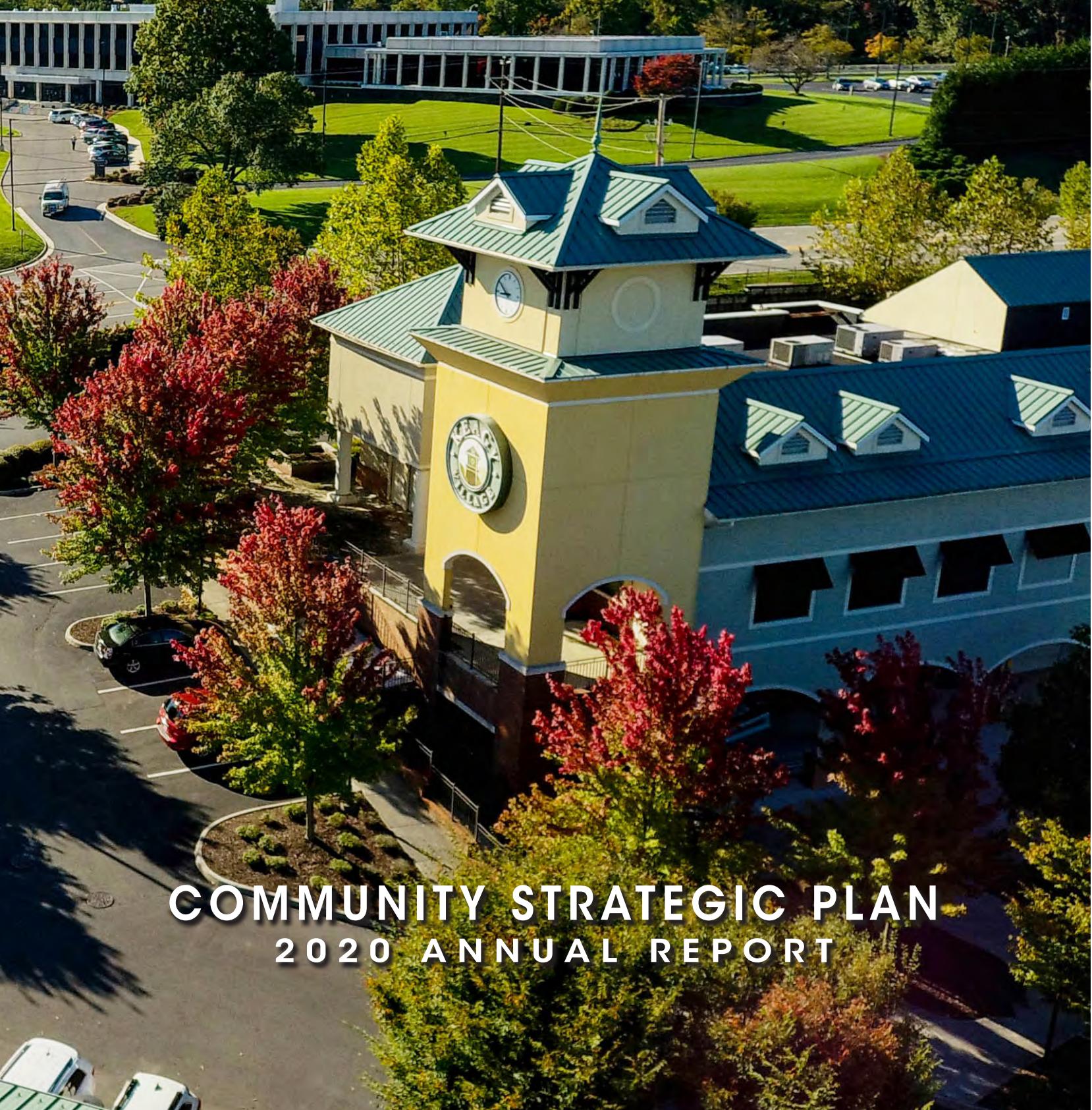




**ROANOKE
COUNTY VA**



**COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN
2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAIRMAN

In March of this year, COVID-19 made its way from the news headlines into the very heart of our daily lives. While our community has not been as ravaged as others, we have witnessed the loss of local jobs, the closings of some Roanoke County businesses, the closing of our schools, and the virus's effects on both our personal lives and the health of our local economy.

Despite these challenges, Roanoke County has weathered this storm better than many other communities. Throughout this difficult season, one thing we have not sacrificed is our duty to serve the citizens of Roanoke County. While our buildings may have been closed for a brief time, we continued providing vital services to our residents by phone, email, drive-through windows, and even under outdoor tents.

Through the use of CARES Act funding, we have offered grants to help local businesses keep the doors open, and we have been able to ensure support to those with the greatest need in our community. We will continue to provide the services that make Roanoke County a "community of choice," and a place where we not only weather the storm, but come out stronger on the other side.

As we travel the road to recovery together in the coming months, I encourage everyone to stay safe, be vigilant, and stay healthy.



*David F. Radford,
Windsor Hills Magisterial District
2020 Board of Supervisors Chair*

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, with advanced emergency planning, prudent use of our budget, and the adaptability of our amazing employees, we have been able to provide continuous service to our citizens.

I have seen firsthand how Roanoke County's staff has risen to the challenge of serving our citizens in difficult times. While many employees moved to work outside of our regular offices, others remained on-site to serve citizens with permitting, personal property, development needs, and other services by appointment. The administrative work of Roanoke County never paused this spring, and our incident command team met daily to coordinate services, plan on how best to reopen public buildings, and coordinate our regional response efforts with other local governments.

Public health and safety always remained our top priority and we have made renovations to many of our public spaces to safeguard both our staff and the public. I would like to thank our citizens for their patience as we restored services from the Library and Parks, Recreation and Tourism, and our other public-facing departments in the safest ways possible.

As you read this year's Community Strategic Plan Annual Report, I hope that you'll learn more about the actions taken by departments to ensure your safety while continuing to provide best-in-class service throughout this challenging time.



*Dan O'Donnell,
Roanoke County Administrator*

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF A PANDEMIC

Despite the closure of public buildings earlier this year to limit the spread of COVID-19, departments and staff were able to provide access to vital services for Roanoke County's residents throughout the spring and summer.

