COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR ROANOKE,
VIRGINIA 1985-2005
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Left: The Mill Mountain star has symbolized Roanoke since 1949.
The Comprehensive Development Plan provides a new approach to guide Roanoke’s continued revitalization and growth. The Plan begins by recognizing the impressive gains Roanoke has made in the past decade. Downtown and neighborhood revitalization have brought dramatic change to the city’s physical character and to Roanoke’s attitude about its own identity and potential. Economic growth and job creation, fueled by significant industrial and commercial developments, have made Roanoke a more competitive regional center. Strong political leadership, coupled with professional municipal management, has improved the quality of a wide variety of public facilities and services while lowering the city’s tax rate. Today, Roanokers sense the excitement of living in a dynamic city, yet value the historic structures, traditional values, natural beauty and comfortable pace that have long defined the city’s character.

A ROANOKE VISION: 2005
But what about the future? In twenty years, what kind of community do Roanokers want their city to be?
In keeping with the City’s tradition of civic involvement in planning, the Roanoke Vision Planning Team took this question to the citizens of Roanoke. Through a broad-based public participation process, including a public opinion survey, television special and a series of planning workshops and community meetings, a growing vision about Roanoke’s future emerged:

**Roanoke should be a city of neighborhoods.**
The preservation and enhancement of the city’s existing neighborhood fabric — its attractive homes, tree-lined streets, neighborhood commercial districts and local employment sites — should be firmly established. New land development ordinances, such as an innovative neighborhood conservation zone, should be adopted to help achieve preservation goals. Equally important are participatory planning efforts and new public and private implementation vehicles, such as a privately-initiated, non-profit housing development corporation, which should be supported to further needed housing revitalization efforts. Continued improvements in the educational facilities and programs of the City schools should draw families to city neighborhoods. Neighborhoods should also be strong social communities where everyone from children to the elderly can thrive. Human services designed to promote self-sufficiency should support this goal. Every neighborhood in the city should be an active participant in determining its own — and therefore Roanoke’s — future.

**Roanoke’s appearance and environmental quality should enhance the city’s image for residents and visitors.**
Roanoke should be a more beautiful city — a city of trees. Landscaped, well-lighted boulevards should
lead from regional highways to attractive neighborhoods and a pedestrian-scaled downtown. New and renovated housing units should capture the flavor and best qualities of their historic and architectural context. Revised land development regulations which encourage improved design quality and landscaping should ensure that new employment developments are good neighbors to adjacent uses. New construction should have a healthy respect for natural features, avoiding flood plains or steep slopes. Development and landscaping of a scenic river parkway should be considered in conjunction with flood control improvements to share costs and provide increased environmental benefits.

Roanoke's continuing economic development should be pursued as crucial to neighborhood health as well as to regional growth.
Roanoke's employment base should continue to be expanded through active economic development efforts. Successfully marketing Roanoke as a vital economic center — a part of the "southeast urban region," which also contains the Raleigh, Charlotte, Atlanta, and Nashville areas — is critical to the region's continuing growth. Equally important is the value of economic development to ongoing neighborhood revitalization. Attractive and well-planned nearby job sites can be positive tools for residential marketing, leveraging housing assistance, providing job training and promoting self-sufficiency.

Roanoke and its downtown should serve as a dynamic center for the region.
An emphasis not only on office, industrial and retail development, but also on tourism will increase Roanoke's importance as a vibrant center for the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area and the western Vir-
ginia region. An improved airport, a river parkway, a new convention center, additional hotel space, attractive downtown housing, a relocated transportation museum, continued development of Center in the Square, and new theaters and restaurants near the City Market and Henry Street are all features that can be attractions for local residents and regional or national visitors. Regional cooperation in planning the services and infrastructure to support these facilities is essential. Equally important is City support for other regional institutions and programs, such as expanded higher education opportunities in cooperation with area colleges and universities or the development of major tourist destination attractions such as the proposed Explore Project’s new zoological park.

Roanoke’s citizens see an exciting future for their city. To achieve this vision, the recommendations of the Comprehensive Development Plan attempt to balance new approaches for housing, human service, economic development and public service and facility needs with continuing efforts to maintain and enhance the city’s existing assets.

Implementation of the Plan will require cooperation. Leaders from local government, the business community, the volunteer sector and neighborhood organizations must keep working together to find even more opportunities for the creative human and financial investments that have characterized the city’s recent revitalization and development. The central focus of the Roanoke Vision Comprehensive Development Plan is to provide a common framework for these ongoing partnership efforts: the strategic planning, regulatory and development actions needed to help Roanoke reach its full potential as both a vital regional center and a comfortable hometown community.
SUMMARY OF MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to implement these long-term approaches, the Comprehensive Development Plan proposes four priority areas for action over the next five years and beyond:

- Revised Land Development Regulations
- Improved Administrative Procedures
- Partnership Approaches
- Planning and Development Actions

The following summary highlights the major recommendations in each category. For a more detailed discussion of these proposals, please see the appropriate sections of the Plan.

Revised Land Development Regulations

Revised land development regulations including zoning, site plan and subdivision ordinances are essential to successful implementation of the Comprehensive Development Plan. The following regulatory recommendations should be enacted:

- Revised zoning and related regulations should promote neighborhood conservation and preservation of historically significant structures, facilitate development of "infill" or vacant lots in existing neighborhoods, and expand the possibilities for downtown housing in renovated or new structures.
- Improved site plan controls and design guidelines should encourage quality new construction and renovation sensitive to existing neighborhood character.
- Revised land development regulations should provide a wider variety of new housing choices through more innovative site planning techniques.
- Revised zoning and related regulations should improve the quality of commercial and industrial
development and minimize impacts on adjacent residential uses.

- A new zoning classification for neighborhood commercial centers should ensure appropriate, small-scale development of needed neighborhood services.
- Revised zoning regulations should facilitate the provision of essential community-based human service programs and facilities.
- Continued enforcement should be provided of the City's existing regulations limiting run-off and new efforts should be made to establish Valley-wide storm water standards through cooperation with other area jurisdictions.

**Improved Administrative Procedures**

Improved coordination of all ongoing municipal planning functions is an important element in achieving the strategic planning and comprehensive development actions called for in this plan. A streamlined development approvals process including increased staff support to land development regulatory bodies is also critical. Key administrative proposals include:

- Strengthen Roanoke City Planning Commission’s role in directing ongoing comprehensive planning for the city.
- Improve coordination of all strategic and comprehensive planning by developing stronger relationships and more formal lines of responsibility between the City's Office of Community Planning and all municipal departments and related agencies with planning functions.
- Provide a “one-stop” source of land development information, response and program assistance for the public within the Office of Community Planning.
Develop a central computerized land use mapping and data base as part of this effort.

- Organize coordinated development review and staff reporting procedures for the Roanoke City Planning Commission, Architectural Review Board and Board of Zoning Appeals within the Office of Community Planning.

- Ensure maximum possible enforcement of all land development regulations including housing and property maintenance codes through appropriate City departments.

**Partnership Approaches**

- Continue successful public/private/neighborhood partnership efforts in planning and development actions.

- Support new private non-profit development entities for housing and commercial revitalization.

- Support neighborhood civic and business associations.

- Actively involve neighborhood residents in detailed planning to develop action strategies for each neighborhood.
Planning And Development Actions
The Plan’s key planning and development action recommendations include:

Housing
- Develop public/private housing strategy plan to establish methods, schedule and financing approaches to upgrade quality of substandard housing units and address other housing needs.
- Initiate and support a non-profit housing development corporation to carry out housing rehabilitation efforts and develop models for new residential uses such as downtown housing.

Economic Development
- Continue active efforts to expand Roanoke’s employment base.
- Support continued downtown development as a center for office, government and supporting retail services.
- Support the development of tourist destination attractions and supporting services.
- Prepare neighborhood commercial plan to identify areas lacking essential commercial services, existing centers in need of revitalization and sites for new centers.
- Encourage industrial development on appropriate sites and complete public access and infrastructure improvements to these developments as needed.

Historic and Cultural Resources
- Prepare detailed historic and cultural inventory plan to develop expanded strategies and programs to promote preservation of historic structures and neighborhood character.
Human Development

- Support continued improvement of public school facilities and programs including policy of maintaining neighborhood schools through renovation of older facilities and paired school administrations.
- Support efforts to expand job training, graduate and other higher education facilities and programs in Roanoke.
- Prepare detailed human resources plan for human service and facility needs through cooperation with public and private service providers and neighborhood residents.
- Support the development of neighborhood-based, multi-purpose human service centers.
- Support increased youth activity, service and day care programs through both new public and private efforts and better coordination and use of existing facilities and programs.

Parks and Recreation

- Update Parks Master Plan to identify priority park development and improvement projects.
- Develop a greenway system along the Roanoke River and major streams to provide both a continuous open space with bikeways and pedestrian paths and enhanced flood control.
- Provide expanded recreation programs with special emphasis on youth programs in neighborhood areas with a high need for youth services.

Transportation

- Participate in revision of Roanoke Valley Area Transportation Plan and prepare City Thoroughfare Plan.
• Implement selected street improvements, new roads and interchanges.
• Support continued airport improvements.
• Improve Roanoke's image through aesthetic, landscaping and traffic improvements on major entry roads into city and downtown.
• Prepare a traffic management plan with special emphasis on downtown circulation and parking.

Utilities
• Cooperate with area jurisdictions to develop a regional storm drainage plan and implement improvements identified for city.
• Participate in the development of a regional water supply plan.
• Resolve future regional facility needs for waste water treatment and solid waste disposal.

Environmental Quality
• Implement appropriate flood control measures and minimize development in the flood plain or flood prone areas.
• Develop open space conservation areas to protect natural resources and sensitive land.
• Enhance city's visual quality through an expanded tree planting program for residential and commercial areas.

