

An aerial photograph of a town during sunset. In the foreground, there is a mix of green fields, some small buildings, and a road with a roundabout. In the middle ground, a large industrial complex with multiple buildings and parking lots is visible. The background features a range of mountains, with the sky transitioning from blue to orange and pink at the horizon.

BACKGROUND

## 2.1 Overview



The Roanoke County 200 Plan (200 Plan) will serve as the County's community-driven comprehensive plan from its adoption in 2024 to the County's bicentennial anniversary in 2038.

This chapter provides a background of the County's history of community engagement and plan development since the creation of its first Planning Commission in 1939. It includes a discussion of the planning initiatives that are incorporated into the 200 Plan, including the Community Planning Areas which are key components to its development, the adopted Designated Growth Areas, and provides background on the establishment of Activity Centers which provide specific design



guidelines and implementation strategies at the neighborhood scale. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how the 200 Plan relates to other County-wide planning efforts, including the Board of Supervisors' strategic planning efforts and those of the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Planning Commission.

## 2.2 History of Planning & Development Regulations in Roanoke County



Roanoke County has a long history of long-range planning and developing regulations for implementation. A chart of these events and the year they happened can be seen on the following page.

Year	Description
1939	Planning Commission is established in Roanoke County
1939	First Subdivision Ordinance adopted
1940	First Comprehensive Plan adopted
1941	First Zoning Ordinance adopted
1960	New Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map adopted
1970	Major revision to Zoning Ordinance text and county-wide reclassification of zoning map
1974	Adoption of new Comprehensive Plan
1977	The existing Comprehensive Plan (1974) is amended to incorporate minor modifications as a result of a 1975 special annexation court order
1985	Adoption of new Comprehensive Plan
1985	General rewrite and clarification on existing Zoning Ordinance
1987	Route 419 Frontage Development Plan*
1990	Roanoke River Corridor Study*
1992	Current Zoning Ordinance adopted
1995	Conceptual Greenway Plan*
1998	New Comprehensive Plan (Community Plan) adopted
1998	Roanoke Valley Regional Stormwater Management Plan*
2000	Colonial Avenue Corridor Study*
2005	Comprehensive Plan (Community Plan) amended
2007	Route 220 Corridor Study*
2007	Update to the Roanoke Valley Conceptual Greenway Plan*
2008	Community Facilities Map*
2008	Mount Pleasant Community Plan*
2008	Hollins Area Plan*
2009	Route 221 Area Plan*
2010	Vinton Area Corridors Plan*
2012	Glenvar Community Plan*
2015	Board of Supervisor adopted amendment to the Comprehensive Plan identifying Designated Growth Area
2018	Roanoke Valley Greenway Plan*
2019	419 Town Center Plan*
2020	Hollins Center Plan*
2021	Oak Grove Center Plan*
2023	U.S. Route 460 Land Use and Connectivity Study*

\*Incorporated into County's Comprehensive Plan

Although the Comprehensive Plan has not been updated since 2005, the County has prepared many smaller area studies and plans that focus on specific locations and corridors of interest since that time. These studies and plans have all been prepared and adopted for incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan to assure it remains current and relevant as the County has continued to grow and develop. The constant evolving nature of the Comprehensive Plan constitutes it as a living

document whose implementation has helped the County continuously address the changing wants and needs of citizens and work towards achieving land use and development goals.

Similarly, although the County has not adopted a new Zoning Ordinance since 1992, multiple amendments have been adopted since that time to help address evolving land use patterns and development design standards.

## 2.3 Designated Growth Area

 In 2014, House Bill 2 (HB2) was signed into law, which established new methods and procedures for scoring and funding transportation projects in Virginia. Since the passing of HB2, for proposed transportation projects to be eligible for state funding, they are required to be located within a Corridor of Statewide Significance, Regional Network, or an Urban Development Area.