MARCH

March 12 - Virginia Governor Declares State of Emergency

March 30 - Virginia Governor Issues Stay At Home Order

APRIL

MAY

Phase 1 Reopening - May 15

JUNE

Phase 2 Reopening - June 12

JULY

Phase 3 Reopening - July 1

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER
OCTOBER

Board of Supervisors declares a local emergency on March 17, 2020.

County offices and facilities closed to the public effective March 23, 2020. Modified Services begin.

Staff begins delivering services remotely via email, telephone, and by appointment.

Permits and Development Review provided outside in tent location to accommodate social distancing.

Treasurer opens satellite facilities at South County Library. Library launches virtual programs for children, teens, and adults.

Roanoke County Schools closed March 24.

Social Services continues assisting clients through its drive-thru window.

Treasurer announces satellite facilities at additional Library locations.

Elections Office moves to the Craig Center at 900 Chestnut Street in Vinton to provide safer access for citizens.

Parks and Recreation reopens outdoor programs at Explore Park.

Library offers curbside returns and pickup of materials.

Green Ridge Recreation Center fitness facilities reopen.

Brambleton Center classes resume.

Board of Supervisors authorizes the Treasurer to extend the deadline to pay personal property taxes without penalty until August 1.

Roanoke County Administration Center reopens to the public.

Green Ridge Recreation Center indoor pool reopens.

Social Services reopens lobby to serve clients.

Picnic Shelter Rentals resume.

Roanoke County Public Schools reopen.

Library begins phased reopening of select locations.

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<u>Position Roanoke County for Future Economic Growth.....</u>	<u>7-10</u>
<u>Promote Neighborhood Connections</u>	<u>11-12</u>
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<u>Keep Roanoke County Healthy, Clean and Beautiful</u>	<u>19-21</u>
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ABOUT THIS UPDATE...

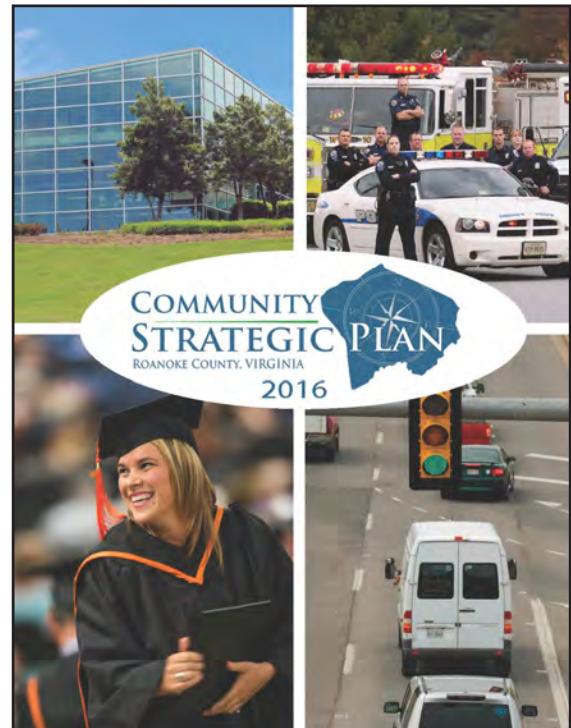
Roanoke County's 2016 Community Strategic Plan was designed as a five-year plan to guide the pursuit of seven key Strategic Initiatives within the budget and resource limits available to the County. These seven initiatives reflect the vision statement adopted by the Board of Supervisors in January 2016, that "Roanoke County is a vibrant, innovative, and scenic community that values its citizens, heritage, and quality of life."

Development of the Community Strategic Plan involved public input from hundreds of telephone surveys, multiple stakeholder interviews, and a series of community-based focus groups held over nine weeks.

Annual Community Strategic Plan Updates provide Roanoke County's citizens information about the many projects, programs, and activities that support the Strategic Initiatives of this community-based plan.

This 2020 Community Strategic Plan Update follows previous updates from 2017, 2018, and 2019, marking four years since the original plan's adoption by the Board of Supervisors in August 2016. The updates inside this document highlight significant achievements since the publication of the previous Community Strategic Plan Update in 2019.

To view the original 2016 Community Strategic Plan and the annual reports, please visit www.roanokecountyva.gov/csp.



Above: The Board of Supervisors adopted the Community Strategic Plan in August 2016.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE
CONNECT ROANOKE COUNTY TO THE WORLD



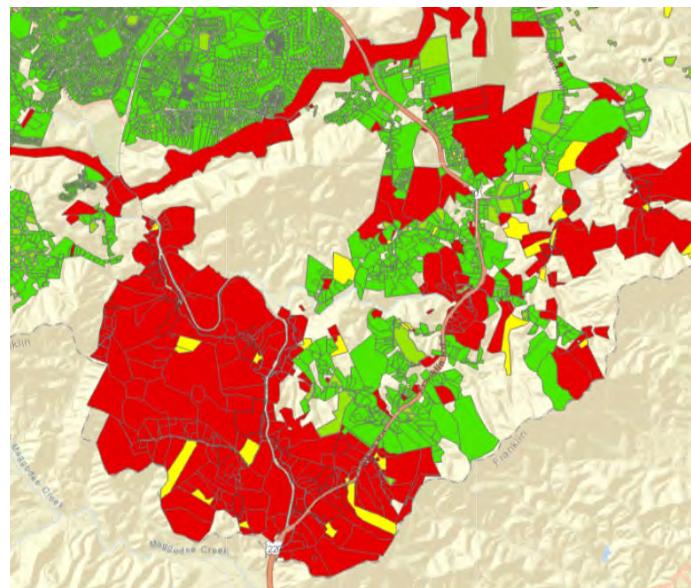
Roanoke County Begins Broadband Study

In December 2019 Roanoke County's Communications and Information Technology Department launched a Broadband Study to identify areas under-served or unserved by high-speed Internet.