THE ROANOKE VISION PROCESS
Through the Roanoke Vision planning process, Roanoke's citizens joined in the tasks of examining the city's various land use and service components—from residential to human development. In addition to developing specific recommendations for each component, the impacts of actions in one component
were evaluated in relation to others including the interrelationships among a variety of neighborhood revitalization, economic development, public infrastructure, and human services efforts.

The Comprehensive Development Plan itself incorporates both long-term (20 year) projections and strategies for Roanoke's future, as well as a short-term (5 year) set of proposed planning and development actions. The Plan's assumptions and conclusions should be reviewed every five years, while the shorter-term actions should be refined and updated yearly.

The larger Roanoke Vision planning process should become a continuing planning and development program for the City under the direction of the Roanoke City Planning Commission. Development actions must always be preceded by continually-refined plans and a continually-expanding set of participants. Based on the Comprehensive Development Plan's framework, the Planning Commission should initiate two parallel sets of planning activities to be coordinated by the Office of Community Planning and carried out by appropriate City departments and public agencies. These ongoing planning efforts include:

**Neighborhood Action Plans:**
Detailed neighborhood planning with local residents should be based on Comprehensive Development

Above: The Roanoke Vision Comprehensive Plan established a land use framework for the next 20 years and a development/revitalization action strategy for the next five years. Detailed action strategies will then be developed in subsequent 5 year increments.
Plan analysis and should include additional data gathering, issue identification, and definition of action projects. Neighborhood plans should focus on both existing development (maintaining good qualities, improving problem areas, or changing seriously deteriorated conditions) as well as new development (how to achieve both optimum location and quality design of new land uses).

**Detailed Component plans:**
Detailed strategies for specific subjects such as housing, human services, or storm water management should also be developed. Based on the values and recommendations of the Comprehensive Development Plan, these plans should focus on specific actions and resources. Project scheduling, phasing, and budgeting should also be established. Task forces to advise on component plans should include, as required, public and private sector participants.
Through citizen participation in the planning process, a common vision emerged about the kind of city Roanokers want their community to be.
The Roanoke Vision planning process involved two parallel work efforts:

- a public participation element composed of workshops, media and public surveys designed to inform and solicit the ideas of Roanoke Valley citizens, and
- a technical planning element through which the Roanoke Vision Planning Team and City staff collected and analyzed background data needed to form planning and development recommendations.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
The public participation process was based on the premise that when planning begins with good communication — a lively exchange of information and ideas — it will result in effective actions with broad support. Communication elements of the Roanoke Vision Process included:

Roanoke Vision Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee and Ordinance Review Committee
The City Council-appointed Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee and the citizen-based Ordinance Review Committee played key roles in developing the Comprehensive Development Plan and related land use regulations. Both committees contained representatives from the City’s development-related boards and commissions and neighborhood organizations. Because of its technical focus, the Ordinance Review Committee also contained representatives from the business, construction and engineering sectors of the community.

Roanoke Vision TV Special
This prime time television special, produced by the Roanoke Vision Planning Team and broadcast by the NBC affiliate, WSLS TV-10, highlighted the history of planning in Roanoke and the problems and opportunities Roanoke now faces.

Roanoke Vision Survey
The Roanoke Vision Survey, published as a supplement to the Roanoke Times and World News, reached over 165,000 Roanoke Valley households. In addition to providing background information on Roanoke’s rich planning legacy as well as current issues facing the city, the Survey provided citizens with an opportunity to register their opinions on a range of planning and development activities. Young people were also invited to respond through a “Dreams for Roanoke” contest.

Roanoke Vision Forum
This public town meeting brought together over 200 invited civic, business, neighborhood and government leaders to discuss key ingredients in Roanoke’s quality of life and the issues the city faces in its continued revitalization and growth.

Planning Workshops
Through a series of three planning workshops, a representative group of citizens developed a comprehensive set of community values to guide the Plan’s development, provided information on specific neighborhood and city-wide issues, and reviewed preliminary Comprehensive Development Plan concepts.

Community and Civic Meetings
The Roanoke Vision Planning Team met with key public boards and commissions, professional organizations and civic and neighborhood groups to solicit their ideas and to explain the issues being addressed in the Comprehensive Development Plan and related land use regulations.
ROANOKE VISION SCHEDULE

1985
M J J A S O N D J F M A M

Comprehensive Plan
Analysis & Public Information
Development & Participation
Review & Approval

Zoning
Research & Analysis
Develop Draft
Produce Zoning Recommendations
Approvals

TECHNICAL PLANNING
The Roanoke Vision Planning Team conducted professional evaluations and developed planning recommendations in parallel with the public participation aspects of the planning process.

Analysis of Existing Conditions
In conjunction with City administrators and staff, the Planning Team examined demographic and economic data, investigated land use and zoning conflicts, evaluated local and regional issues and listened to citizen concerns. As background for this work, a group of citizen investigators prepared a comprehensive land use inventory of the city, the first such update in over 10 years. A review of existing City departmental planning efforts as well as current projects and program actions was also a major part of this effort. A detailed description of this work is contained in a supplemental report, Roanoke Today: An Analysis of Existing Conditions.

Analysis of Components and Preparation of Final Comprehensive Development Plan
The Planning Team analyzed and prepared recommendations for major components of Roanoke’s land use and infrastructure, testing each in terms of its relationship to the others, and synthesizing them into a final composite plan and policy recommendations.

Concurrent work focused on land development regulations as a major implementation tool for Roanoke Vision values and recommendations.
Citizen concerns expressed through the public participation events in the planning process helped shape a common vision of the kind of community Roanokers would like their city to be. The results of the Roanoke Vision Survey, Forum and Planning Workshops as well as civic and neighborhood meetings directed the development of the Plan. Specifically, the Planning Team investigated the issues, conditions and potential planning or development actions identified by citizens. Two companion reports, *Building the Roanoke Vision: A Summary of Citizen Response at the Roanoke Vision Forum and Public Opinion Survey: A Summary of Citizen Response to the Roanoke Vision Survey 1985*, provide more complete discussion of these issues.

GOALS
Citizens also participated in the development of a statement of goals for the Comprehensive Development Plan. These general goals are:

- Provide orderly growth and revitalization for the city;
- Encourage preservation of environmental and cultural resources;
- Ensure pleasant, safe and suitable living environments in each neighborhood;
- Promote a balanced economy to ensure sufficient employment and economic base;
- Provide public services, facilities and infrastructure to meet the varied needs of all city residents;
- Encourage active citizen involvement in the planning and development actions that affect the city’s quality of life.

COMMUNITY VALUES
In addition, citizens helped develop a set of community values reflecting major concerns in four issue areas:

- neighborhood enhancement, preservation and development
- economic development
- human development and public safety
- city services and facilities

The values in each of these areas reflect the combined citizens’ responses and highlight the following common themes:

- the importance of neighborhoods,
ing preservation of existing buildings and quality new development;
- the desire to maintain Roanoke's convenient, comfortable pace and appreciation for its friendly neighborly spirit;
- a concern for the city's image and appearance;
- the expansion of Roanoke's role as an economically and culturally vibrant regional center;
- the desire for quality public services and facilities;
- the importance of quality educational opportunities;
- the importance of self-sufficiency as a goal in human services; and
- the need for increased regional cooperation among local governments in the Roanoke Valley.

The complete set of community values which guided the Roanoke Vision Planning process follows.

COMMUNITY VALUES

**Neighborhoods: Enhancement, Preservation and Development**

1. Neighborhoods are an essential element in Roanoke's quality of life. Neighborhood enhancement, preservation, improvement, and development should be encouraged through public, private and voluntary action.

2. Neighborhood character and environmental quality should be protected. Possible changes in land use or new public and private development in or near residential areas should be carefully evaluated and designed to conserve and enhance neighborhood quality.

3. Preservation of archaeological sites, historic districts, landmark features, and historic structures should be supported and significant structures should be preserved.

4. Priority should be given to maintenance and rehabilitation of sound, usable structures rather than demolition. Traditional and historical features should be preserved to the extent practical.

5. Better public and private property maintenance should be encouraged through public policy, including stronger controls over unsightly property, as well as through the efforts of citizens, the private sector and voluntary organizations.

6. Building, housing maintenance and zoning codes should be strengthened and effectively enforced to ensure improved housing quality and community appearance.

7. New housing and housing types (townhouses, condominiums, etc.) should be encouraged to respond to current needs and trends including changing family structures, household composition and economic conditions. However, new housing development in existing residential areas should be carefully designed to relate well to the existing neighborhood character.

8. Development of housing in downtown should be encouraged with both public and private initiatives.

9. Programs that support affordable housing for all economic groups in
the city should be continued and expanded. These programs should emphasize public/private partnerships that support home ownership, especially for financially disadvantaged groups where possible.

10. Development or reuse of small neighborhood shopping areas to serve the needs of area residents should be encouraged through public policy and private actions. Priority should be given to areas where needed commercial services are not currently provided. Regulations should ensure that neighborhood commercial uses are in keeping with the neighborhood’s character.

11. The development of neighborhood self-help organizations in all areas of the city should be encouraged, through efforts such as the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership.

12. Environmental and design amenities that enhance neighborhood livability should be encouraged in all neighborhoods. These important neighborhood amenities should be protected.

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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

1. Commercial, industrial and residential growth and development should be encouraged through public and private actions to ensure a strong and diversified economic base and employment opportunities for all of Roanoke’s citizens.

2. Roanoke’s downtown should continue to evolve as the region’s “central business district” for office, financial, supporting retail, cultural, entertainment and government services.

3. Development of new or existing commercial and industrial areas in the city should be carefully planned and designed to promote quality development and good land use.

4. Roanoke should encourage the continued development of commercial, health, transportation-related businesses and other service facilities that serve the larger Valley region.