At the time that HB2 was passed, Corridors of Statewide Significance and Regional Networks existed across the County, but Urban Development Areas had not been established. An Urban Development Area (UDA) is an area "designated by a locality that is 1) appropriate for higher density development due to its proximity to transportation facilities, the availability of a public or community water and sewer system, or developed area and 2) to the extent feasible, to be used for redevelopment or infill development" (Code of Virginia §15.2-2223.1-A). In order for a UDA or similar growth area to be established, a locality shall designate the area(s) in its comprehensive plan and provide reference to Code of Virginia §15.2-2223.1.

In response to this new funding criteria, the County established a Designated Growth Area (DGA) by analyzing its existing future land use designations and determining which designations met the UDA criteria. The resulting DGA includes all future land use designations except for Conservation, Rural Preserve, and Rural Village, a map of which can be viewed on page 2-5. The DGA shall incorporate principles of traditional neighborhood design, which may include but need not be limited to (i) pedestrian-friendly road design, (ii) interconnection of new local streets with existing local streets and roads, (iii) connectivity of road and pedestrian networks, (iv) preservation of natural areas, (v) mixed-use neighborhoods, including mixed housing types, with affordable housing to meet the projected family income distributions of future residential growth, (vi) reduction of front and side yard building setbacks, and (vii) reduction of subdivision street widths

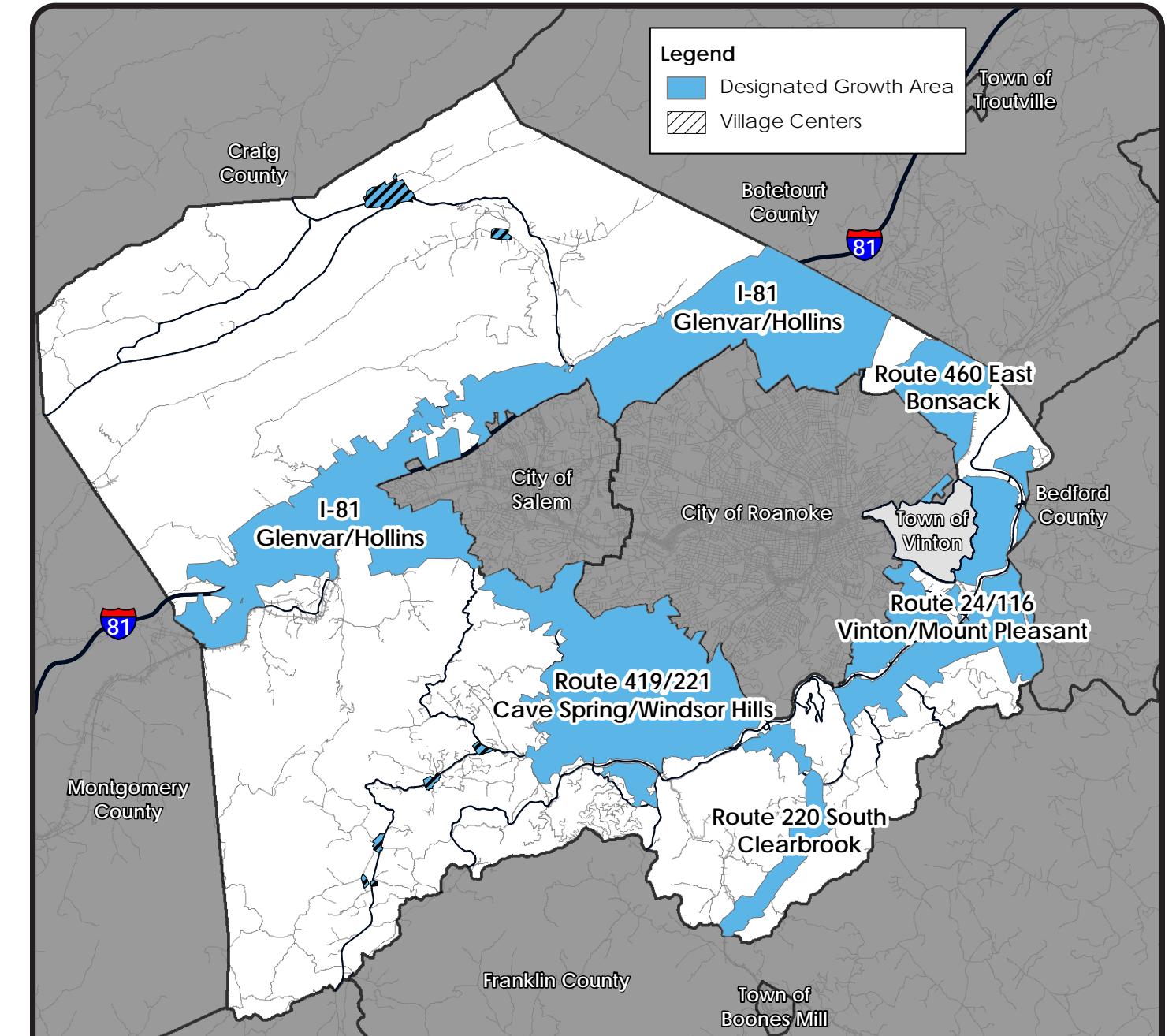
and turning radii at subdivision street intersections. In September 2015, the County amended the 2005 Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the designated DGA and add reference to the Code of Virginia §15.2-2333.1.