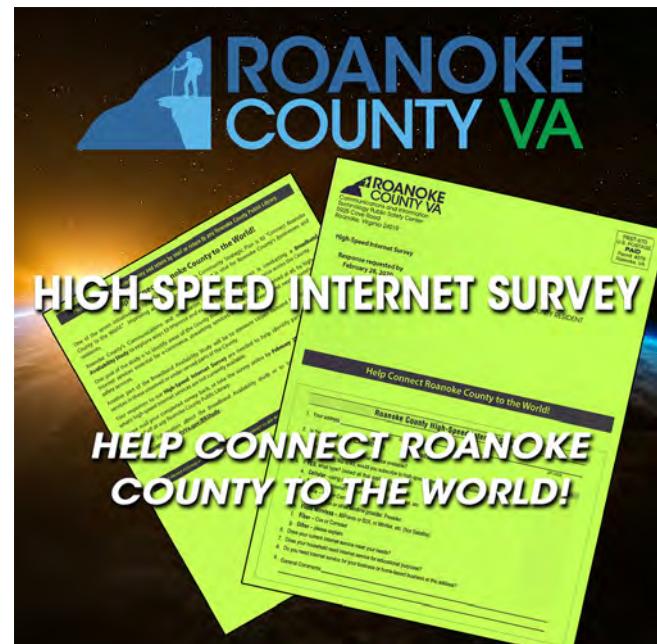
A High-Speed Internet Survey of Roanoke County households began in December 2019 with an online survey, followed by 10,250 postcard surveys mailed to targeted households in outlying parts of the County. Nearly 14,000 additional printed surveys were distributed to student households through Roanoke County schools in January 2020. More than 2,600 surveys were returned, and the results were plotted using GIS mapping technology to present an overview of areas within the County that lack access to high-speed Internet services.

Survey Results

Significant areas of the County without high-speed Internet access include the Catawba Valley and Bradshaw Road areas, the Cove Hollow Road neighborhood, the Bent Mountain community, and a section of homes on Mary's Way/Ivyland Road, and areas on Starlight Lane south of the Blue Ridge Parkway. County staff used this information to issue a formal Request for Proposal to



Above: GIS mapping of the Starlight Lane area visually shows clusters of residences without access to high-speed Internet services.



Above: More than 24,000 surveys were sent to Roanoke County residents asking about their existing Internet connectivity.

private sector broadband providers for the Construction, Design, Operation and Maintenance of Broadband Expansion in these areas. Through an interview and competitive process, the bid for broadband services was tentatively awarded to Cox Communications contingent upon receiving State funds for the project.

VATI Grant Application in August 2020

In August 2020, staff submitted an application to the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) grant program administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. The VATI grant program is intended to help extend broadband services to unserved communities.

This State grant program, coupled with local matching funds, provides funds to build broadband infrastructure in places that otherwise would not be economically feasible for private sector broadband providers. The VATI program requires applicants to be a partnership between a unit of local government and a private sector broadband provider. The Cox Communication proposal formed the scope of the grant application. Awards of State funds will be announced in January 2021.

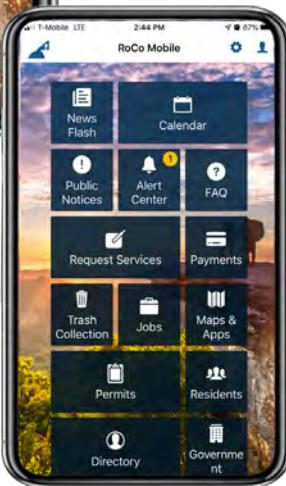


STRATEGIC INITIATIVE CONNECT ROANOKE COUNTY TO THE WORLD

Coming Soon: RoCo Mobile Access to County Services



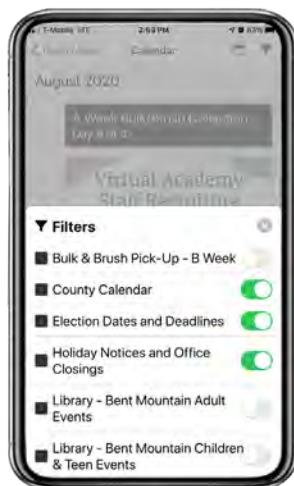
**RoCo Mobile
Coming Soon to
the App Store and
Google Play!**



One-touch access to the most frequently requested information and services.



See the latest news, alerts, and calendar events arranged by category.



Use custom filters to only view the categories that matter most to you.

Local Websites Win National Awards



In September 2020, [Roanoke County's website](#) earned a coveted Pinnacle Award from the National Association of Government Web Professionals. Other local municipal Pinnacle Award winners included the [Regional Center for Animal Care and Protection \(RCACP\)](#) and the [Town of Vinton](#). Congratulations to all the teams who created websites that provide residents best-in-class services online!

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE
POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH



Mack Trucks Opens New Facility in Roanoke County



Above: Ribbon-cutting in January 2020 featuring Gov. Northam, Chairman Radford, Mack President Martin Weissburg, and other officials. Photo courtesy RVT-3, Elaine Bays Murphy.

On January 30, Mack Trucks announced the opening of a new medium-duty truck manufacturing facility with a ribbon-cutting, featuring Governor Ralph Northam, Mack President Martin Weissburg, and Roanoke County Chairman David Radford. The \$13 million investment will bring more than 250 new jobs to Roanoke County and the region. The facility is home to the new Mack MD Series, the first vehicle line manufactured in Virginia from prototype to production. The deal was made possible in part by a \$700,000 grant from the Commonwealth's Opportunity Fund, a matching performance grant from Roanoke County, and assistance from the Virginia Jobs Investment Program.



Above: The medium-duty truck being produced at the factory in Glenvar.



Above: Mack President Weissburg and Chairman Radford. Photo courtesy RVT-3, Elaine Bays Murphy.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

First Team Announces the All-New First Team Volkswagen

On March 3rd, First Team Auto expanded its footprint in the Hollins area with the announcement of a new \$3 million state-of-the-art Volkswagen Sales and Service center. The new 15,000 plus square foot facility features a modern two-story showroom and completes First Team Auto Mall's plan to offer one-stop shopping for all automotive needs. The center will feature charging stations and service facilities to accommodate VW's Carbon-Free Future initiative as well as the ability to serve its guests in a facility that reflects the high-quality service and amenities desired and expected by its customers.



Above: A rendering of the new First Team Volkswagen. This project represents the 9th expansion of the First Team Automotive Group in Western Virginia over the past 30 years.

