sediment-laden stormwater runoff during construction, an important part of keeping our community's streams and waterways healthy.





## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

# KEEP ROANOKE COUNTY HEALTHY, CLEAN, AND BEAUTIFUL

## Highlights of Previous Accomplishments



### Fiscal Year 2017

- Federal Land Access Program (FLAP) Grants allow development to begin to connect the East Roanoke River Greenway to Explore Park.
- Jae Valley Park property is acquired, in collaboration with Roanoke City.
- Stream improvements to Glade Creek in Vinyard Park, Murray Run, and drainage channel improvements in The Orchards subdivision.
- Contractor Appreciation / Stormwater Clean Awards program implemented.



### Fiscal Year 2018

- Roanoke County places as the 99th Healthiest Community out of 3,000 communities across the nation, as ranked by US News and World Report.
- Partnerships with Blue Mountain Adventures and Don's Cab-Inns bring new amenities and lodging options to Explore Park.
- Mayflower Disc Golf Course opens adjacent to Explore Park, ranked in the Top 5 disc golf courses in Virginia.
- Virginia's Blue Ridge (VBR) is named a Silver Level Ride Center by the International Mountain Bicycling Association, making Roanoke County and surrounding areas a mountain bike destination for enthusiasts.
- Roanoke County officially opens Jae Valley Park with access to Back Creek, connecting the park by water to Explore Park five miles downstream, a gateway to the Roanoke Valley Blueway system.
- The Neighborhood Concerns application launches, allowing citizens to easily report zoning code violations to County staff. The app receives both the 2018 PTI Technology Solutions Award and the 2018 National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award.



### Fiscal Year 2019

- Hinchee Park officially opens, giving residents access to 235+ acres of woodland preserve and access to Carvins Cove Natural Reserve.
- Jae Valley Park development receives the 2019 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award.
- Treetop Quest aerial adventure course opens at Explore Park.
- Twin Creeks Brewing announces an agreement to reopen the historic Brugh Tavern at Explore Park.
- Extensive stormwater improvements made to Belle Meade Drive, Glade Creek in Vinyard Park, and Mud Lick Creek in Garst Mill Park.



### Fiscal Year 2020

- The first Illuminights event in December 2019 sees more than 43,000 visitors, and later wins the 2020 Achievement Award from the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo).
- A Virginia Outdoor Foundation Forest CORE grant enables Roanoke County to purchase 304 acres on Read Mountain to create the Read Mountain Preserve.
- Development staff completes 20 emergency projects across the County brought on by spring floods.
- Development Services expands services to help citizens and developers access permits and approvals online through its Public Access Portal.



## 2021 AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS



**Roanoke County** placed third in the nation on the 2021 Digital Counties Survey by the Center for Digital Government and the National Association of Counties.



**Communications and Information Technology** received both a Comp/TIA Solution Award and a National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award for its "Public Access Portal for Online Permitting." GIS staff also received NaCo Achievement Awards for the "PlanView", "Scanned Plans", and "ParkView" web applications.



**Roanoke County's Economic Development Department** won a 2021 Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Achievement Award for the "Town of Vinton Revitalization Project," while **Roanoke County Public Libraries** received a 2021 VACo Achievement Award for "From Crisis to Transformation: Local Solutions to a Global Pandemic."



**Roanoke County Economic Development** also received won 2021 Excellence in Economic Development Award from the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) for the "Town of Vinton Business District Revitalization Project." The project received a Bronze Rank across a field of more than 500 award submissions from four countries.



**Roanoke County's Finance Department** received Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Budget for the 34th consecutive year. Finance also received GFOA's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the 37th consecutive year.



The **Reimagine 419 Plan** won the Platinum award for the "Best Idea for the Valley's Future" category in the Roanoker Magazine's Best of 2021 issue. The Reimagine plan envisions a mixed-use corridor with multi-modal access that revitalizes the area around Tanglewood Mall.



## VISION STATEMENT

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

*- Roanoke County Board of Supervisors, January 2016*

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*Back Cover Photo courtesy Roanoke County Fire & Rescue, drone pilot Christopher Lacy.*



# ROANOKE COUNTY VA

COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN  
2021 ANNUAL REPORT