

# Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan (Revised 2005)

Excerpts from Chapters 2 and 3:

## Chapter 2: Vision Statements

### Economic Development and Tourism

1. In 2010, Roanoke County has played a major role in developing the Roanoke Valley into a center of industrial and commercial technology by adequately funding the Industrial Development Authority, enabling them to acquire property and providing the infrastructure to encourage economic growth.

2. In 2010, Roanoke County and the surrounding areas have become a natural playground for visitors and residents. The local governments have provided the necessary infrastructure to permit full usage and enjoyment of our scenic resources - both private and public - such as a regional greenway system, pedestrian-friendly roads, campgrounds and recreational vehicle parking areas. Strong incentives have been put into place to encourage developers to include dedicated lands and connected greenways in all new development projects.

3. In 2010, Roanoke County has taken the lead to preserve our most valuable natural asset, the scenic environment and natural ridge lines of the mountains surrounding the Roanoke Valley.

## Chapter 3: Land Use Issues

### 2. DESIGN GUIDELINES

#### Introduction

Establishing design guidelines to promote quality development and enhance the unique character of communities within the County is an important component of Roanoke County's Community Plan. These guidelines are intended to facilitate development creativity and provide incentives for development design principles that will result in the enhancement of the visual appearance of the built environment in the County. They relate to such items as: site development, relationship of proposed land uses to adjoining land uses and buildings to adjoining buildings, relationship of buildings to their site, site layout, parking lots, landscaping, building design, lighting, and signs. The results of the Neighborhood Council process re-enforce the idea of guiding development design with the following themes voiced by all the communities within the County:

- New development should incorporate a high standard of design including the following design elements: appropriate architecture, landscaping, and signage.
- Encourage neighborhood involvement in the design process associated with any

development proposal through citizen meetings with developers.

- New developments should be designed and planned as cohesive communities.
- Incompatible land uses should be buffered from adjoining land uses.
- New developments should be required to design around existing, healthy stands of trees and/or individual specimen trees where possible, to preserve trees that are outside of the building envelope and to replace trees when existing trees must be removed.

## **Goal**

**All new and redeveloped sites are designed to be in harmony with their surroundings, improve the general appearance of the site and strengthen community identity.**

## **Issues and Opportunities**

- Design guidelines may provide a level of comfort with a proposed development that otherwise would not exist.
- Design guidelines may help assure that development reflects the unique characteristics of the community.
- The citizens of Roanoke County appear to be very supportive of design guidelines.

## **Objectives**

A. Develop and incorporate design guidelines for all future development in the County, excluding individual home sites and farm buildings.

B. Involve citizens, businesses and community leaders in the creation of community specific design guidelines.

## **Implementation Strategies**

1. Continue to support and expand as necessary the Hollins Village/Williamson Road redevelopment initiative using public funds as a catalyst to stimulate private investment.
2. Identify and ensure that the gateways into the County are attractive and enhance the community's identity.
3. Encourage through community meetings, public participation in the development of design guidelines for land in Roanoke County.
4. Provide education and outreach to the public emphasizing the importance of developing design guidelines for the County.
5. Be firm about goals, but flexible about how to attain them.

## **Design Guidelines**

### **Neighborhood Conservation**

Single-family neighborhoods are traditionally the most protected land uses. The strategic placement of non-residential land uses, such as parks, schools, libraries and churches (determined by neighborhood preference and need) can play a vital role in preserving and enhancing neighborhood character. Also, creative site planning practices can enhance the opportunity for attached housing to achieve compatibility with adjacent detached housing.

### **Objective**

A. Preserve and enhance the existing character of established neighborhoods through boundary protection and the addition of desired amenities.

### **Guidelines**

1. Screen and buffer adjacent non-compatible land uses.
2. Incorporate greenways within neighborhoods as well as from neighborhoods to adjacent institutional services, other neighborhoods and commercial centers.
3. Encourage infill of vacant lots with similar density housing.
4. Any additions or changes to existing neighborhoods should be compatible with established (underlying) site patterns.
5. Allow well-designed low impact service oriented businesses to locate near neighborhoods.

### **Transition**

Certain roadways within the County have become or have the potential of becoming primary corridors where current strip development pressures exist. Within these corridors access and aesthetics should be controlled in order to avoid unappealing forms of commercial strip development and the resultant traffic congestion.

### **Objective**

A. Establish development and design guidelines for future development along designated key road corridors and gateways into the County.