SpringHill Suites Coming to Hollins

A new 86-room, four-story SpringHill suites by Marriott was approved for construction in the Hollins area. Presented as an upper-moderate brand, this \$12 million project will be an all-suite hotel located near Gander Outdoors.



County Receives Opportunity Zone Grant for Wood Haven Area

Roanoke County received a \$15,000 Community Development Block Grant to procure a professionally developed marketing prospectus for the County's Opportunity Zone located around the Wood Haven Technology Park properties. Created by the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, Opportunity Zones attract investment through preferential tax treatment. Roanoke County's zone is located at the intersection of Interstates 81 and 581 and contains 33 parcels totaling nearly 200 acres of undeveloped or underdeveloped land targeted and zoned for industrial, commercial, or multi-family development.

POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH



Grants Help County Businesses Survive the COVID-19 Pandemic

In the summer of 2020, Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton established a \$1.1 million grant program using federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding. An additional \$200,000 was added to the program in October. The program provided one-time grants of up to \$10,000 to small businesses affected by closures due to the virus. The first-come, first-served grants helped over 200 eligible businesses cover operational costs, pivot to new market conditions, deep clean their facilities, and more.

Governor Northam awarded Roanoke County a \$20,000 Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development FUND (AFID) grant for the Catawba Sustainability Center project: *Supporting Forest Farmers and Meeting COVID-related Medicinal Plant Demand in Western Virginia*. The grant provides Roanoke County the opportunity to provide immediate aid to land-owners and farmers impacted by COVID-19, while meeting the demand for herbal medicines such as goldenseal.

Virginia Career Works Blue Ridge Region provided \$16,466 in layoff aversion grants to four Roanoke County businesses to help purchase equipment for personal protection and teleworking to help keep local businesses operational during the pandemic.

Economic Development Featured in Virginia Town & City Magazine

Economic Development strategies were featured in the June 2020 Virginia Town & City Magazine, highlighting the long-term benefits of place-making strategies and infrastructure investments. Roanoke County's Reimagine planning efforts were central to the theme of the article, highlighting successful efforts in securing nearly \$30 million for future transportation projects along the 419 Corridor.

By Thomas Rowley

When is a road more than just a road?

Route 419: Place making and the art of leveraging

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE long relied on tax breaks, grants, and other incentives to lure industry to their communities to create jobs and increase the local tax base. Alongside such "deal making," more and more localities are now adding another economic development tool: "place making." Like those other incentives, however, place making can be expensive. In fact, it can be very expensive depending on what needs to be done to make a place into an economic development asset. Moreover, the return on investment can take years, if not decades, to materialize, all of which makes it even more difficult to identify and commit funds to the project.

Still, the benefits of place making are expansive, with aesthetic,

Route 419: Reimagining a Town Center

From its early days in the 1970s, the 1.1-mile Route 419 corridor has served as the County's primary highway connecting the northern district of Roanoke to the south. In its current form, however, the area suffers from a limited availability of easily developable land, a near complete dependence on automobiles to bring in business, traffic congestion, outdated buildings, multiple state vacancies, and an overall lack of planned new investment. Its assets include a prime location with proximity to Interstate 81.

Small Business Recovery Grant

ROANOKE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton have established a \$1,000,000 Grant Fund to support small business recovery following the COVID-19 outbreak. One-time grants of up to \$10,000 are being provided to offset business impacts during the pandemic. The grant program will be administered by the Roanoke County Department of Economic Development and the Economic Development Authority.

Applications will be posted and accepted beginning July 6, 2020.

FUNDING SOURCE

The U.S. Treasury guidance allows states to use Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) dollars for expenditures "related to the provision of grants to small businesses to reimburse the costs of business interruption caused by required closure." The Commonwealth of Virginia has elected to disperse a portion of its allocation to local governments. The Roanoke County Board of Supervisors has elected to use part of the County's allocation to help preserve small business in Roanoke County by providing grants to eligible businesses.

ELIGIBLE GRANT USES

Grant funds must be expended in compliance with state and federal law. Funds may be used to reimburse the cost of business interruption caused by required closures, which may include:

- Operations (i.e., payroll, rent, supplies, utilities, working capital, insurance, etc.)
- Pivot to respond to new market conditions (i.e., develop or expand online sales/ e-commerce, pivot or take out; develop new product line, etc.)
- Equipment and inventory purchases
- Rent or mortgage expenses
- Deep cleaning services, PPE, protective barriers, etc.
- Other critical operating expenses

How to Apply:

Electronic applications are being accepted beginning July 6, 2020 and will be available on the Roanoke County Economic Development Website at www.yesroanoke.com

For More Information:

Secondo@RoanokeCountyVA.gov
(540) 772-2049

Virtual Economic Development Town Hall Highlights County Development

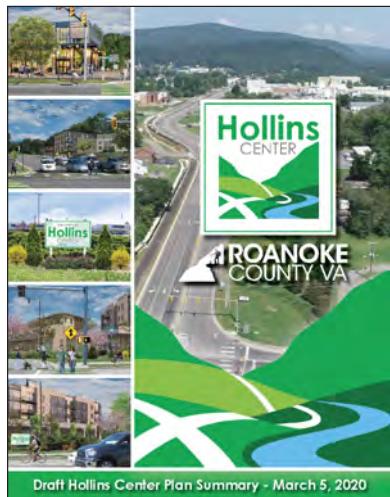


Roanoke County hosted an economic development virtual town hall meeting on July 22, 2020, to inform and engage the community about recent economic development projects. The meeting was attended virtually by 54 people and included updates about Roanoke County programs and projects that strengthen our local economy. Speakers included Board of Supervisors Chairman David Radford; County Administrator Dan O'Donnell; Economic Development Director Jill Loope; Director of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Doug Blount; and Director of Planning Philip Thompson.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE POSITION ROANOKE COUNTY FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

Hollins Center Plan Adopted by the Board of Supervisors



On July 28, 2020, the Board of Supervisors adopted the Hollins Center Plan as part of the County's Comprehensive Plan. The plan will guide future growth and development decisions in the Hollins area over the next 20 years.