## 2.4 Community Planning Areas

 The County's geographic area is divided into individual Community Planning Areas (CPAs), each of which represents a different demographic of the County. These CPAs were formally introduced with the adoption of the 1985 Comprehensive Development Plan as the 'primary building blocks upon which the Inventory and Analysis and the Comprehensive Development Plan are founded'. At that time, twelve (12) CPAs were identified, whose boundaries were based on the topography of the County, availability of utility services, existing land use, and elementary school districts (1984 Community Development Plan, Vol. 1). Analysis of each CPA and engagement with its citizens helped define key concerns, community objectives, and standards, helped prioritize actions needed to manage land use and transportation growth, and helped develop strategies for meeting future demands for public facilities (1984 Community Development Plan, Vol. 1).

Since their formal introduction in the 1984 Community Development Plan, the CPAs have remained a key component of the County's comprehensive planning efforts, including the 1985 Comprehensive Plan. The citizens of each CPA were heavily involved during preparation of the 1998 Community Plan, with the input received and goals and recommendations developed carried over into the 2005 Community Plan. The CPAs were again engaged during the development of the 200 Plan, with the exception that at this time, the Bonsack and Vinton CPAs were combined into one due to their small size, resulting in a total of eleven (11) CPAs.

Engagement with the 11 CPAs during the development of the 200 Plan facilitated both the



 **Designated Growth Area**

The Designated Growth Area was previously determined based on the recommended future land use of contiguous development areas throughout Roanoke County. This area is intended to protect, preserve, enhance, and efficiently utilize county resources by guiding future growth and development through promoting compact and connected, infill development.

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identification of County-wide needs and values as well as the identification of CPA-specific needs and values. The outcomes of these engagement processes during the 200 Plan development are summarized in 11 individual Community Planning Area Summary Documents. These Community Planning Area Summary Documents also identify specific recommendations for community facilities, natural and cultural resources, transportation, housing, and future land use for each CPA, including recommended future land use maps.