### **Guidelines**

1. Support and expand the public-private partnerships in the redevelopment of older commercial corridors in the County.
2. Establish provisions which discourage strip development along corridors and promote planned development nodes located at major road junctions.
3. Redevelopment of existing strip developments should stress the importance of reducing the number of entrances, coordinating signage and parking and increasing vegetative buffers.

### **Core**

Core areas by nature have the potential of becoming congested and visually cluttered districts. Therefore, it is essential that in these areas property owners establish common planning goals in new developments and redeveloping areas to ensure safe, accessible, and visually pleasing Core areas.

### **Objectives**

- A. For each respective Core area, establish common characteristics that will ensure ease of travel and visual coherence.
- B. Encourage the redevelopment of congested Core areas.
- C. Encourage the development of high density residential that is integrated with commercial development.
- D. Create pedestrian-oriented Core areas to ease traffic congestion.
- E. Concentrate intensive commercial uses into one area rather than in long linear corridors.
- F. Develop strategies to accommodate large box retail uses.

### **Guidelines**

- 1. Common links between adjacent sites and land uses should be made whenever possible to ensure connectiveness in these areas of high intensity urban uses.
- 2. Site-to-site movement for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles should be easy and safe.
- 3. Encourage the interconnection of parking lots and the reduction of driveways along primary, arterial and collector roads.
- 4. Building size, shape, height, and materials should complement adjacent buildings.
- 5. Natural site amenities, especially slopes, trees and drainage, should be conserved to the maximum practical extent.
- 6. Create common areas as buffers along the edges of Core areas that adjoin less intensive land uses.
- 7. Designate and establish landmarks - public buildings, monuments, squares and miniparks - to strengthen the identity of community Core areas.
- 8. Design exterior lighting and signs as integral architectural elements of the building, site and Core area. Encourage compatibility or shared use of signs for adjacent businesses. Maintain good scale and proportion in sign design and in visual relationships to buildings, surroundings and views.
- 9. Encourage the siting of communication antennae and dishes on existing or new structures rather than on stand-alone towers.
- 10. Research and develop design and site development strategies to accommodate large box retail uses and allow them to have a positive relationship to the surrounding community.

### **Principal Industrial**

Through innovative planning practices, many industrial areas can become beneficial to adjacent areas, providing jobs for nearby residents and customers for commercial areas.

### **Objectives**

- A. Create industrial districts that use environmental design practices in their development

and become assets to surrounding neighborhoods.

B. Encourage cluster developments within industrial districts, combining industries, support retail and open space.

### **Guidelines**

1. Inventory existing site natural features and resources as a first step in development.
2. Protect and utilize natural features and resources wherever deemed helpful in combating the negative aspects that industrial developments create, such as noise, air emissions, waste discharge, and increased runoff.
3. Where industrial development is adjacent to residential areas, apply exceptional design measures to achieve compatibility.
4. Provide direct access to sufficient capacity public streets.
5. Avoid slopes in excess of 15% for building sites.
6. Take advantage of slopes to break up large parking areas.
7. Plan for trees in parking lots to provide shade (at least one per 20 spaces).
8. Consider the use of pervious pavement for large parking areas.
9. Provide buffering for adjacent land uses in the form of a vegetative screen, open space or a communal greenway.
10. Allow opportunities for industrial site employees' to use alternative modes of travel, such as biking or walking.
11. Encourage the siting of communication antennae and dishes on existing or new structures rather than on stand-alone towers.

## **4. QUALITY OF LIFE**

### **Objectives**

A. Preserve the scenic beauty of the County while balancing the need for economic growth.

Chapter 3: Land Use Issues

B. Promote the location of clean, high-technology research and development firms in the Roanoke Valley.

C. Maintain the concept of neighborhood schools.

D. Provide access to community parks and greenways to all citizens.

E. Provide cultural and recreational opportunities to citizens of all ages.

F. Promote the use of good traffic planning concepts.

G. Preserve, where appropriate, existing trees and encourage the planting of tree species that are native to the Blue Ridge region.