An extensive community engagement strategy helped create recommendations about future land use, community facilities, transportation, and gateway and street-scape improvements. The Hollins Center planning process launched in March 2018, with nearly 900 residents, businesses, property owners, and area employees helping to envision the future of Hollins through various community meetings, stakeholder interviews, and online surveys. Participants gave feedback on opportunities, challenges, and needs regarding transportation, future development, and economic growth in the Hollins area.

The final plan, along with presentations, summary reports and additional information can be found on the [Hollins Center web page](#).

Award-Winning Community Planning Helps Guide Future Development

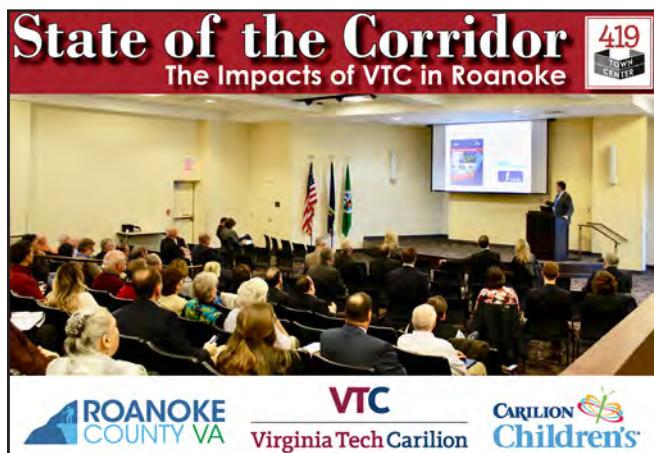
Roanoke County's Planning staff won the 2020 National Association of Counties Innovation in Planning Achievement Award for the Public Schools Planning Workshop portion of the Oak Grove Center Plan, a collaborative effort with the City of Roanoke's Planning Department and Roanoke County Public Schools.

Staff planners met with the Roanoke County Student Advisory Council for ideas about involving younger generations in community planning. This input led to four workshops held at the elementary, middle and high schools closest to



Oak Grove. Small group exercises with students helped envision future development, transportation and public amenities for the area. The Oak Grove Center Plan meetings concluded in May 2019, with over 1,300 participants of all ages from Roanoke County and the City of Roanoke. For more information about the status of the plan, visit the [Oak Grove Center Plan web page](#).

Implementing the 419 Town Center Plan



The 419 Town Center Plan adopted by the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors in July 2019 recommends a dynamic, new urban design for the Route 419 corridor over the next twenty years. In 2020, steps taken to implement the plan's recommendations include planning and funding transportation projects along the Route 419 corridor, repositioning underutilized commercial properties for redevelopment, and marketing the plan to property owners and developers.

On November 1, 2019, over 100 people attended a 'State of the Corridor' event to learn more about the impacts of the nearby Fralin Biomedical Institute and the development of a new Carilion Children's Clinic at Tanglewood Mall. Learn more by visiting the [419 Town Center web page](#).

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

PROMOTE NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS



New Local Transportation Projects Build Connections and Improve Safety

Electric Road/Route 419 is now under construction to add a third lane between Ogden Road and the Route 220 South off-ramp. Sidewalks and bike lanes will be added to both sides of the road, along with crosswalks and pedestrian signals at three intersections. Three bus stops will be consolidated into one bus shelter at Copper Croft Apartments. This project is anticipated to be completed in November 2021.

To help improve safety on Plantation Road, a traffic signal is being installed on Plantation Road at Lila Drive. The new signal will also provide better access to nearby businesses. Completion of the stoplight project is scheduled for December 2020.

Roanoke County has also received funding approval to install pedestrian signals and crosswalks on Electric Road/Route 419 at Carriage Lane and Grandin Road in the Oak Grove area. Construction on this pedestrian project is anticipated to begin in 2021. Improved pedestrian access is a key component outlined in the draft Oak Grove Center Plan.

Roanoke County has also requested funding for two projects on Peters Creek Road, including interchange improvements at Interstate 581 and a realignment and widening of Valleypointe Parkway as it approaches Wood Haven Road. If funded, these projects would improve safety on Peters Creek Road and facilitate future development at the Wood Haven Technology Park.



Above: Construction on Electric Road / Route 419 in front of Tanglewood Mall. Completion of this project is anticipated for November 2021.

See Project Updates on the Transportation Story Map

Transportation Projects

View active projects in and around Roanoke County. To zoom: scroll in and out with your mouse or use the + and - buttons. To move: click and drag the map. To return to the overview, press the Home button.

Transportation Projects [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Email](#)

[Interstates](#) [Primary Highways](#) [Secondary Roads](#) [Bicycle, Pedestrians & Greenways](#) [Transit](#)

Roanoke County, Virginia 2019

Roanoke County offers citizens a comprehensive view of projects across the County 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 Interstate, Primary Highways, Secondary Roads, Greenways, and other initiatives.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PROMOTE NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

I-81 Projects to Improve Access to the Valley

Work has begun on the project to widen Interstate 81 between Exit 141 (Route 419) and Exit 143 (I-581). Both north and southbound directions will be widened to three lanes. Completion of the project is anticipated in 2022 and will ease congestion on Interstate 81 and will provide safer access to I-581 and the heart of the Roanoke Valley.

Preliminary Engineering is also underway for the next phase of Interstate 81 widening, in both directions, between Exit 141 and mile marker 136.

This project is part of the Interstate 81 Corridor Improvement Plan approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board in December 2018. Construction is anticipated to begin between 2023 and 2027.

In an effort to connect the Roanoke and New River Valleys, a new Valley to Valley Trail study is underway to look at routes that may provide connections between the Roanoke River Greenway and trails in the New River Valley.



Above: The project to widen I-81 between exits 141 and 143 is expected to be completed in 2022.

Airport Master Plan Charts Course for Future Growth, More Service

The Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport Master Plan will look at the physical assets of the airport, such as parking lots, the terminal, concourses, air carrier ramps, taxiways, and runways, as well as general aviation facilities and hangars. The plan will use forecasts to determine activity levels that determine when facilities will need upgrades to accommodate increased usage.

The plan looks 20 years into the future to help plan for future growth and create benchmarks that trigger improvements to facilities. Once completed, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will have to approve the plan so that future airport improvement projects can receive their share of federal funding.