The eleven unique Community Planning Areas spanning across Roanoke County include:

- Back Creek
- Bent Mountain
- Bonsack-Vinton
- Catawba
- Cave Spring
- Clearbrook
- Glenvar
- Masons Cove
- Mount Pleasant
- Peters Creek
- Windsor Hills

## 2.5 Activity Centers

 When looking forward to the growth that the County anticipates, it has been recognized that the County currently has a limited amount of land that is zoned appropriately for future high-density development, including commercial and industrial land uses. As of the date of the 200 Plan adoption, only 1.76% of the County's land is commercially zoned, and 2.20% is industrially zoned. Of this land zoned commercially and industrially, only a portion is vacant and can accommodate new development while other portions are either already developed or are underutilized, meaning

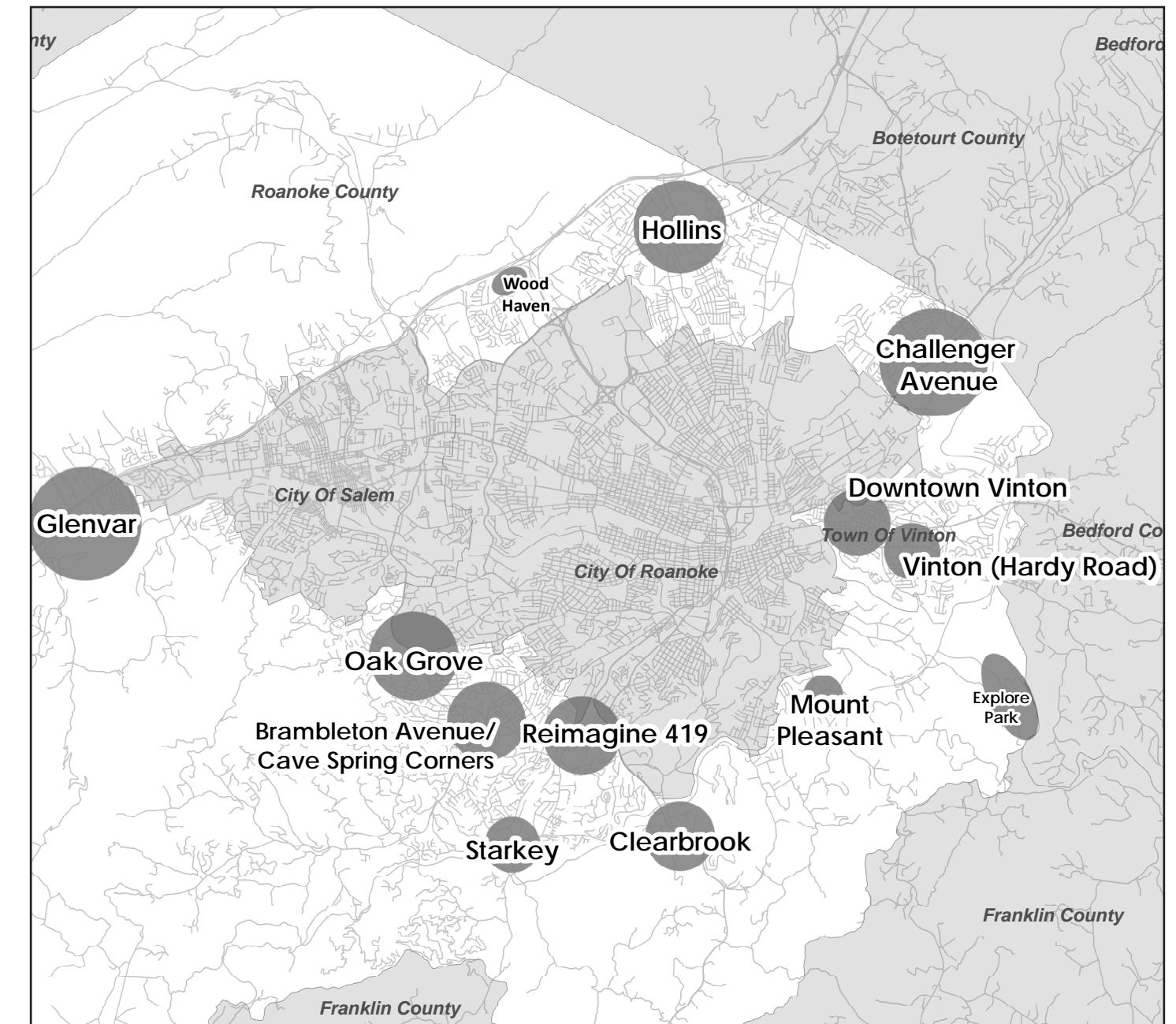
a use occupies the land that is not conforming to the underlying zoning district, such as a single-family dwelling in a commercial district. In consideration of the County's economic development goals, these current conditions mean a limited land base available for future commercial and industrial development and a reliance on a primarily residential tax base.