H. Encourage innovation and creativity in land development.

### **Implementation Strategies**

1. Develop and adopt more stringent regulations and incentives to protect natural resources

- in the County - including mountainsides, ridgetops, streams, rivers, viewsheds, open space, wetlands, forests, soils and wildlife. (Obj. A, E, G, H)
2. Ensure that future growth and development is consistent with the adopted Community Plan and enhances the quality of life of Roanoke County citizens. (Obj. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H)
  3. Modify and enhance design guidelines, incorporating incentives where feasible, to be applied to all future residential, commercial and industrial developments. (Obj. A, H)
  4. Continue funding and support of the greenway system and develop a dedicated source of funding to support the system. (Obj. D)
  5. Fully implement the recommendations of the School Board Blue Ribbon Committee for school construction and maintenance needs. (Obj. C)
  6. Revise the neighborhood street design standards to give liveability, pedestrian/bicycle and retail friendly aspects equal footing with ease of traffic movements. (Obj. F)
  7. Adopt a tree protection ordinance that applies to private properties. (Obj. A, G)
  8. Ensure that future commercial and industrial parks receiving financial or tax incentives from the County are built as park-like environments and include strict design guidelines, greenways and open space. (Obj. B, D, H)
  9. Revise the subdivision ordinance to encourage the dedication of greenway easements at the time a subdivision is platted. (Obj. D)
  10. Continue to support and participate in the regional land trust - a publicly-supported charitable organization providing a voluntary means to promote the preservation of natural and cultural resources - and other statewide and national land trusts. (Obj. A, E, H)
  11. Continue to provide a variety of housing options in a broad range of prices. (Obj. H)
  12. Through zoning ordinance revisions, allow for increased housing density, while requiring the dedication of open space. (Obj. A, D, E, H)
  13. Encourage the development and re-development of lands served by public utilities while discouraging through zoning ordinance revisions the development of lands without these services. (Obj. A, H)
  14. Continue to preserve the nature and stability of existing single-family neighborhoods but allow infill development, appropriately designed, at slightly higher densities. (Obj. H)
  15. Continue to work cooperatively with, and provide financial support to, cultural and recreational organizations which provide invaluable opportunities to County residents. (Obj. E)
  16. Expand the Roanoke County park system so that neighborhood parks are accessible to all citizens. (Obj. D, E)
  17. Expand and enhance the County-wide road beautification efforts. (Obj. A, G)

## **LAND USE POLICIES**

The following land use policies apply to all land use designations.

### **GENERAL**

1. Act proactively to manage growth. Encourage and direct growth toward those areas of the County that can support it with the appropriate and necessary infrastructure, facilities and services and discourage development where the infrastructure and transportation system cannot support it.
2. Encourage sustainable economic growth that enhances the quality of life and fosters economic health.
3. Encourage land use development patterns that reflect community values and desires. Discourage land consumptive development patterns.
4. Allow flexibility in site design to encourage the preservation of unique natural resources and open space.
5. Recognize the uniqueness of our community. Work actively to protect those features and characteristics that distinguish Roanoke County from every other community.
6. Use high quality architectural features and character in addition to creative landscape design to develop sites that are sensitive to the environment and respect the unique land features of the site.

### **RESOURCE PRESERVATION**

1. Prevent or discourage land development that will destroy the County's valuable natural resources including ridgelines, mountains, floodplains, wetlands, scenic vistas and water quality. Develop incentives that will make this policy more palatable.
2. Encourage the preservation of agricultural lands. These farms have economic, educational, open-space and cultural value.
3. Encourage the preservation of historic and cultural resources in the County. Recognize the importance these features and sites have in the quality of life and collective history of County citizens.
4. Use creative and flexible site design techniques to protect natural resources while allowing reasonable densities.

## **DESIGN**

1. Implement, through the rezoning process, design guidelines for all new developments to encourage architectural and site design features that enhance the surrounding community and work in cooperation with the topography and land features. Provide incentives where appropriate to facilitate this process.
2. Encourage planned residential, commercial and industrial centers that utilize coordinated access points, parking and signage and common design themes.

## **NEIGHBORHOODS**

1. Recognize that because of the suburban nature of Roanoke County, most citizens identify more closely with their own neighborhoods than with the County as a whole.
2. Assist neighborhoods in promoting their own identities and forming neighborhood civic leagues.
3. Preserve the stability of residential neighborhoods by discouraging the intrusion of incompatible uses.
4. Recognize that in order to discourage sprawl and protect rural lands and natural resources, some reasonable increase in housing density may be necessary as infill development and re-development occurs.
5. Encourage the maintenance and enhancement of older neighborhoods, recognizing that these homes provide a viable source of affordable housing to the community.
6. Design traffic circulation patterns so that traffic is routed around rather than through residential neighborhoods whenever feasible. This policy is not meant to encourage cul-de-sacs but rather to examine the use of more narrow neighborhood streets, grid patterns, etc. to protect County neighborhoods from cut-through traffic.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

1. Continue to support the concept of neighborhood schools and recognize their importance as a focal point of existing, stable neighborhoods.
2. Encourage the use of school facilities for multiple purposes including community meeting places, recreational facilities and open space.