Right: The new covered access to the Roanoke-Blacksburg Regional Airport's entrance.





Providing Best-In-Class Public Safety During a Pandemic

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Police Department has remained agile as information about the virus evolved. With assistance from the Emergency Communications Center (ECC), a new procedure was created to screen calls to help streamline police response. Communication officers now ask a series of screening questions and request, when practical, for callers to make contact with officers outdoors.

Through the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Funding Program Solicitation the department received funds to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitizing devices. The department created a PPE Decision Matrix to provide guidance about when and what type of PPE to wear, based on the type of citizen contact. These protective measures are used to reduce contracting or spreading coronavirus during in-person contacts.

The department has also implemented a Micro-Time Hot Spot policing strategy to combat the increase in thefts from motor vehicles. Micro-Time Hot Spot policing is a crime reduction strategy that analyzes where crimes occur within a short amount of time. There was a 16% decrease in the number of thefts from motor vehicles this year compared to 2018. The number of cases cleared by an arrest increased from 6% in 2018 to 13% in 2019. Five percent of the cases so far in 2020 have been cleared by an arrest.

On May 30, 2020, at the request of the Roanoke City Police Department, the Mobile Field Force Unit was



Above: Officer Foutz and K9 Remi on a visit with Spencer Bohon to deliver a custom wheelchair donated by Extreme Motus Wheelchairs. K9 Remi successfully located 9-year old, nonverbal Spencer in the woods earlier this year after he went missing from his home.

activated to assist Roanoke City Police and other law enforcement agencies with crowd management and to protect businesses and government facilities within the city. The unit was activated for 10 days and was placed on 12-hours shifts during that time.

In June 2020, K9 Officer Remi found a 9-year old non-verbal autistic boy after he went missing from his home. Within 12 minutes, the officers found the area where the child was hiding. K9 Remi caught Remi's scent off of a pillow and proceeded to track the child through nearly a half mile of difficult elevation, thick woods and small creeks.



Sheriff Upgrades Jail Control Room

The Sheriff's Office worked to upgrade their technology within the Jail to ensure additional control and safety measures. The added features of digital cameras throughout the jail and security drawers to transfer items between secured areas help limit physical contact and provide better security for the staff, inmates, and public.

Left: In July 2020, the Sheriff Office's new Control Room upgrades at the Roanoke County-Salem Jail.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

ENSURE CITIZEN SAFETY

Emergency Management Addresses Pandemic Needs

Since the pandemic began, Roanoke County's Emergency Management Team has coordinated with Federal, State, and local jurisdictions to mitigate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. The team strives to sustain the continuity of government by working with the County Incident Command Team to increase safety measures for employees while coordinating public outreach programs to assist with controlling the virus' spread in the community.

Emergency managers have worked diligently to obtain and deliver personal protective equipment (PPE), including masks, face shields, gloves, and gowns for County departments. Officials also worked with the Virginia Department of Health and surrounding jurisdictions to promote resiliency as the pandemic continued throughout the spring and summer months.



Above: Fire & Rescue staff demonstrating various types of personal protective equipment (PPE) distributed to personnel during the pandemic to help protect both the public and staff from the virus.

Protecting Our First Responders

Over the past several years, emergency medical providers have responded to active shooter incidents where victims needed immediate care. In these situations, first responding units are in as much danger as the victims, and it's vital that our emergency medical providers have the appropriate level of protection during these incidents. This past year Roanoke County Fire & Rescue purchased 54 sets of ballistic gear that are available for first responders who may have to enter potentially unsafe zones to treat victims.

New Tools to Help Save Lives

During the past year, Fire & Rescue has updated some of the specialized equipment used to save lives. Grant funding from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs was used to purchase nine new Flir thermal imaging cameras to help users see clearly in the harshest environments. The new cameras help firefighters maneuver more strategically, stay better oriented, and find victims faster in the event of a fire.

Roanoke County Fire & Rescue was also able to purchase sets of new battery-operated extrication tools. The department received three sets of extrication tools with an overall goal of outfitting every first-run fire truck with a set of these practical tools. These tools help personnel remove victims from remote and tight spaces.

Fire Station Renovations Continue

In 2020, Roanoke County was able to complete a number of capital improvement projects at several stations to better suit 24-hour staff living within the facilities and to promote energy efficiency. Kitchen appliances, low maintenance flooring, and other improvements were included in these renovations.

Another capital project was the installation of a diesel exhaust removal system in the bay of the Clearbrook Fire Station. This system works as a large HEPA filter to remove diesel exhaust—a well-known carcinogen—from the bay areas of the station. This system is extremely beneficial for the health of career and volunteer personnel. This exhaust removal system is the first of many to be installed in stations over the next five to six years.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE
BE A CARING AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY



Social Services Offers CARES Act Grants to Assist Citizens

The Roanoke County's Department of Social Services (DSS) continued to serve its clients throughout the entire pandemic via its drive-thru window and online services, the only DSS in Virginia able to offer this level of service.

As of October 1, Roanoke County DSS also distributed more than \$307,000 in CARES Act funds directly to Roanoke County and Town of Vinton residents to assist with unpaid utilities, car payments, child care expenses, food, medical bills, and rent or mortgage payments.

This year Roanoke County DSS partnered with the United Way, public school systems, Head Start, and privately owned child care centers to give families access to early care and education resources during the pandemic.

For the 16th consecutive year, DSS staff sponsored an elementary school for its Snack Buddy Program, in partnership with the Salem/Roanoke County Food Pantry, to ensure that every student has something to eat during snack time.

Foster staff received 75 foster parent inquiries for its recruitment efforts this year and approved more than 50 family placements for foster children.



Above: Roanoke County's Social Services has continued to serve clients throughout the pandemic with its drive-thru window and online services.

Roanoke County DSS and DePaul Family Services also co-sponsored a Post Adoptive virtual conference to encourage, educate, and better equip families, caregivers, and professionals to serve children impacted by foster care and adoption.

