

Economic Development Focus Group



Below is the meeting summary for the third Economic Development Focus Group meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to select approximately three objectives for each goal established at the second meeting. All of the Focus Group information will be incorporated into the Community Strategic Plan document which will be considered by the Board of Supervisors later this year.

Meeting Date: 4/7/2016

Recorder: Becky James

Meeting Location: Vinton War Memorial

Number of Participants: 37

Number of Small Groups: 3

Host: Supervisor Jason Peters

Lead Staff: Jill Loope and Philip Thompson

Staff Facilitators: Brian Hughes, Anne Marie Green, Tori Williams, Jay Brenchick, Becky James and Jimmy Lyon

* * * * *

Topics with Top Three Goals

Topic 1: Infrastructure

Goal 1. Invest in technological infrastructure and site improvements.

Goal 2. Support improvements to the region's multi-modal transportation system.

Goal 3. Encourage and plan for the development of attractive, mixed-use walkable communities.

Topic 2: Regional Cooperation and Marketing

Goal 1. Enhance regional cooperation for economic development.

Goal 2. Proactively market and advertise the region.

Goal 3. Promote and assist local business activity.

Topic 3: Workforce Development

Goal 1. Support lifelong learning (K through Gray) to train and enhance the workforce.

Goal 2. Target industries for workforce development.

Goal 3. Focus on regional solutions and regional partners for workforce development.

Objective Development: All Objectives Discussed for Each Goal

Topic 1: Infrastructure

Goal 1. Invest in technological infrastructure and site improvements.

Objective 1: Extend high speed internet (gigabit) and affordable broadband to business parks, commercial corridors and residential districts. Incorporate wireless service where appropriate.

Objective 2: Ease government regulations for new site development, including coordination with DEQ for stormwater credit program.

Objective 3: Implement a regional wayfinding program/system, including "Welcome To" signage along major corridors in Roanoke County.

Objective 4: Coordinate and create programs with private property owners within specific growth areas to improve real estate inventory and expand the existing Roanoke County database of available properties.

Objective 5: Coordinate with the Roanoke Regional Partnership and Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facilities Authority in increasing the number of pad ready (a lot available for development) sites within Roanoke County.

Goal 2. Support improvements to the region's multi-modal transportation system.

Objective 1: Preliminary plan the construction of a "beltway" around Roanoke County to improve transportation access.

Objective 2: Improve air service with more flights to new markets and make more affordable. In addition, research and engage Lynchburg concerning the construction of a new airport.

Objective 3: Support the widening of I-81, Route 460 and Route 220/I-73. In addition, improve safety improvements and access along these interstates.

Objective 4: Create a bike friendly community.

Objective 5: Improve Interstate exits, including lighting, along I-81. In addition, within Roanoke County, improve the traffic lighting system, specifically the synchronization of lights.

Objective 6: Extend bus transit service into Roanoke County.

Objective 7: Assist Roanoke City with commuter rail (Amtrak) service.

Objective 8: Complete the Roanoke River Greenway from Explore Park to Green Hill Park and provide lineages to Southwest County. In addition, improve safety, services and amenities along the existing Greenway trail.

Goal 3. Encourage and plan for the development of attractive, mixed-use, walkable communities.

Objective 1: Conduct planned studies for different development areas of Roanoke County – with outside firm assistance if possible.

Objective 2: Establish uniform development standards for Commercial Matching Grant Program and expand program County wide.

Objective 3: Create mixed-use zoning designation and amend the Roanoke County Zoning Ordinance to include sidewalks for redevelopment areas.

Objective 4: Identify and prioritize properties for redevelopment, focusing on industrial and commercial zoned districts.

Objective 5: Create lifestyle and activity areas in commercial areas.

Topic 2: Regional Cooperation and Marketing

Goal 1. Enhance regional cooperation for economic development.

Objective 1: Leverage social media and grassroots campaign to attract business.

Objective 2: Develop shared database on regional projects and inventory of available sites for development.

Objective 3: Proactively support promotion and expansion of regional greenways and blueways.

Objective 4: Actively participate in the Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority.

Objective 5: Evaluate effectiveness of County business incentive programs.

Objective 6: Schedule regular briefings on economic development projects to regional organizations.

Objective 7: Establish regular meetings between economic development departments across the region to align marketing efforts.

Objective 8: Improve and expand revenue sharing between localities on regional projects.

Objective 9: Develop method to assess current and potential needs of business.

Goal 2. Proactively market and advertise the region.

Objective 1: Promote distinguished livability brand of Roanoke County.

Objective 2: Provide oversight and on-going evaluation of regional marketing programs.

Objective 3: Adopt and continuously promote Virginia's Blue Ridge brand.

Objective 4: Evaluate regulatory hurdles to advertising business, and community events and organizations, including use of electronic signs.

Objective 5: Leverage and modernize County social media marketing efforts.

Objective 6: Explore what types of business should be recruited based on demographics of our region/market.

Objective 7: Promote educational opportunities to attract visitors and business.

Objective 8: Proactively recruit targeted business and industrial sectors.

Objective 9: Evaluate regional marketing budget and compare with other similarly sized regions.

Objective 10: Promote consensus/awareness on regional identity/brand.

Goal 3. Promote and assist local business activity.

Objective 1: Explore collaboration and partnerships with the life sciences sector (Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute).