5. Development of facilities and activities which would enhance Roanoke’s role as a convention and tourism site should be encouraged.

6. Controls to help ensure that new or expanded industrial and commercial developments are good neighbors for residential or other adjacent areas should be carefully evaluated and strengthened where necessary.

7. Cooperation of Valley governments in planning and creation of common economic development and supporting infrastructure policies should be encouraged, through public policy and private actions.

8. Improved job training, placement and adult education should be continued
and expanded as part of the City's program.

10. Expanded higher education opportunities should be continued and expanded as part of the City's program.

11. Improved transportation systems—highways, rail lines, air travel, and public transit—are extremely important to Roanoke's economic development and should be carefully planned.

12. The physical facilities and operations of Roanoke's airport should be expanded and maintained to be competitive with other metropolitan areas.

13. Because of the limited amount of existing industrially zoned land in Roanoke, the comprehensive plan and related ordinances should protect these areas by restricting uses to only industrial categories.

**HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Education and Youth**

1. High quality educational facilities and programs at all levels should be supported and maintained as a major investment in Roanoke's human and economic future.

2. Through a variety of public and private efforts, Roanoke should provide programs and activities for young people to become productive adults so that they can take advantage of opportunities to remain in or return to the city.

**Human Services**

3. Self-sufficiency should be a goal for human service programs for Roanoke's citizens.

4. Quality public and private child care services, including before and after school care, should be available and affordable for all working parents. Creative approaches and settings should be encouraged to offer choices to meet a variety of family needs. Coordination with schools and other existing institutions and organizations should also be emphasized where appropriate.

5. Human services should provide for the health, welfare, and safety of all citizens through public and private efforts.

6. Appropriate housing services for individuals with special needs should be available in neighborhood settings through public and private efforts.

7. Through a variety of public and private efforts, services should be made available to allow Roanoke's elderly and disabled citizens to remain in their own homes or neighborhoods as long as possible.

8. Through public and private efforts, employment training opportunities should be available to serve Roanoke's youth and economically disadvantaged citizens.

9. Supporting and strengthening the family should be a goal of public and private human services in Roanoke.
Public Safety
10. Crime prevention efforts should be supported through strengthened law enforcement activities and citizen involvement.

Regional Cooperation
11. Cooperation of Valley governments in addressing human development and public safety issues which impact the larger region should be encouraged.

CITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES
Environmental Quality
1. Promoting, encouraging, maintaining or enhancing environmental quality and the appearance of the city should be a key objective of public services and private initiatives in Roanoke.

2. Public area landscaping and beautification should be encouraged and supported through public and private actions.

Parks and Recreation
3. Enhancement and maintenance of existing parks and recreation facilities should be continued and supported.

4. When new community facilities and parks are developed, they should be provided in currently unserved areas where need and demand for services are highest.

Infrastructure: Transportation
5. Roanoke’s transportation system and utilities should focus primarily on maintenance and completion of existing systems. Expansion of these systems should be carefully coordinated with the future land use goals adopted in the comprehensive plan.

6. The review of the City’s traffic management system should be an ongoing process.

7. Regional accessibility should be strengthened through the enhancement of transportation facilities, including buses, and airport services.

8. Improved downtown accessibility through better traffic flow, locational and directional signs, parking and pedestrian amenities should be developed.

Regional Cooperation
9. Cooperation of Valley governments in addressing issues which impact the larger region should be encouraged.

10. Regional facilities which serve the metropolitan community or provide joint services to areas in need should be encouraged and supported.
Left: Downtown was thriving when Roanoke’s second Comprehensive Plan was being developed in 1928.
Roanoke celebrated its centennial in 1982—100 years of development from a small crossroads village to a railroad center, then from a growing industrial city to the diversified regional industrial, service and financial center of western Virginia that it is today.

FROM VILLAGE OF BIG LICK TO RAILROAD "BOOM TOWN"

Settlement in the Roanoke area began in the 1850s when the first railroad lines located in the Village of Big Lick. However, the city's rapid growth came between 1874 and 1889 after Roanoke became the headquarters of the Norfolk and Western Railway.

The legacy of development patterns begun in these early boom years is still evident. The original settlement along Big Lick Creek was located in the areas where downtown Roanoke and the Gainsboro neighborhood stand today. Industrial development grew along the rail lines and the Roanoke River. Much of the housing in the city's oldest neighborhoods was built rapidly by speculative land companies. By the early 1900s, Roanoke had established itself as a growing industrial city and the desire for home ownership spurred more substantial residential development.

1907 PLAN: REMODELING ROANOKE

General concern about the city's development was expressed in 1907 when Roanoke's first comprehensive plan, entitled Remodeling Roanoke, was commissioned by a group of citizens called the Civic Betterment League. This plan, one of the first such efforts in the nation, established the foundation for the city by coordinating the location of the downtown buildings along Jefferson Street and at the site of the City Market, establishing an orderly street system and proposing a network of parks.

"The problem that confronts the people of Roanoke...is no less than the remodeling of the existing city and the remoulding of the large area around it so that both may better serve present and future generations. The task is not an easy one. It involves an intimate knowledge of the evolution of the present City of Roanoke and as wise as possible a forecasting of its future, a firm hold upon fundamental principles of city making generally; an acquaintance with the experience and actual achievement of other cities; and a capacity to discriminate—to select from a number of possible courses of action one that is, all things considered, unquestionably the best. Moreover, it demands imagination, courage and public spirit." (Remodeling Roanoke, 1907)

1928 PLAN: GROWING CITY OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

By 1928, Roanoke's citizens and City Hall recognized the need for a new plan to direct development in the growing city. Key results of the 1928 comprehensive plan can be seen throughout Roanoke today. Road and park systems were developed. Schools were located. The sites for Victory Stadium, the city's first airport, and the present municipal buildings were chosen. The plan included the city's first zoning ordinance which controlled how land in the city could be used.

"The plan of 1928 has been prepared for a still greater Roanoke, for a city of splendid appearance as well as a strong industrial and commercial center. It contemplates the growth of the city and region for a generation ahead; for the meeting of the modern trends in transportation; for the best use of lands; the preser-
NEW VALUES

The negative aspects of the 1964 plan’s development legacy began to be addressed in the late 1970s by a diverse set of public and private actions. Roanoke began to rediscover the rich diversity of the city’s older neighborhoods and the pleasures of downtown. Individuals began to renovate historic buildings and City actions soon followed. New action plans and strategies for downtown, neighborhood, park, and economic development were based on an emerging set of values, which included:

- Historic preservation
- Neighborhood revitalization
- Downtown revitalization
- Quality city services
- Job creation through economic development
- Public/private/citizen cooperation
- Development of arts, entertainment, convention and tourist activities

Citizens once more took the lead and joined in the activities of programs such as Design ’79, the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership and a score of advisory groups and task forces on issues such as housing, crime prevention and park revitalization. These efforts, coupled with significant public and private investments, have led to major improvements in Roanoke within the last decade.
Right: Every day is festival time in the old City Market.
ROANOKE: CENTER OF A DYNAMIC REGION

Roanoke, a city of 100,600 people, is located in the broad valley where the Roanoke River meets the Blue Ridge Mountains. As the major city in western Virginia, Roanoke plays a central role in the area's economy and is the regional center of employment, professional services, finance, health care, transportation, shopping and entertainment. The city's regional context is defined on two levels. First, Roanoke is the center of the larger Roanoke Valley metropolitan area of 224,000, the federally defined Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) which also includes the City of Salem, the Town of Vinton and Roanoke and Botetourt Counties. Roanoke contains only 10% of the land area of this metropolitan region, but contains almost half of the area's population and over 50% of its jobs. In addition, Roanoke serves a much greater market area of approximately 800,000, including the 19 counties of the western Virginia region as well as nearby counties in West Virginia.

Transportation plays a key role in Roanoke's focus as a trade and service center for western Virginia. In fact, as far as this region is concerned, "all roads lead to Roanoke." Roanoke developed as a railroad center, and now its location along I-81 and U.S. 220 provides easy automobile access. The Blue Ridge Parkway brings over 19 million tourists to Roanoke's doorstep each year. Its airport facilities serve the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area and much of western Virginia.

ROANOKE AS A MATURING CITY

Roanoke's future is shaped by its people — individuals choosing where to live, work and send their children to school; businesses deciding whether or not to locate or expand in the city; government officials weighing the economics of investments for public facilities; or volunteers actively working on a wide array of neighborhood, cultural or civic projects. However, Roanoke's future is also shaped by larger economic and demographic trends that affect other Virginia and U.S. cities. In this context, Roanoke may be seen as a maturing city within a dynamic, growing region which shares the following characteristics with many other such cities:

A relatively stable population totalling less than 50% of a growing metropolitan area (SMSA) population.

Roanoke's population has stabilized. No large population gains or losses are predicted. Modest fluctuations may occur: for example, a small decrease by 1990 had been forecast by the Tayloe Murphy Institute in a study for the State of Virginia; however, recent updates to that estimate show slight gains since 1980 to the current 100,600 level. Roanoke's successful economic development and downtown and neighborhood revitalization efforts have contributed to this stabilizing trend during a period when many other central cities have continued to lose population. In contrast, just as many other regions in the southeastern United States, the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area (SMSA) is continuing to grow rapidly. By 1990, its total population is expected to rise from 224,000 to 243,000, with much of the growth occurring in Roanoke County. As a developed, mature city, Roanoke's assets are a critical factor in the metropolitan area's growth. While the city may not gain the direct tax revenue of expanded populations, with careful planning it can share the economic benefits which result.
A population with a substantial number of elderly and young residents.