General Services Renovates Facilities for Public and Employee Safety

Roanoke County's General Services Department has been involved in many projects to provide an additional level of safety to both the public and County staff. Some of the more prominent projects include:

- Purchasing and renovating 2741 Penn Forest Blvd to relocate the employee health center and employee COVID-19 testing site.
- Completing the renovation and relocation services to move the Elections Office to the Craig Center.
- Completing renovations to the entry of the Commonwealth Attorney's offices to include a transaction window and additional renovations at the Court Services front service counter.

- Renovations to improve office space needs for the Finance Department, along with a building by building review of staff and common area spacing to increase social distancing, cubicle changes, capacity limits, and protective barriers.
- Re-purposing the former Mill Mountain Coffee and Tea space at South County Library for use as a Treasurer satellite location with drive-thru services. A variety of other items have been completed at the Libraries to support a phased reopening in October 2020.

Many other projects are now in process at County facilities based on the latest CDC and ASHRAE guidance, including best practices for recurring maintenance of building systems.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE BE A CARING AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

Elections Office Moves to a Safer, More Accessible Location; Offers Satellite Services



Above: The new home for Roanoke County's Elections Office at the Craig Center, located at 900 Chestnut Street in Vinton.

As the COVID-19 pandemic started impacting how services are delivered this spring, Roanoke County leaders understood the importance of having an accessible and safe location for the County's Elections Office. With public access limited at the Roanoke County Administration Center, the Elections Office was moved to the Craig Center, at 900 Chestnut Street in Vinton, to accommodate the volume of voters and services needed for this year's General Election.

The Craig Center, a former elementary school owned by the County, offers an accessible parking lot and entrance for disabled voters, and adequate space to allow for social distancing among voters.

Early Voting at the new Elections Office began on Friday, September 18, and Elections staff reported serving an average of 550 walk-in voters each week. In October, the Elections Office opened a satellite location for voters at the Brambleton Center, located at 3738 Brambleton Avenue, to help facilitate voting. In addition, the Elections Office provided secure ballot drop-off locations at Hollins Library and the Public Service Center on Kessler Mill Road, in cooperation with Roanoke County Public Libraries and the Parks, Recreation and Tourism department.

Clerk of Circuit Court Safely Continues to Serve Citizens

The Clerk of Circuit Court's Office is responsible for more than 800 functions that are vital to the continuity of our courts and legal system. To better safeguard staff and the public, and continue services throughout the pandemic, the Clerk's Office erected plexiglass panels across its front counter area to shield intake and cashiering staff from direct contact with the public.

In addition, the office has also made it easier for customers to access its online services, greatly reducing the need for the public to visit the office.

The Clerk's Office also created a new space with adequate social distancing for its Criminal Division staff at no additional cost to Roanoke County taxpayers using funds from fees collected for authorized services.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE
PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING



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



Left and above: Curbside returns started the week of June 15 with bins at library locations. Staff started curbside service to fulfill holds and accept returns the week of June 22.

Below: Library staff curated several collections for patrons who missed browsing the stacks, including *Bundle of Books*, *Library Concierge*, and *DVD Bundles*.



Starting the week of March 16, Roanoke County Public Libraries pivoted to virtual services for patrons. Popular programs were moved to online platforms, including daily episodes of Storytime on YouTube, Teen Drama Club on Zoom, Couch Trivia Nights, Book Clubs, and more.

Staff used social media to promote the library's database services and fun social games, along with tutorials and videos for teens. Staff also created a new blog, *Reading RoCo*, to highlight library updates, database insights, and book reviews. Library staff stayed connected with patrons this spring through its *Let's Stay in Touch* phone call service for those wanting to chat, and live reference assistance via Zoom to assist people with technology and reference databases.

The Library system also procured Hot Spots for patrons to check out at the Glenvar Library to help teachers and students finish out the school year.

In June the Library staff began distributing more than 2,500 Take & Create Kits for children, teens, and adults and staff also created 3D printed face shields for Roanoke County Fire & Rescue through funding provided by the Friends of the Library.

Despite the pandemic, the virtual Summer Reading Program community surpassed its goal of 15,000 books read before the program's end. The Friends of the Library donated \$1,000 to Feeding Southwest Virginia in recognition of the group's achievement.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

Roanoke County Public Schools Adapt to COVID-19 Challenges

Roanoke County Public Schools has remained steadfast in providing full-time in-person instruction to younger students (grades PK-3) with older students learning in a hybrid model. The district also provides a robust 100% online instruction program including the new RCPSOnline Academy for high school students. Building upon decades of technology-supported instruction, Roanoke County Public Schools greatly expanded online course offerings so that now a student can complete their high school experience completely online. To learn more about RCPSOnline and the Academy, visit www.rcps.us/online.

Roanoke County Public Schools also mobilized its resources this spring to deliver prepared bagged meals during afternoon bus routes to any students in need of a meal and provided hot meals for pickup at eleven schools across Roanoke County. Schools also partnered with the YMCA, The United Way of Roanoke Valley, Boys & Girls Club of Southwest Virginia, Prevention Council of Roanoke County, and area churches to establish new daycare programs for parents impacted by alternative school schedules.

In September Roanoke County Public Schools received the distinction of being recognized as a "School Di-



Above: Debbi Cornett's 2nd Grade, socially distanced, class at Mount Pleasant Elementary School.

sion of Innovation" by the State Board of Education for designing and implementing alternatives to traditional instructional practices. Roanoke County Public Schools is also proud to announce that Hidden Valley High School was chosen as a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. Hidden Valley High School is one of eight schools, and the only high school, receiving the award in Virginia.

Cave Spring High School Renovation Completed

Roanoke County Public Schools completed an 18-month long renovation and expansion of Cave Spring High School in Fall 2020. With a budget of just over \$43 million, the project renovated nearly every space of the original 1969 building to the point that it practically is a new school. Gone is the "hexagon" in the middle of the school that often caused issues with traffic flow. Gone is the sunken media center in the center of the hexagon. Now there are larger classrooms, wider halls, and more efficient space for learning, creativity, and collaboration among students and staff. Next, school leaders will be turning their attention to renovations at William Byrd High School, slated to start in summer 2021.





Illuminights Event is an Award-Winning Community Success!



Above: More than 43,000 people came out to Illuminights in 2019. This year's event begins Friday, Nov. 20 and runs through Jan. 2.