While it may be valuable to evaluate whether the County should increase its commercial and industrial zoning, there are opportunities within existing Activity Centers for redevelopment and infill development. Activity Centers are areas along major transportation corridors that contain employment and housing opportunities, have existing public and institutional uses, are home to a high population density in relation to surrounding areas, and that offer potential for mixed-use, walkable development. Furthermore, Activity Centers often already contain commercial and industrial zoning, allowing for a mix of different uses in a concentrated area. Developing plans for infill and redevelopment in these Activity Center areas will help to focus reinvestment in areas currently served by vital infrastructure and prevent expansion of development into areas of natural, agricultural and cultural importance in the County.

In early 2016, Planning and Economic Development staff evaluated potential Activity Center locations by evaluating the existing land uses, zoning districts, and future land use designations of various areas in the County. Several Activity Centers were identified that present opportunities for investment that will improve their economic viability, aesthetics and value. A map of the areas identified as future Activity Centers is found on page 2-7. As of the date of adoption of the 200 Plan, four (4) of these identified Activity Centers have had plans prepared and adopted since that time:

**419 Town Center Plan (2019):** This plan focuses on the Tanglewood Mall location and the greater area along the Route 419 corridor and envisions it as a high-density, mixed-use activity center. The advantages of this area as an Activity Center include its proximity to residential

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## Activity Centers

This map shows the original proposed activity centers areas throughout Roanoke County.

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development, its access provided by existing transportation networks, and its high percentage of commercial and high-density residential zoning. In addition, many of the larger parcels prime for redevelopment are held under single ownership.



**Hollins Center Plan (2020):** This plan explores opportunities to develop higher density, mixed-use activity areas along the existing commercial corridors found along the crossroads of Plantation Road, Williamson Road and Peters Creek Road. The Hollins Center was identified as a viable Activity Center due to its proximity to Interstate 81 and Hollins University, the fact that its home to the highest concentration of employment in the County, and because it has multiple redevelopment opportunities in proximity to community services, including parks, schools, libraries, and public safety facilities.

**Oak Grove Center (2021):** This plan focuses on redevelopment of an area that is primarily commercial in nature located along a busy stretch of Route 419 and within proximity to existing residential, including multi-family development. This area was chosen as an Activity Center due to its high visibility for potential future redevelopment

and its proximity to existing residential, office and community services, including parks, schools, libraries, and public safety facilities. Preparation of this plan was a joint effort with the City of Roanoke due to the study area also being located within their jurisdictional boundary.

**Challenger Avenue/Route 460 Land Use and Connectivity Study (2023):** This study is intended to inform future decisions related to the Route 460/Challenger Avenue corridor, which is recognized as a primary location for future development, redevelopment, and infill. The study provides recommendations for alternatives to traveling the corridor, potential changes to zoning and future land use designations to match desired land uses and examining at-grade railroad crossings for potential improvements.