The age structure of Roanoke's population influences the city's economic dynamics and service needs. The largest segment of Roanoke's population (58.4%) falls into the working age brackets from 19-64. Those in the 19-34 age group are now, and will continue to be, the largest segment of this population. However, Roanoke's elderly residents, age 65 and over, and youth, age 18 and under, together comprise 41.6% of the city's population. These non-working age groups are a vital part of the community, but do require a variety of health, education, recreation and other human services. The elderly population in Roanoke is rising while contributing a smaller share to current City revenues. In 1970 it was 13.6% of the city total and in 1980 it was 15.7%. Nationally, the population is aging at a similar rate, but the total is only 11.7%. The youth population is declining, from 29.8% in 1970 to 25.9% in 1980. Again, this trend in Roanoke is following the slight decline in the number of youth 18 and under at a national level. This change indicates that the public school population in the city may continue to decline modestly.

A reduction in household size and an increase in the number of households.

Decreasing household size is another national trend. Roanoke shares this change in Roanoke from 2.85 persons per household in 1970 to 2.6 in 1980 means that more people now live alone or in smaller families and groups. More housing units are required to house the same number of people. In Roanoke the increase in occupied housing units, from 32,000 in 1970 to 40,000 in 1980, is a much higher percentage increase (20%) than the city's population increase of approximately 10% during the same period. This means that even with the stable population projected for the city, there will be increases in housing demand, particularly for smaller units.

A minority population larger than the other jurisdictions in the metropolitan area.

Racial composition is another factor in the city's demographics. In 1980, 78% of Roanoke's citizens were white and 22% were black. Roanoke's recent history is marked by improved race relations in the city's political, economic, educational and cultural life. The city's inner neighborhoods remain centers of black population, but approximately one quarter of the other neighborhoods in the city now have a significant racial mix. Within the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area (SMSA), Roanoke has the largest percentage of minority residents. This difference is expected to continue.

A predominately middle income and mobile population.

Roanoke is a predominately middle-income community that benefits from a relatively reasonable cost of living. The 1983 median income in the city was $18,596. Although this is $2,000 lower than the national average, in Roanoke the cost of living for a family of four is more than $4,000 lower than
the national average. This middle income characteristic makes a positive contribution to the city's overall quality of life.

Roanoke's population is also relatively mobile. More than 40% of the city's residents have moved within the last five years. This indicates the potential for continuing demographic change and vitality in Roanoke. Areas with stable neighborhoods are a basic strength to the city. However, even stable areas need gradual change to avoid the situation currently facing several of Roanoke's neighborhoods where the population has been so stable that they now have large aging populations with relatively low or fixed incomes. This means that entire neighborhoods could experience major changes in the composition of their communities within short periods of time.

Based on these factors, Roanoke's future development must consider the following:

**Roanoke's stable population size can be a significant asset.**

Costly municipal infrastructure is largely in place. Future facility and service needs can be more easily planned. Once basic needs are met, resources can be directed to further improving the quality rather than the capacity of the city's transportation and utility infrastructure as well as its educational, recreational, human service and public safety programs and facilities. Also, as the quality of such programs and facilities continues to improve, the city will be in a better position to attract the working age residents most able to contribute to the city's economy.

**Roanoke can share the benefits of the region's growth by continuing its active economic development efforts.**

As the employment center for the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area, Roanoke must continue to create jobs for its 19 to 34 year old working age "population bulge," maintain good road access to the city's principal employment centers for the commuters in the work force, and stimulate growth of retail and other support services for these workers.

**Housing development will be important to the city's overall health.**

There will be an increase in the need for housing catering to new households comprised of single adults, childless couples or smaller families. The development of new housing or the renovation of existing housing for these groups can be an important factor in attracting new residents to the city. Even though stable population levels are forecast, this assumes a dynamic housing market. The more responsive the city's real estate market can be, the larger the share of the region's growth Roanoke can attract.

**Changing neighborhood demographics will require adjustments in the locations and types of public services and facilities.**

While the overall capacity needs of schools and other public services and facilities are not expected to increase, demand for services for some groups such as the elderly and lower income residents will increase. In addition, changes in age and household composition will require timely and responsive adjustments in the provision of services. This must be a key strategy if quality services are to be provided for all population groups throughout the city.
THE PLANNING APPROACH: A CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Roanoke is a city of diverse neighborhoods. These neighborhoods, the basic building blocks of the city, contain a range of residential, industrial, retail, office, institutional and park/open space uses. They are also strong social communities, well-defined by topographic and other natural or man-made features. Because of this diversity, the Roanoke Vision process developed a neighborhood-specific, strategic planning approach which provides a city-wide framework for planning and development recommendations.

This approach to neighborhood development focuses on both developed and vacant parcels:

• Strategies for existing development propose ways for analyzing and revitalizing existing neighborhoods

• Strategies for vacant land propose ways to define locational criteria and design standards for new development.

EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

Healthy neighborhoods are those in which the private housing market is strong and vital. In neighborhoods where the market is weak or not present, a variety of physical, social, or economic problems often exist. These problem areas can be improved or changed through public or private sector actions.

The goal for public sector efforts is therefore to maintain, improve, or change conditions to achieve the best possible environment for each neighborhood and to encourage maximum functioning of the private real estate market.
Planning Approaches
Three proposed levels of public sector effort are described below:

1. MAINTAIN the high quality of strong and stable neighborhoods.

Strong neighborhoods may be characterized by the vitality of their real estate markets. Houses for sale at fair prices will sell relatively quickly, indicating that the neighborhood is perceived as a desirable place to live not only by its residents, but also by outsiders. Housing quality is good, there are few conflicts between adjacent land uses, and social problems are minimal. The public sector strategy in these strong neighborhoods is, therefore, to maintain and enhance the existing quality of the area.

2. IMPROVE transitional or problem areas.

Some neighborhoods are characterized by a mixture of good housing conditions and some noticeable deterioration. Housing deterioration may be due to deferred maintenance by either home owners or rental property owners. In addition, there may be a lack of needed special services for elderly, young or unemployed residents. There may also be specific public utility problems or inappropriate commercial or industrial uses within or on the edges of the neighborhood. All of these factors negatively affect the private real estate market in these areas.

However, none of the conditions in these neighborhoods have deteriorated to the point that selective positive actions could not substantively restore the neighborhoods' attractiveness and private market appeal. Here, targeted public sector investments in the maintenance and renewal of the housing stock, essential human services or selected public utility or other infrastructure, can bring needed improvements and encourage further revitalization efforts by neighborhood residents, organizations and other private investors. Detailed planning with residents is needed to identify problems and define appropriate action strategies.

3. CHANGE seriously deteriorated or deficient conditions.

Within some of Roanoke's neighborhoods, deterioration has progressed to the point that major corrective action is needed. Entire blocks may contain a mix of vacant lots and vacant or seriously deteriorated houses. In many instances, conflicts between incompatible industrial and residential uses have helped to create these conditions. Here the private housing market is almost non-existent. Social or economic problems are often pervasive.

In these neighborhoods, areas of strength and areas of weakness must be defined. Detailed planning with residents,
supplemented by expert technical assistance, should examine options to change those conditions which are so serious that building rehabilitation alone may not help.

Public sector actions should, at a minimum, include:

- Strategic renovation of housing units combined with new infill construction or relocation of usable structures in deteriorated areas to vacant sites in strong areas;
- Removal of unusable structures and development of new land uses: either open space (new permanent parks or temporary "greening" until future development is feasible) or employment-related uses of benefit to the adjacent neighborhood (new commercial or industrial development physically separated from residential areas by open space buffers).

**Neighborhood Analysis**

Participants in the planning workshops ranked conditions in city neighborhoods according to the "maintain, improve, or change" approaches described above. The following matrix, *Future Growth and Development Strategies for Roanoke Neighborhoods*, summarizes some of the criteria used to determine which development approach is suited to a particular neighborhood.

In order to test the applicability of these approaches, a more detailed investigation of conditions in each of the city's neighborhoods was carried out as part of the comprehensive planning process. This examination evaluated each neighborhood according to nine elements: housing, commercial development, industrial development, historic and cultural resources, human development, parks and recreation, transportation, utilities and environmental quality. The level of effort needed to 1) maintain stable areas, 2) improve problem areas, or 3) change seriously deteriorated or deficient conditions was estimated for each of the nine components of each neighborhood. The results of this ranking provided general background information for the Comprehensive Development Plan recommendations and specific direction for the detailed neighborhood planning which must be done during the next five years in order to implement the Plan (See Chapter 5).

**VACANT LAND**

The City of Roanoke, as a maturing urban area, has a dwindling supply of vacant land available for development. Ensuring the best use of this scarce resource must therefore be carefully considered. In preparing the Comprehensive Development Plan, two major factors have organized land use deci-
# Future Growth and Development Strategies for Neighborhoods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Conditions</th>
<th>1. Maintain Stable Areas</th>
<th>2. Improve Problem Areas</th>
<th>3. Change Deteriorated Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate Market</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Spotty</td>
<td>Nonexistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Amenities</td>
<td>Attractive</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>Few if any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Solid</td>
<td>Needs work</td>
<td>Needs major repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Climate</td>
<td>Healthy</td>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>Very weak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Public Actions to be Taken to Implement Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Sector Programs</th>
<th>Maintain current level of services</th>
<th>Attack problems &amp; guide new development</th>
<th>Implement intensive redevelopment and revitalization programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Investments</td>
<td>Small investment</td>
<td>Moderate investment</td>
<td>Large investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use Objectives</td>
<td>Ensure new uses on individual parcels, compatible with existing zoning &amp; development patterns</td>
<td>Encourage development on multiple parcels to reinforce existing zoning and development</td>
<td>Change uses in deteriorated areas to create new opportunities for housing, jobs or open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Development Regulations</td>
<td>Control new development &amp; construction to maintain existing neighborhood character</td>
<td>Develop effective zoning &amp; design guidelines for renovation and infill</td>
<td>Use zoning controls to accommodate redevelopment and change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sions: achieving optimum location for land uses and maximum quality of new development.