3. Recognize the impact that large residential developments have on community facilities, including schools, parks and police and fire services. Consider the use of impact fees and proffers to offset some of these costs.
4. Promote regional cooperation in the provision of all community services including public safety, libraries, schools, parks and utilities.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

1. Ensure that County citizens and staff have the opportunity to participate in transportation planning at the initial stages of plan development.
2. Require that transportation plans consider the viability and economic feasibility of alternative modes of transportation including greenways, bike paths, sidewalks and walking trails.

### **OPEN SPACE**

1. Prioritize the open space resources of the County and develop implementation strategies for preserving and protecting these valuable resources.
2. Encourage the preservation of agricultural lands. These farms have economic, educational, open space and cultural value.
3. Encourage private property owners of large tracts of open space lands to preserve these properties using tax incentives.
4. Participate and support the Western Virginia Land Trust in its endeavors to preserve the natural resources of Roanoke County.

### **GREENWAYS**

1. Greenways and greenway easements should be incorporated into new residential subdivisions and office and industrial parks.
2. New road construction and widening of existing roads should include serious consideration of greenways and bikeways and their associated benefits and costs.
3. Provide for the construction and maintenance of greenways by incorporating them into the Department of Parks and Recreation's park system with adequate

funding.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

1. Create an effective business environment which fosters the growth and prosperity of existing business and industry.
2. Seek new business development and investment in Roanoke County in areas planned and designated as economic opportunity areas.
3. Develop and implement plans and programs to attract tourists to Roanoke County.
4. Recognize that the scenic beauty of the Roanoke County area is an essential ingredient in the tourist experience. Support efforts to preserve and protect these valuable natural resource features.
5. Create an effective mechanism so that the County can work together with citizens and civic associations to develop or preserve their community in its economic and social dimensions.
6. Encourage the diversification of the County economy.
7. Provide adequate land for commercial and industrial growth while minimizing the impacts on residential neighborhoods and natural resources.
8. Recognize that developable land is in low supply and encourage the re-use, re-development and occupancy of existing, vacant commercial space rather than developing additional land.
9. Recognize that County citizens desire and support economic growth, even in close proximity to their neighborhoods, when the developments are carefully designed, the buildings have aesthetically pleasing and site appropriate architecture, and creative site design elements that are sensitive to surrounding neighborhoods, are utilized.
10. Encourage the development of greenways, bike trails and pedestrian paths in all new commercial and industrial park developments.

## **BONSACK COMMUNITY PLANNING AREA**

### **Community Values**

- Preservation of the views of the mountains and ridgelines from this community is a value deeply held by the residents.
- The numerous historic buildings and sites provide a tie to the historic and cultural roots of the community. The preservation and enhancement of these aspects are vital to the residents of this community.
- The U.S. Route 460 corridor needs to have a unified development plan in conjunction with Roanoke City, Roanoke County and Botetourt County.
- Prevent the typical strip commercial/industrial development along U.S. Route 460. Instead require that commercial/industrial developments be developed in a planned or campus-like setting providing nodes of development along the corridor.

### **Key Resources**

- The protection of viewsheds from the Blue Ridge Parkway, Summit Ridge, Stewart's Knob, Lowe's Farm, Seibel's Farm, Bonsack Park, and Samuel's Gate are assets for the community.
- The preservation of the Cox Trout Farm and Glade Creek is vital for the community.
- The enhancement and preservation of the historic character of the "Village of Bonsack" are a critical resource for the community.

### **General Policies**

#### **Natural Resources**

- Require that all new developments are sensitive to the preservation, protection and enhancement of the viewsheds from the Bonsack community. In so doing, require higher standards of design which will minimize the visual impact of development and promote innovative methods of site planning.
- Acquire land for the establishment of a greenway providing critical linkages to shopping, schools, parks, libraries and homes for the residents of the community.
- Work cooperatively with adjoining jurisdictions, private landowners, and State and Federal agencies to preserve and protect significant natural, historic, and cultural features in the Bonsack community.

## **Land Use**

- Promote the use of planned commercial developments and/or nodes of commercial development along the U.S. Route 460 corridor. These developments would offer extensive landscaping, appropriate and tastefully designed signs and provide buildings which have a unified architectural design.
- The appropriate balance between residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural land uses is a key to Bonsack becoming a sustainable community.
- Explore the opportunities to create a Historic District in the “Village of Bonsack,” which would promote preservation as well as economic development through heritage tourism.