## 2.6 Community Strategic Plan

 In 2016, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors adopted its first ever Community Strategic Plan, a five-year plan designed with input from County citizens that defined a community Vision Statement and established seven (7) Strategic Initiatives intended to guide County plans, programs, and activities in the five-year time frame. The following Vision Statement was established to summarize the shared vision for the County that was determined during the Community Strategic Plan process:

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



A key component to the development of the Community Strategic Plan was the various methods of community engagement employed by the County to gather input from citizens. Citizen input helped to pinpoint important strategic objectives and to identify common themes and overlapping priorities that existed among six key focus areas: Economic Development, Transportation, Quality of Life, Education, Community Health and Wellbeing, and Public Safety. These efforts resulted in the identification of the following seven (7) Strategic Initiatives that would help shape Roanoke County over the five-year span of the Community Strategic Plan:

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

During the five-year tenure of the Community Strategic Plan, these Strategic Initiatives were used to inform various County planning efforts, including the Annual Fiscal Plan, Capital Improvement Plan, Organizational Strategic Plan, and the preparation of the Roanoke 200 Plan. County departments also used the initiatives of the Community Strategic Plan as a tool for preparing annual departmental business plans and establishing performance measurements aimed at achieving the community's vision as summarized in the Vision Statement.

## 2.7 Board of Supervisors Strategic Plan

 In 2022, the Board of Supervisors committed to continuing strategic planning efforts with the adoption of a Strategic Plan, including seven (7) Strategic Target Outcome Areas and vision

statements for their implementation. The following 7 Strategic Target Outcome Areas were adopted:

- Economic Development
- Community Development
- Outdoor Recreation
- Education
- Housing
- Public Safety
- Organizational Effectiveness

Each Strategic Target Outcome Area included a three-year work plan for implementation, which outlined key actions to be taken during the three-year timeframe, and identified which County departments and staff would be responsible for their implementation. Since its adoption in 2022, the Strategic Plan and the work plans associated with the outcome areas have been updated annually to ensure the stated action items are still relevant to achieving the stated vision of each outcome area.