**Optimum Location**
Market forces have a major influence on where new land uses are located. Other site criteria such as access, visibility, and the relationship to adjacent building and land uses also help determine the development potential of a particular parcel of land. The purpose of the Comprehensive Development Plan is to ensure that, by examining the potential range of impacts of possible development, uses are established for vacant parcels that meet both city-wide and neighborhood needs including:

- for the city as a whole, achieving a properly-balanced inventory of developable land for a variety of needed uses;
- for neighborhoods, locating development to reinforce positive development trends and minimize negative impacts such as traffic, noise, or visual conflict.

**Quality Development**
Encouraging quality new residential, commercial or industrial development is critical to Roanoke's image and continued growth as an economically vibrant and attractive regional center. Quality development means not only visually attractive construction, but also the careful siting of buildings to preserve environmental features, provide organized traffic flows, services and parking, and promote proper "fit" with adjacent uses, through provision of open space buffers, landscaping, or careful building design.

Techniques for encouraging quality development include not only controls such as zoning, subdivision, and site plan regulations (now being refined and improved in the Roanoke Vision planning process), but also positive actions, such as provision of roads and utilities or active packaging of desired projects by the City, neighborhood groups, business associations, or other public and private organizations.
The ultimate intent of the comprehensive planning process is to combine and coordinate city-wide needs, opportunities, and projects into a single, interrelated strategy. This strategy has been developed by creating a composite overlay of individual plan elements in order to establish the basis for future public and private development decisions.

The Comprehensive Development Plan includes:

**Neighborhood elements**: Individual land uses which combine to form the basic fabric of neighborhood areas:
- housing
- commercial development
- industrial development
- historic and cultural resources

**Unifying elements**: Networks of infrastructure or services and facilities which tie the various neighborhood elements into the city as a whole:
- human development and public safety
- parks and recreation
- transportation
- utilities
- environmental quality

The Comprehensive Development Plan, however, is more than just the sum of its parts. The issues and opportunities that Roanoke faces are primarily the result of how the various elements of the city relate to each other in either negative or positive ways. These negative or positive relationships may be characterized either as **conflicts**, (in which, for instance, a new road through a residential neighborhood might create problems) or as **congruences**, (in which, for example, the need for a new park might coincide with available open space in flood prone areas). The recommendations proposed in each of the following plan elements have been designed to minimize possible conflicts and build on positive congruent relationships. The resulting strategies and actions have also been designed to meet the goals and community values defined by citizens in the Roanoke Vision public participation process.

The following reviews of each of the plan elements include:

**Review of existing conditions**: Summary of issues and opportunities, current plans and programs.

**Proposed planning strategies**: Summary of long-term objectives and rationale for maintaining, improving or changing existing conditions and initiating new programs or development actions.

**Planning and development activities**: Summary of proposed recommendations and implementation priorities.

Left: Traditional paving bricks in many neighborhoods are worth preserving as a part of the city's past.
Housing

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Roanoke's neighborhoods are dominated by single family houses in a wide range of styles, ages, sizes and costs. The city has a significant inventory of well-maintained housing in older neighborhoods as well as contemporary homes in newer subdivisions.

Residential Market Characteristics
The availability of good quality housing plays a major role in the city's economic health. Since household size is declining in Roanoke, as it is across the nation, new housing units within the city can help maintain the existing population level. This is an important goal so that the city can continue to maintain its revenue base, supply of employees, diversity of residents, and quality of occupied buildings.

Roanoke's residential market strengths include its improving city image based on its active and successful public and private partnerships, improved appearance, and resulting neighborhood pride. Other factors which can positively affect Roanoke's residential markets include continuing improvement in City schools, competitive tax rates relative to adjacent jurisdictions and good maintenance of neighborhood infrastructure: utilities, streets and curbs, street lighting and street trees.

A healthy real estate market requires both existing and new, ready-to-occupy units. Currently, very few of the new housing units in the Roanoke Valley are being built in the city. Although limited undeveloped land is available in Roanoke, the development of sites suitable for residential construction should be stimulated to capture a larger share of the new home market.

In addition, other potential sites for developing quality housing units in the city exist. Vacant lots suitable for new "infill" housing development are available in many of Roanoke's older neighborhoods. These neighborhoods also have existing homes available for renovation.

The market in the city's older neighborhoods is affected by several factors. The need for renovation deters some potential buyers in favor of new, ready-to-occupy units. According to real estate brokers, low resale values and length of resale period also influence new buyers who are often skeptical of the ability of older city neighborhoods to maintain their stability over time. Increased neighborhood revitalization efforts can help change this perception.

In neighborhoods further from the city center, the relative newness of the housing stock and surrounding facilities present a different set of issues and opportunities. While markets in these areas are often strong, efforts are needed to correct problems as they are identified in order to maintain housing values.

Housing Problems and Revitalization Approaches
The most serious housing problems are generally concentrated in the city's central neighborhoods which have been negatively affected by suburban development trends, past policies and regulations, and a combination of demographic, income and market forces. Noise and visual conflicts associated with industrial or commercial uses adjacent to residential areas also negatively affect real estate markets in some of these neighborhoods.

Substandard conditions, vacant and abandoned units and vacant lots created by housing demolition are serious problems in some areas. Housing maintenance is also a problem in many of the city's older neighborhoods, particularly in the rental housing stock and in homes owned by elderly residents on fixed incomes. There is strong
community support for continuing housing rehabilitation programs and for more effective enforcement of existing property maintenance codes, including the possible development of stronger regulations, an effort which might require changes in state law now limiting local property maintenance regulations.

The City of Roanoke's current strategy to address housing problems is a mixture of public policy approaches and housing rehabilitation loan and grant programs in conjunction with private and neighborhood efforts. One goal of these efforts is to upgrade or eliminate over 950 substandard housing units identified in a recent survey plus another estimated 250 seriously deteriorated units (2.3% of Roanoke's total housing units) by 1995.

In addition, the City of Roanoke provides most of the publicly assisted housing in the Roanoke Valley through the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) which owns and operates 1,500 units in eleven projects. Other public programs to supplement the supply of affordable housing include more than 800 units of federally subsidized Section 8 housing also administered by RRHA.

In 1979, neighborhood revitalization became a central focus for City housing programs. A housing task force established the need for more public and private efforts to reduce the number of houses in seriously deteriorated condition. Through City programs and private support, more than 800 houses have been rehabilitated in the last seven years.

Since 1980, the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership has been instrumental in influencing City housing policies, helping neighborhood organizations with their own housing development strategies and bolstering neighborhood confidence by improving general neighborhood conditions. In 1985, the Partnership added a housing planner to work directly with neighborhood organizations to develop housing action plans for specific neighborhoods.

**STRATEGY**

**Residential Development Objectives**

- Encourage expansion of Roanoke's population base.
- Encourage variety of housing choice in existing neighborhoods through a balance of preservation, rehabilitation and new development.
- Encourage quality construction and attractive design.
- Discourage insensitive new construction and demolition of usable units.

The intent of the Plan's housing strategy is, therefore, to improve and enhance existing neighborhoods by building on areas of strength, to provide additional new housing units through rehabilitation and new construction, and to promote diversity of housing type and cost.
Housing Revitalization and Neighborhood Change

Most of the vacant and substandard housing units in Roanoke are found in the city's older, central neighborhoods. Based on preliminary neighborhood analysis, the Housing Development Strategy map depicts areas where major housing improvements or land use changes are needed for neighborhood revitalization. Although each situation varies, common patterns influencing housing deterioration can be identified. Conflicting uses such as unsightly, noisy industries or commercial uses often affect the desirability of nearby housing. If appropriate buffers are not provided through landscaping, topography or design features, housing and neighborhood deterioration are a common result in blocks which form the edge between conflicting uses. In neighborhoods such as Gilmer/Northwest, Hurt Park, Shenandoah West or Belmont, blocks adjacent to these conflicting edges are often up to 90% vacant, while vacancy in the interiors of the neighborhoods is much lower. Current industrial or commercial zoning in areas which have continued to be primarily residential reinforces this pattern by encouraging deferred maintenance and by discouraging new residential investment.

Neighborhoods affected by conflicting land uses can change patterns of deterioration. Where appropriate, poor quality edges could be converted into new open space or employment-related industrial or commercial uses. Housing units which are removed should be replaced within the neighborhood; good quality housing units could even be moved to more stable blocks in the neighborhoods. Careful design and site plan controls could ensure compatible new development with adequate open space buffers to protect the remaining community from future land use conflicts. Effective programs to carefully maintain any new open space would be critical.

The essential strategy for such seriously deteriorated conditions is to reinforce and expand the stable areas of neighborhoods by focusing housing revitalization in a smaller, more defined territory and finding appropriate new uses for the remaining land. This has several positive effects:

- Housing rehabilitation funds can be targeted for visible results.
- Neighborhood safety, confidence, image and quality are enhanced.
- Dangerous, substandard housing units unable to be renovated are removed.
- Sites for attractive new open space or industrial or commercial land uses are made available.

This approach depends on the active involvement of neighborhood residents in detailed neighborhood action planning. A careful examination of existing neighborhoods, strengths, housing conditions, adjacent land uses, market potential and more would be needed.

Below: The work of many is revitalizing the city's neighborhoods. Private investments and improved maintenance by homeowners can be seen throughout Roanoke.
In neighborhoods where there are concerns about the impact of larger, multi-family housing units on the surrounding areas, the relationship of adjacent uses can be improved in several ways. Additional landscaping or design features to reduce the visual contrast is one approach. Increased human service programs including organized youth activities, job training, or family services would be effective where social problems are the primary issues. Neighborhood development efforts to foster increased communication and neighborhood identity would be additional tools.