Objective 2: Evaluate regulatory environment governing small business.

Objective 3: Modernize zoning codes to include mixed-use development.

Objective 4: Create one-stop shop for business assistance on a regional level, including promotion of Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs).

Objective 5: Develop County business assistance/incentive grant program to retain and expand existing business.

Objective 6: Create infrastructure or mechanism for co-working space in Roanoke County.

Objective 7: Conduct a survey of existing business to determine needs.

Topic 3: Workforce Development

Goal 1. Support lifelong learning (K through Gray) to train and enhance the workforce.

Objective 1: Develop mentoring program, apprenticeships and neighbor to neighbor teaching.

Objective 2: Offer incentives for skill education and encourage community colleges and high school to participate.

Objective 3: Collaborate with local higher education institutions.

Objective 4: Target career changers.

Objective 5: Support STEM education.

Objective 6: Enhance early childhood education programs.

Objective 7: Connect workers to jobs through online resources.

Objective 8: Creation and marketing of scholarships for mid-career individuals.

Objective 9: Promote available resources in Roanoke County Library facilities.

Objective 10: Equalize vocation and college tracks in high school.

Goal 2. Target industries for workforce development.

Objective 1: Develop job fairs for career readiness

Objective 2: Market Roanoke Valley to needed workers and offer them incentives to come.

Objective 3: Identify unemployed and connect to education and jobs.

Objective 4: Create common platform to gather workforce needs data.

Objective 5: Determine needed skill sets of business region wants and attract and connect VWCC to provide classes.

Goal 3. Focus on regional solutions and regional partners for workforce development.

Objective 1: Promote the use of social media.

Objective 2: Construct a clearinghouse to connect businesses with skilled workers and students – high school and college level.

Objective 3: Connect with existing businesses to determine the needs of the workforce.

Objective 4: Enhance skills for workforce advancement. Teaching skills to advance at current company.

Objective 5: Involve local high schools in regional partnerships, including career and technical education (CTE), Magnet Programs (Governor's School) for CTE.

Objective 6: Support cooperative and work study programs.

Objective 7: Promote apprenticeships for high school credit.

Objective Development: Group Consensus on Top Three Objectives for Each Goal

Topic 1: Infrastructure

Goal 1. Invest in technological infrastructure and site improvements.

Objective 1: Ease government regulations for new site development, including coordination with DEQ for stormwater credit program.

Objective 2: Extend high speed internet (gigabit) and affordable broadband to business parks, commercial corridors and residential districts. Incorporate wireless service where appropriate.

Objective 3: Coordinate with the Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facilities Authority in increasing the number of prepared sites within Roanoke County.

Goal 2. Support improvements to the region's multi-modal transportation system.

Objective 1: Improve air service with more flights to new markets and make more affordable. In addition, research and engage Lynchburg concerning the construction of a new airport.

Objective 2: Improve Interstate exits, including lighting, along I-81. In addition, within Roanoke County improve the traffic lighting system, specifically the synchronization of lights.

Objective 3: Complete the Roanoke River Greenway from Explore Park to Green Hill Park and provide linages to Southwest County. In addition, improve safety, services and amenities along the existing Greenway trail

Goal 3. Encourage and plan for the development of attractive, mixed-use, walkable communities.

Objective 1: Create mixed-use zoning designation and amend the Roanoke County Zoning Ordinance to include sidewalks for redevelopment areas.

Objective 2: Establish uniform development standards for Commercial Matching Grant Program and expand program County wide.

Objective 3: Identify and prioritize properties for redevelopment, focusing on industrial and commercial zoned districts.

Topic 2: Regional Cooperation and Marketing

Goal 1. Enhance regional cooperation for economic development.

Objective 1: Improve and expand revenue sharing between localities on regional projects.

Objective 2: Evaluate effectiveness of County business incentive programs.

Objective 3: Establish regular meetings between economic development departments across the region to align marketing efforts.

Goal 2. Proactively market and advertise the region.

Objective 1: Proactively recruit targeted business and industrial sectors.

Objective 2: Explore what types of business should be recruited based on demographics of our region/market.

Objective 3: Adopt and continuously promote Virginia's Blue Ridge brand.

Goal 3. Promote and assist local business activity.

Objective 1: Conduct a survey of existing business to determine needs.

Objective 2: Create one-stop shop for business assistance on a regional level, including promotion of SBDC.

Objective 3: Modernize zoning codes to include mixed-use development.

Topic 3: Workforce Development

Goal 1. Support lifelong learning (K through Gray) to train and enhance the workforce.

Objective 1: Equalize vocation and college tracks in high school.

Objective 2: Offer incentives for skill education and encourage community colleges and high school to participate.

Objective 3: Collaborate with local higher education institutions.

Goal 2. Target industries for workforce development.

Objective 1: Determine needed skill sets of business region wants and attract and connect VWCC to provide classes.

Objective 2: Create common platform to gather workforce needs data.

Objective 3: Identify unemployed and connect to education and jobs.

Economic Development Focus Group



Goal 3. Focus on regional solutions and regional partners for workforce development.

Objective 1: Promote apprenticeships for high school credit.

Objective 2: Involve local high schools in regional partnerships, including career and technical education (CTE), Magnet Programs (Governor's School) for CTE.

Objective 3: Construct a clearinghouse to connect businesses with skilled workers and students – high school and college level.