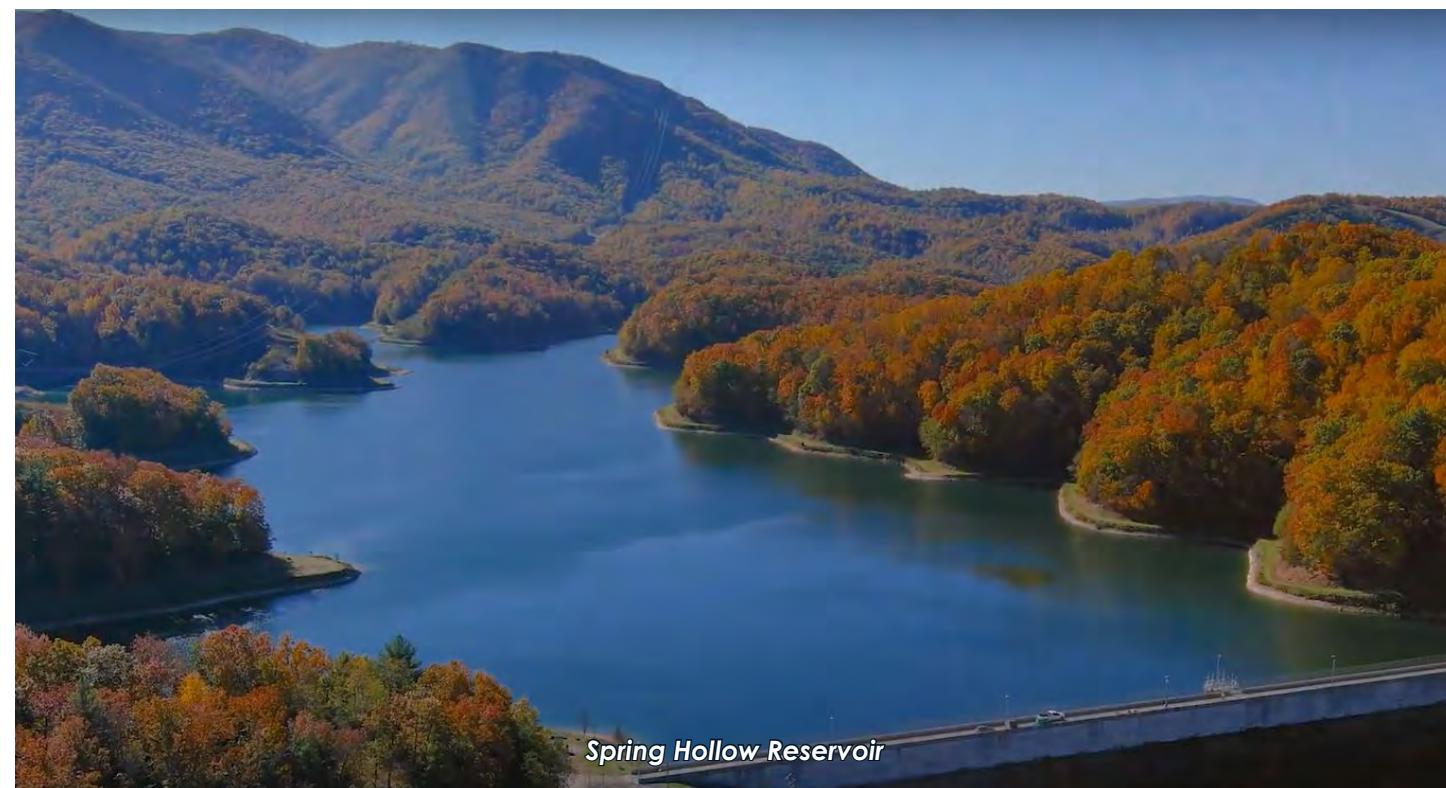
## 2.8 Regional Planning

 A map of Roanoke County is shown on page 2-11 and provides information on its location in Virginia and its relationship to neighboring counties and independent cities. Roanoke County is strategically located in southwestern Virginia on Interstate 81, a critical transportation connector to Washington D.C., Maryland, West Virginia, Ohio, North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky. The scenic Roanoke River runs through the center of the County and is recognized for its recreational opportunities and spectacular mountain scenery, rock cliffs, and gorges. Roanoke County also hosts portions of the Jefferson National Forest along its northern and western borders. Roanoke County is primarily rural agricultural or mountainous forested land in terms of undeveloped land area. The County also includes the incorporated Town of Vinton and census designated places such as Cave Spring, Glenvar, and Hollins. This southwest portion of

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Virginia is also rural, and the surrounding counties of Botetourt, Bedford, Montgomery, Craig, Floyd, and Franklin portray similar agrarian landscapes, forests, and low-density land development patterns. The interstate and highway systems, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Roanoke River distinguish Roanoke County as a crossroads and a logical regional center for agriculture, economic development, tourism, and outdoor recreation.