Reinforcement for seriously deteriorated areas of neighborhoods as well as for other neighborhoods needing improvement will require a concentrated public/private effort. Housing strategies and neighborhood plans need to be developed and coordinated on a city-wide basis. City zoning regulations should reinforce preservation and housing infill efforts. City maintenance codes must be effectively enforced.

**New Residential Development**

Strategies for new, large-scale residential development on scarce vacant land should be encouraged in order to expand Roanoke’s population base and respond to the demand for a diversity of housing choices. Building setbacks, materials, and other design characteristics should relate to the existing neighborhood context. Clustering of units can promote attractive residential settings by slightly increasing densities as a trade off for achieving large areas of common open space. “Planned unit developments” may contain appropriate retail development and community service facilities in addition to housing units. In all undeveloped areas, construction on steep slopes and in flood plains should be minimized. The Housing Development Strategy map shows potential parcels in the city that would be appropriate for new housing development.

Downtown also provides sites for new housing development. The public participation process indicated significant interest in downtown housing: the creation of a 24-hour activity center, for living as well as working, will increase the vitality and attractiveness of downtown as a cultural, entertainment and retail center as well as a desirable office location. Loft renovations in now vacant floors above existing commercial uses or new housing development on sites immediately adjacent to the central business district are the kinds of projects which can respond to this potential market.

Such housing could be a major effort of residential programs sponsored by a new housing development corporation. Current zoning which restricts residential uses in the downtown area should be modified to increase design flexibility and ease the administrative approvals process for renovated or new downtown housing development.

**Non-profit Development Corporation**

To achieve the proposed housing strategies, preserve the character of the city’s older neighborhoods, and provide a variety of affordable housing choices, significant new housing investments will be required.
Current local, state and federal programs administered by the City and the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) will not adequately meet Roanoke’s continuing maintenance and rehabilitation needs for the city’s significant stock of older and substandard housing units. A non-profit development corporation should be founded as a key ingredient in an expanded housing strategy. Such an organization would be able to coordinate increased public and private investments and initiate housing rehabilitation and new construction projects, independently or in conjunction with neighborhood organizations. It could also offer needed financial and technical expertise to neighborhood organizations.

The non-profit corporation, modeled on similar projects in cities such as Charlotte, N.C., should be spearheaded by local financial and business interests. As an independent non-profit organization, the corporation would have the flexibility to leverage both public and private funds and to attract major grants and loans from sources such as the Ford Foundation’s Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) or the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Inner City Ventures Fund. Roanoke does not now have an appropriate non-profit development vehicle to attract such major funding; however, the city’s impressive track record in neighborhood revitalization would make it an attractive investment site if the right vehicle did exist. The housing development corporation would not duplicate existing public sector efforts, but rather act to bring critical new investments by expanding the private and non-profit sectors’ roles.

In addition, a housing development corporation could participate in selected new construction projects in areas such as downtown or to provide housing for populations with special needs.

SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS
1. Develop public/private housing strategy plan.
2. Create non-profit development corporation.
3. Emphasize housing strategy in neighborhood plans.
4. Enact zoning to facilitate preservation, infill, and more downtown housing.
5. Ensure maximum possible enforcement of housing maintenance codes.
6. Improve existing neighborhood environments.
7. Define design guidelines as examples for new or renovated housing.
Commercial Development

EXISTING CONDITIONS

As a regional commercial center, Roanoke offers an exceptionally wide range of services. Through recent urban design efforts, downtown Roanoke has grown as an attractive and vital commercial district. Downtown revitalization has meant new stores, parking structures, major office building construction, park development, and street landscaping. The historic City Market District houses an active outdoor farmers' market as well as a variety of shops and restaurants including those in the recently renovated historic City Market Building.

Office and Retail Use

Downtown Roanoke is now the preferred office location in the city. South of downtown, the Franklin Road corridor in Old Southwest and the area of South Roanoke adjacent to Roanoke Memorial Hospital are developing as residential/office areas. For both of these areas, proximity to a major hospital, good access and changes to commercial zoning in the 1960s have resulted in use conflicts with adjacent residential areas. In the Old Southwest area, a recent study focusing on Franklin Road noted that parking and clearance of older houses for new office and parking lots are changing the character of the area.

Historically, downtown Roanoke, with its many department stores and specialty shops, dominated Roanoke's regional retail trade area. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, the growth of regional shopping centers throughout the Roanoke Valley shifted major retailing away from downtown. These centers, located in or immediately next to the city, are now considered assets to the shopping diversity and overall economic health of Roanoke.

Strip development is a term applied to car oriented commercial uses located along major roads or highways. Commercial strips are often cluttered with unattractive signage and are disruptive of traffic flow. Roanoke has existing strips along Williamson Road, Melrose Avenue and Franklin Road and more are in the process of forming.

Despite commercial growth in malls and strips, Roanoke still has many concentrated neighborhood commercial centers. A convenient neighborhood center not only can provide local services, but it also greatly contributes to the social fabric and identity of a neighborhood. These facilities are especially important to the elderly and people without cars. The Grandin Road and Crystal Spring Avenue commercial areas are good examples of successful neighborhood centers that warrant preservation. The Commercial Development Strategy map shows both neighborhood centers in need of revitalization and sites for new centers.

Tourism

Roanoke has a growing tourist/convention industry which generated over $120 million dollars for the Roanoke Valley economy in 1984. New hotel and motel rooms have been added, as well as jobs and tax revenues. However, with the exception of the Blue Ridge Parkway, western Virginia and the Roanoke Valley lack a major tourist destination. And, while the Blue Ridge Parkway draws over 19 million visitors to the
Roanoke area each year, few stop in the Roanoke Valley. Convention and exhibit facilities are also limited in capacity and do not reflect the current state-of-the-art required by many users.

Efforts to tap Roanoke's tourist potential, further expand the regional economy and add new recreation and cultural facilities are being developed with a regional focus. The Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau is a major advocate and coordinator of regional tourism. Current City efforts include a study for improvements at the Roanoke Civic Center possibly to include plans for a new convention center with related development or improvement of adjacent hotel rooms.

The River Foundation, a non-profit organization, is directing the development of the Explore Project, a major, family-oriented tourist attraction which would include the proposed Blue Ridge Zoological Park, educational and research facilities, and a wide range of lodging and dining facilities. Additional tourist attractions include the development of a 25 mile scenic river parkway along the Roanoke River from Dixie Caverns through the city to Smith Mountain Lake and a steam train ride from the City Market area to the proposed project site in Roanoke County at the intersection of the Blue Ridge Parkway and Roanoke River. The Virginia Museum of Transportation may also be relocated and linked to the Explore Project. Preliminary plans call for completion of the project's first phase by 1990.

Other visitor-related projects now in the planning or development stages include the completion of the Victory Stadium Sports Complex and continued growth of the City Market area as a major regional draw.

**STRATEGY**

**Commercial Development Objectives**

- Encourage continuing growth of downtown as an office, commercial and cultural center.
- Encourage the growth of tourism in Roanoke.
- Encourage revitalization or creation of neighborhood centers.
- Discourage new strip commercial, speculative multi-building office parks, and land use conflicts.

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**Downtown Revitalization and Image**

Downtown Roanoke should continue to be the focus of office and supporting commercial activities. The impacts on downtown of any new multi-building office parks proposed for sites outside the central business district should be evaluated. Plans developed in Design '85, a recent downtown development study, propose new initiatives to link areas within the core and create new sites for office and entertainment development. This includes establishing a connection to the Hotel Roanoke across the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks, the possibility of a convention/exhibit center, and the introduction of downtown housing as well as continued rehabilitation of the retail and office uses. The Design '85 effort, initiated by the downtown business community, should be supported and reinforced by the City. This
support should include careful examination of public actions which could help leverage private investment; these possible projects could include street improvements, traffic improvements, and streetscaping, planting and lighting to continue to improve downtown's image.

Citizen response identified several other important ideas to enhance downtown including: a system of coordinated identity and directional signs on all major routes into and within downtown; expanding retail store hours; more convenient parking; and improving the image of downtown through coordinated marketing. To further improve the image of downtown, neighborhood and streetscapping improvements should occur on all major entrance routes. For city and regional commuters, daily impressions of downtown are shaped by the deteriorated conditions on the edges of downtown. Immediate attention to housing problems, unsightly commercial and industrial uses and improved landscape treatments could have a major effect on perceptions of downtown and the city as a whole. Similar design, signage and landscaping at major entry points to the city including the I-81 and I-581 exits should be considered.

Parking is a key element to downtown's continued growth. New parking facilities to reduce the current deficit of parking spaces and to accompany any major new downtown development, as well as efforts such as "Park and Shop" programs for reduced/subsidized parking rates, are needed to provide ease of access for workers, potential downtown residents and shoppers.

**Henry Street Revitalization**

Revitalization of the Henry Street area as an activity and entertainment link between downtown and adjacent neighborhoods should be an important additional part of downtown planning.

Important issues include coordinating improvements such as the First Street bridge reconstruction, connection of Henry Street (First Street, N.W.) and Gainsboro Road, linkage to the Hotel Roanoke and potential convention center plans, and the renovation of the Warehouse District adjacent to the First Street Bridge.

**Tourism and Convention Development**

Regional and local efforts to expand convention and tourist facilities and programs should be supported as key ways to expand the local economy and make Roanoke a more competitive regional center. The proposed Explore Project, including a zoological park and steam train should be supported through public and private efforts. Improvements to the Roanoke Civic Center, possibly linked to new exhibit center facilities, are the subject of a study to be completed in June 1986.