Illuminights saw over 43,000 visitors during its 26-day inaugural season sponsored by Center in the Square and Explore Park. Community and media partnerships made the event a huge success, surpassing all expectations and starting a new holiday tradition for our region. The Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) recently selected the event as a 2020 Achievement Award Winner, recognizing excellence in local government programs. Roanoke County was one of only 21 municipalities to receive the award this year.

Green Ridge Staff Adapts to COVID-19 Closure and Reopening

Green Ridge Recreation Center staff has been working to ensure the safety of visitors through enhanced sanitation procedures. Touch surfaces are deep cleaned every two hours and sanitizing stations have been added to the wellness floor and studios. More information about the many changes made throughout the center to ensure the health of our members, guests, and staff can be found on the [Reopening After COVID-19 web page](#).

This spring staff took several key steps to serve the community and support member retention during the COVID shutdown. Staff created a Video Library of more than 70 group exercise videos for those looking to stay healthy at home, and Green Ridge's personal trainers offered Virtual Personal Training sessions for viewers. Staff also launched a limited lineup of weekly camps at Green Ridge and Brambleton Center to serve the children of working parents.

Right: Enhanced cleaning procedures at Green Ridge Recreation Center help keep members, guests, and staff healthy.



In Case You Missed It - Parks Updates for 2020

Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism received a \$620,054 Virginia Outdoor Foundation Forest CORE grant in 2020 for the acquisition of 304 acres on Read Mountain, with support from the Read Mountain Alliance.

Parks volunteers continued to make a huge impact this year, despite the pandemic. Nearly 900 volunteers invested 4,176 hours to maintain our parks and natural areas.



STRATEGIC INITIATIVE KEEP ROANOKE COUNTY HEALTHY, CLEAN AND BEAUTIFUL

Explore Park Becomes Home to Outdoor Fun for the Entire Family

In its first year of operation, Treetop Quest saw over 10,000 visitors despite an unexpected three-month closure for COVID-19 this spring. Approximately 1,000 visitors also came out to Scare Quest last October, featuring nighttime zip lines and an interactive escape-room style theatrical piece. Treetop Quest continued to offer a safe and thrilling experience for Explore Park visitors this summer by modifying operations to include a focus on social distancing and the use of face coverings by staff and guests alike.

Right: Treetop Quest staff provided a safe outdoor experience by using social distancing and best practices.



Tubing, Camping, and Cabin Rentals Return for 2020 Summer Season

Blue Mountain Adventures saw tremendous success this year at Explore Park. Along with 944 tube rentals, Blue Mountain Adventures received 600 campsite bookings for the season.



Don's Cab-Inns (pictured below) also continued to see growth in its cabin rentals at Explore Park, with 2,240 nights booked in fiscal year 2020.



Twin Creeks Opens at Explore Park

Twin Creeks Brewpub (pictured below) held a successful soft launch during Illuminights 2019 which led to an earlier than expected opening at Explore Park's Brugh Tavern. The brewpub opened weekends this past winter and returned to serve Explore Park's visitors throughout the summer.





Stormwater and Drainage Projects Help Protect Our Community

Stream Restoration of Glade Creek in Vinyard Park was completed this year. This two-phase project protected adjacent playing fields, decreased erosion, and improved access for trout fishing. Total funding for this project was \$2.1 million, with 50% being funded by state grants.



Above: Glade Creek Stream Restoration Project.

An ongoing project to repair the main stormwater drainage channel in the Orchards community (pictured below) came to a close earlier this year. The design and construction were both handled by staff for a project that is estimated to have cost \$1.2 million if the work had been performed by private contractors.



Drainage Crews Provide Emergency Response to Mitigate Flood Damage

Flash flooding this spring caused unexpected rising water in several Roanoke County neighborhoods. Stormwater Operations staff were called to assist several areas to avert even greater damage to homes and property in the Andrew Lewis subdivision, along Club Lane and near Woodway Road. Flooding resulted in a total of 20 emergency projects with an estimated cost of \$1.2 million.



Above: A project to repair stormwater drainage along Woodway Road earlier this year.

Development Services Expands Online Services and Permitting

In October 2019, Development Services launched a replacement of Roanoke County's permitting system for the Office of Building Safety, Planning and Zoning, Engineering, and Stormwater divisions.

The department opened its Public Access Portal in April 2020 to allow public submission of permit applications and plans. The department was also able to continually serve residents this spring by issuing permits in outdoor tents after the public closure of the Roanoke County Administration Center.

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

Communications and Information Technology



2020 Public Technology Institute Technology Solutions Award for Web Services, Scanned Plans Application, with honorable mentions for the GIS Cityworks Integration Project and the Business License Dashboard Project.

2020 National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award for the SchoolView GIS application.

Finance



2020 Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Report for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2019.

Fire & Rescue



2020 Western Virginia EMS Council Award for Excellence in EMS to Fire & Rescue Chief Simon, for exemplifying outstanding dedication and service to the Virginia emergency medical services system.

Public Libraries



2020 Virginia Library Association Public Library Innovator Award for outstanding contribution to advance the mission of a public library in Virginia through an innovative project, program, or service.

2020 Library Journal Mover and Shaker Award presented to Senior Branch Librarian Michael Hibben for leading technology initiatives that brought robotics, coding, and STEAM programs to Roanoke County Public Libraries.

Parks, Recreation and Tourism



2020 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award (Silver Level) for Hinchee Park and innovative efforts to improve Virginia's environment through land conservation.

2020 Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) Achievement Award for the Illuminights event.

2020 Virginia Recreation and Parks Society (VRPS) Awards for Best New Special Event / Illuminights, Most Innovative Marketing Piece / Illuminights Sponsor Brochure, and Distinguished Private Sector Service Award 2019 / Blue Mountain Adventures.

Planning and Transportation



2020 National Association of Counties (NACo) Innovation in Planning Achievement Award for the Public Schools Planning Workshop component of the Oak Grove Center Plan community engagement strategy.

2020 Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association's Old Dominion Innovative Approaches Award for Public Schools Planning Workshops component of the Oak Grove Center Plan community engagement strategy.

Public Information Office



2020 National Association of Government Web Professionals Pinnacle Award for Website Design.



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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COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN
2020 ANNUAL REPORT