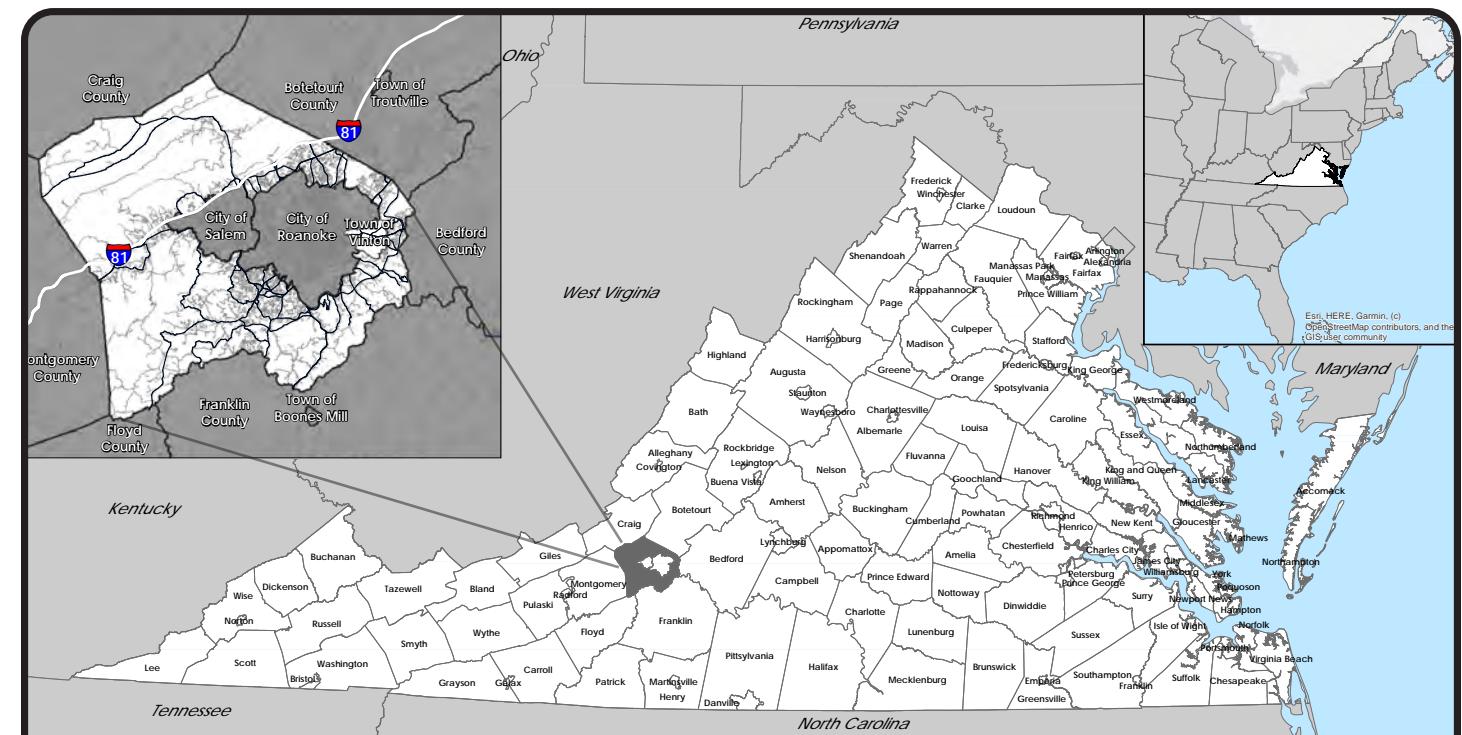
Roanoke County is one of several local government units that make up the Roanoke Valley. While the outer perimeter of the County borders the counties of Botetourt, Bedford, Franklin, Floyd, Montgomery, and Craig, the inner perimeter of the County completely surrounds the City of Salem and the City of Roanoke, sharing its boundary with both. Sharing jurisdictional boundaries with these two independent cities has resulted in an overlap of physical development and an interconnected network of people, resources, and services. Some



of the highest concentrations of people and development are found in the suburban areas at the crossroads between these localities, which requires strong cooperation to collectively plan and manage these areas to maintain the high quality of life that Roanoke County citizens have come to expect and deserve.

As Roanoke County approaches its bicentennial anniversary, the Roanoke Valley and its intertwined localities needs to be thought of as a cohesive unit rather than as many, often competing, individual parts. Many of the challenges of the twenty first century will know no geographic boundary line and will present all Valley citizens and local officials with opportunities to seek efficient and effective solutions. Critical issues such as economic development, natural resource preservation, transportation, cultural opportunities, and housing require a regional perspective and solutions.

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## Roanoke County

Roanoke County is located in southwestern Virginia in the eastern portion of the United States.

### Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional Commission

Roanoke County is a member of the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC) which is one of 21 planning districts commissions (PCDs) in Virginia that assist communities in regional planning efforts pursuant to the Regional Cooperation Act (Code of Virginia §15.2-42). RVARC promotes orderly and efficient development of the physical, social, and economic elements of the region by assisting government entities with planning efforts related to transportation, housing, economic development and environmental factors. RVARC is comprised of a full-time staff in addition to representatives from local governments within the PDC.



Roanoke Valley-Alleghany  
**REGIONAL**  
commission