Other tourist-related projects should include information centers featuring Roanoke area attractions. These centers could be located near major entry points (such as the City Market, possibly in conjunction with Center in the Square, and at
and reduce further visual clutter and traffic problems. New commercial activity should be encouraged to focus in concentrated centers at major intersections for maximum access and convenience. Where neighborhood centers have already been absorbed in existing strips, efforts should be made by the local business community to maintain and promote neighborhood uses as well as to distinguish the center’s visual image through landscaping and quality site planning and design. Selective expansion of zoning for commercial development may be needed to provide for these neighborhood centers. Efforts such as the recent Williamson Road urban design study should be supported in other commercial districts. Action projects identified for the Williamson Road area should be supported through both public and private investments and technical assistance.

In declining as well as successful commercial centers, the development of neighborhood business associations should be encouraged. A “business advisory committee” should be established to work with neighborhood business associations in their continuing economic development or revitalization efforts, particularly in bringing needed commercial services to underserved neighborhoods. Commercial areas on Melrose Avenue, 11th Street N.W. and 9th Street S.E. could all benefit from business association efforts.

New neighborhood centers should be encouraged, where appropriate and feasible, in areas where market support and local access and visibility are available. The Commercial Development Strategy map indicates the potential for a new center in Gainsboro to serve the neighborhoods of lower Northwest, as well as at the junction of Brandon Avenue and the proposed Peters Creek Road Extension, where the market

Above: Atrium view in Center in the Square cultural center located in the downtown Market district.

Valley View Mall). Festival programs, already a success in establishing resident pride, could be expanded and marketed to increase Roanoke’s visibility to regional, state or national visitors. Creative ideas for future use of Mill Mountain, such as a conference center/corporate retreat, are other important agenda items for future planning.

**Neighborhood Commercial Centers**

The development of neighborhood commercial centers as a key element of area revitalization should be reinforced. Detailed neighborhood commercial strategies should be developed as a part of neighborhood action plans. Zoning controls over strip development should help limit curb cuts
made possible by the new road should be focused into a concentrated center rather than strip development. In addition, commercial areas that show the potential for neighborhood centers should be promoted, such as in Riverdale, Garden City and Hurt Park.

**Commercial/Residential Conflicts**

Residential conflicts with existing commercial development should be identified in neighborhood action plans. The Franklin Road Corridor Study suggested a potential mixture of public and private actions to help ameliorate existing conflicts and prevent future development inappropriate to the area. These actions include implementing design guidelines for buffering residential areas, streetscape and parking lot improvements, and building quality and scale for new construction. Other proposed actions include promotion of historic preservation through public education, modification of zoning to protect existing residential quality, development of new parking areas, improvement of existing traffic patterns and examination of the potential for selected street closings. Similar actions should be examined for other areas with use conflicts. For example, landscape buffering and selected street closings could be used to reduce neighborhood conflicts in the Williamson Road area. Visual conflicts between residential and commercial uses common to many neighborhoods can be improved by landscaping and buffering.

**Shopping Centers and Malls**

Existing large scale retail centers and their surrounding land uses are important factors in the local and regional economy. Within Roanoke, these areas include Valley View Mall, Celebration Station and the hotel/retail complex west of I-581 at Hershberger Road; the Crossroads Mall and adjacent commercial development to the east on Hershberger Road; the Roanoke/Salem Plaza area in northwest Roanoke; and the Tower Mall area in southwest Roanoke. Continued careful planning and development of these areas is critical to Roanoke's balanced growth. Issues which should be considered include providing an appropriate mix of uses and activities as well as ensuring accessibility through traffic and transit planning.

**SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS**

1. Prepare commercial strategy as part of neighborhood action plans.
2. Prepare neighborhood commercial plan as part of the City of Roanoke's economic development strategy.
3. Enact zoning regulations to control commercial uses, location and residential impacts.
4. Support the creation of neighborhood business associations and establish a business advisory committee to assist their efforts.
5. Continue development of downtown as an office/government/supporting retail center.
6. Facilitate redevelopment or reuse of declining retail centers.
7. Ensure the stability of existing shopping centers and malls by reinforcing accessibility and supporting land uses.
8. Encourage the development of new and improved tourist destination attractions and supporting services within Roanoke and the larger Roanoke Valley region.
Industrial Development

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Industrial Employment Trends

Roanoke is the employment hub and major service center for the region. Although it contains only 10% of the metropolitan region’s land area, it provides almost 60,000 jobs, over 50% of the employment of the Roanoke Valley. Employment data shows that Roanoke's economic base is changing from a predominantly manufacturing economy to a modern service economy.

Non-manufacturing jobs now outnumber manufacturing by five to one. Only two of the Roanoke Valley’s ten largest employers, Norfolk Southern and General Electric, are members of the traditional industrial sector. There is a good balance between jobs and skills in Roanoke. Over the past ten years, the economy has been operating at or near full employment (an unemployment rate of 5% or less).

Industrial Site Development

Roanoke’s industry is closely associated with the transportation system; the majority of the industrial land focuses around the railroad, major roads or the airport. Many of the older industrial locations are located adjacent to the Roanoke River.

The key issue facing industrial development in Roanoke today is the limited availability of new sites suitable for industrial development. Conflicts with flood plains or with adjacent neighborhoods often limit potential expansion of existing facilities.

The City of Roanoke’s Office of Economic Development and Grants, with support from the Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce, has initiated a number of public/private economic development efforts, including coordination of public grants and leveraged investment for downtown development projects and city-wide industrial/manufacturing site development. The Office’s two primary objectives are to create new jobs and to expand investment in the city.

For the last six years, the City of Roanoke has had a successful site assembly and marketing program which has been able to meet the challenge of stiff competition between cities for new industries.

STRATEGY

Industrial Development Objectives

- Encourage new industrial development on appropriate sites.
- Discourage other uses of valuable industrial land.

New Industrial Development

Regional cooperation is extremely important for industrial development. Until recently, the Roanoke Valley lacked a unified effort to attract industry. The formation of the Regional Partnership in 1984 was an important step in this direction. Creative new regional approaches will be critical for dynamic economic growth. Joint efforts between Roanoke and adjacent jurisdictions could result in advantageous new industrial development for the Roanoke Valley. For example, Roanoke could provide utilities and another could provide the land. Each could share costs and the benefits including the tax revenues.
Strategies for industrial development within Roanoke should initially focus on completing existing developments, such as the Roanoke Centre for Industry and Technology; developing sites within the Urban Enterprise Zone similar to the Wometco project; and marketing new priority sites identified by the City’s Office of Economic Development such as those near the proposed I-581 interchanges south of Valley View Mall. As noted in the housing section of this plan, areas identified in neighborhood plans as suitable for industrial redevelopment should also be considered for new or expanded uses. Evaluation of potential sites should be coordinated with local neighborhood plans to identify compatible job locations.

Any other uses for the limited amount of undeveloped industrial land should be discouraged. Efforts should be made by the City to assure that potential sites have the needed access and infrastructure.

**Improving Industrial Land Use Conflicts**

Many existing industries are located in the Roanoke River flood plains. Future development in these areas, or expansion of existing facilities, should be discouraged. Alternative sites within the city should be identified when the most feasible option is relocation.

Conflicts between industrial sites and neighboring residential areas are a common concern. In addition to the noise and visual problems, truck traffic affects neighborhood access, circulation, and housing market appeal. The City should reevaluate the existing truck route plan to provide easy access to industries while further minimizing traffic impacts on neighborhoods.

**SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS**

1. Coordinate neighborhood plans with industrial development planning to identify compatible job locations and to minimize conflicts.
2. Develop strategies for regional industrial development.
3. Facilitate relocation of existing industrial uses, if desired, and limit new industrial uses in flood plain.
4. Promote appropriate development in Urban Enterprise Zone and other priority locations.
5. Complete access and infrastructure improvements to potential employment sites.
EXISTING CONDITIONS

*Historic Preservation*

Roanoke is a city rich in historic character. Its history of rapid development as a major rail and manufacturing center in the 1880s is evident today in the legacy of its varied residential, commercial, industrial and civic buildings.

The value of this legacy has been rediscovered by citizens, the business community and City government within the last decade. Recent efforts to document and preserve historic structures include the designation of three Virginia and National Register Historic Districts: the Warehouse and City Market Districts in downtown Roanoke and the Southwest Historic District in the neighborhoods of Old Southwest, Hurt Park and Mountain View. In addition to helping preserve important structures, this growing interest in Roanoke’s history has had an important impact on downtown and neighborhood revitalization. The Historical and Cultural Resource Strategy map illustrates these districts, additional National Register structures and other significant buildings noted in the recent historic survey, *Historic Structures in Roanoke: A Preliminary Survey* 1985. Potentially significant archaeological sites are also indicated on the map.

Neighborhood conservation efforts, both within the designated Southwest Historic District and the many other older neighborhoods of the city, are critical to preserving the historic character and architectural heritage of Roanoke. Current land use regulations, including the existing zoning ordinance and demolition procedures, often have negative impacts on these efforts. When the existing zoning ordinance was enacted in 1966, new office, commercial or industrial uses were proposed for many of the city’s older, intact neighborhoods. It also significantly increased the allowed residential densities in these older, architecturally rich neighborhoods and made the small lot sizes prevalent there nonconforming. These zoning revisions contributed to patterns of neighborhood change and disinvestment. In some older neighborhoods, residential structures were replaced by office, commercial or multi-family housing in conflict with the scale and architectural character of the area. Other neighborhoods suffered from new industrial uses inadequately separated from residences. Serious deterioration, abandonment and eventual demolition of some of the city’s oldest homes occurred. Recent revitalization efforts have identified several other regulatory problems for neighborhood conservation. These include: a lack of flexible provisions for developing new “infill” housing on vacant lots; a need for more innovative preservation techniques such as allowing additional uses including “bed and breakfast” accommodations, art studios and professional or home occupations in historic structures; and the need for improved design guidelines and site plan controls as well as improved procedures to limit demolition of significant structures.

*Cultural Resources*

Roanoke is the cultural center for the Roanoke Valley and most of western Virginia. For a city of its size, Roanoke has excellent cultural facilities. Careful planning helped cluster these facilities so that each activity not only reinforces other cultural and preservation activities, but facility locations contribute to the economic prosperity of the city as a whole.

Five major cultural institutions are located at Center in the Square in downtown Roanoke, including three museums, the arts council, and a theater. The Harrison Heritage and Cultural Center, located adja-
cent to downtown in the Gainsboro area, is Roanoke's newest cultural attraction. The Roanoke Civic Center and Victory Stadium serve special events. The Virginia Museum of Transportation is also a tourist draw.

**STRATEGY**

**Cultural/Historical Objectives**
- Encourage preservation of historic buildings or areas.
- Encourage development and expansion of cultural facilities.
- Discourage demolition or inappropriate use of valuable cultural and historic resources.

**Historic Preservation and Neighborhood Conservation**

The growing awareness of the importance of historic structures to the overall character of Roanoke should be nurtured. City programs supporting restoration and renovation of structures should be continued and reinforced. Neighborhood action plans should include a preservation component.

Changes in existing land use regulations are essential to preservation in Roanoke. Zoning designations in the city's older neighborhoods should be evaluated to resolve conflicts between the existing uses and the underlying zoning classifications. For example, appropriate changes should be considered for neighborhoods with predominately single family or duplex residential uses but commercial or much higher density residential zoning classifications. In addition, a new residential zoning category should be considered to allow development on the small vacant lots in many neighborhoods. Protective overlay zoning along with better site plan and design review procedures should be used to discourage demolition of historic buildings and help preserve neighborhood character. Expanded residential uses, increased densities and appropriate non-residential uses should be considered for significant historic properties to help make their preservation economically feasible.

Roanoke's historic character should be promoted as an important aspect of its city identity in economic and tourist development efforts. In addition, the preliminary historic survey should be developed into a historic inventory plan and updated as new information is available.

**Expanded Cultural Opportunities**

Roanoke's cultural resources should continue to be reinforced, promoted and expanded. The City Market District is becoming the central focus of arts activities and should continue to be supported. Regional developments such as the proposed Blue Ridge Zoological Park should be supported as new tourist and cultural centers. In addition, programs which use the arts to expand opportunities for Roanoke's youth should be developed. The coordination of these activities, the expansion of arts programs, facilities, and an enlarged public art strategy are also important. The Roanoke Valley Arts Council, as well as other arts organizations, can be important resources in these efforts.

**SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS**

1. Prepare a more detailed historical/cultural inventory plan.
2. Coordinate neighborhood action plans with preservation objectives.
3. Enact zoning and related land development regulations to preserve landmarks and neighborhood character.
4. Promote Roanoke as cultural/tourism center for region.
5. Establish programs to improve markets for historic and other existing houses and buildings.
Human Development and Public Safety

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Human development and public safety include education, social services, libraries, police, fire, and emergency services.

Education

The Roanoke Public School System consists of 2 high schools, 6 junior high schools and 21 elementary schools. Enrollment in 1985 totaled 14,510 students, reflecting the current enrollment decline of about 2% annually. Existing school facilities can accommodate up to about 17,800 students.

Despite the enrollment decline, the school administration and School Board have set a strong policy to maintain neighborhood elementary schools. As student population declines, school administration pairing techniques have been used to improve efficiency in order to maintain a greater number of neighborhood schools. In addition, although 17 of the 21 elementary schools serve more than one neighborhood, an attempt is made to minimize busing by linking entire neighborhoods to individual schools.

One of the primary problems facing the school system is its image. The recent improvements in test scores, reduction in dropout rates and innovative instructional programs show significant gains within the school system. Many children are returning to the public schools from private facilities, which is a positive indicator of families' perceptions of the school system. However, many citizens in the Roanoke Valley have not yet acknowledged this growth. One of the major manifestations of this perceived problem with the image of City schools is in the relationships of schools to the housing market. One of the primary reasons that young families continue to be drawn to suburban residential areas in other jurisdictions is the perceived difference in educational quality between school districts. As improvements in the quality of education within the school system continue, concerted efforts should be made to translate these improvements into a positive image for City schools, housing and neighborhoods.

The major physical problem facing the school system is the aging of some of its facilities. Seven pre-1930 schools are now being renovated to extend their use. Modernizing all of Roanoke's schools has also included developing programs and facilities to keep abreast of today's technological advances. Improving the school system's physical image will also have a positive effect on neighborhood real estate market conditions.

For older students and adults, there is a need for expanded and convenient local public undergraduate opportunities, a centralized graduate level education program and technical/vocational training, each of which help to stimulate economic development. Current post-secondary education within Roanoke includes a two-year public college, business and secretarial schools and courses in computer education. However, within the immediate Roanoke Valley, private institutions such as Hollins College and Roanoke College expand educational opportunities, as does Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University at Blacksburg.
Human Services

Caring for the human service needs of Roanoke's citizens is important to the Comprehensive Development Plan in several respects. Providing quality cost-effective human services helps insure that the basic needs of all citizens are met, improving the quality of life in the city as a whole.

Within the City government, the Department of Social Services coordinates and administers aid programs including child welfare, food stamps, income maintenance, fuel assistance and employment services. This department also delivers social services required to assist individuals or families in achieving or maintaining self-sufficiency and functioning at their maximum level of independence. Additional services for employment and training are provided on a regional basis through the Fifth District Employment and Training Consortium.

Six major areas of human service concerns in Roanoke identified by key service providers and citizens include:

Teenage Pregnancy: Teenage pregnancy is one of the most serious social issues facing Roanoke. In 1983, approximately one in every nine young women (ages 15-19) became pregnant.

Residential Care Facilities: There is an increased need for group homes for the mentally ill and other special groups. Zoning and community objections often restrict the location of residential facilities. At this time, the City is moving away from using larger group care facilities to smaller "family care" homes.

Alcohol Related Problems: Facilities for problem alcoholics and street people (about 150-200 individuals) are needed.

Elderly Care: Improved services for the elderly indigent are needed. The United Way is currently initiating a needs assessment for the Roanoke area which will be completed in the spring of 1986. Programs for services to the elderly are anticipated to be a main topic in this plan.

Child Care: There is a growing demand for quality day care services for working families. The needs for convenient before- and after-school care are also high. One of the issues for child care businesses is whether current zoning regulations, particularly for home-based child care, are overly restrictive. For larger centers, Virginia state building code regulations which require day care providers to meet commercial building standards rather than standards specifically for child care are also a problem.

Employment Services: Roanoke needs more intensive job/skill training programs. Current college and adult education classes are geared to students or working clientele with different schedule needs than those of the unemployed.
Libraries
The downtown main library, five branches and a bookmobile serve the City of Roanoke. Recent expansion of the main library and two branches, plus reciprocal borrowing agreements with the county and Vinton, has ensured sufficient service for the city's needs. The main issue concerning service is the availability of parking for the main library.

Police
The Police Department works out of centralized offices in the Municipal Building Annex in downtown Roanoke. Operations in the city include thirteen patrol districts that are covered by fourteen to eighteen police cars. A new Police Building and Municipal Annex, scheduled for construction in 1988-89, will relieve the present overcrowding. Improved radio emergency dispatch coordination is also needed.

Fire
The Fire Department has ten fire districts and thirteen stations. The central headquarters are located in downtown Roanoke. However, more administrative space is currently needed. The department is now conducting a computerized location search for a site for a proposed station needed in the vicinity of Route 460 East. Other current plans include a prioritized fire hydrant installation programting for those isolated sections of the city lacking hydrants. Closer Fire Department involvement in land use discussions for new development is also needed.

Health Care and Emergency Services
Roanoke is a regional center of health care facilities for a tri-county region; these medical services are a major element in the city's economy. In addition to Roanoke Memorial Hospital and Community Hospital, the two major hospitals within the city, there are two equally large hospitals adjacent to Roanoke, the Veteran's Administration Medical Center and Lewis-Gale Hospital. Together these hospitals have over 2,200 acute care beds supported by more than 5,000 hospital employees, and 2,500 physicians and support staff. Roanoke also has a total of about 30 out-patient clinics and a smaller specialty facility, the Gill Memorial Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital.

In addition to private mental health practitioners, mental health care is provided on a regional basis through Mental Health Services of the Roanoke Valley. Mental Health Services offers programs in four categories: mental health, mental retardation, mental illness, and substance abuse. Each decentralized program includes group homes and special care facilities as well as outreach programs. In addition, for mental retardation there are five sheltered workshops, adult education, and special recreation programs. The special recreation program is operated by the Roanoke County Department of Parks and Recreation. In services for the mentally retarded, more programs for school age children during the summer, day and after school care, and more specialized workshop facilities are needed. Better accommodation in zoning regulations is needed for group homes for all population groups with special needs.

Three rescue squads and one satellite station presently provide Roanoke with emergency medical services. Professional medical personnel have joined the previously all volunteer service to improve response times and expand services.
STRATEGY

Human Development/Public Safety Objectives

- Encourage educational, human service and safety facilities convenient to all neighborhoods and residents.
- Encourage public-private, self-sufficiency programs for individuals with special needs.
- Encourage regional cooperation in service facilities and programs.

Public Service Facilities

The results of the Roanoke Vision Survey indicated that, overall, Roanokers are satisfied with many of their public and institutional facilities and services. Many existing problems have been identified. Recent changes or proposed plans have already begun to address critical issues. The Comprehensive Development Plan endorses two of these proposed plans including the construction of a new fire station on Route 460 East and the School Board's policy of maintaining neighborhood schools through a program of renovating older facilities and paired school administrations.

Human Resources Plan

A comprehensive human resources plan for Roanoke should be developed with the cooperation of the public and private service providers and citizen groups including clients and neighborhood representatives. In addition, neighborhood plans should have a human resources element.

Neighborhood Human Service Center

Participants in the Roanoke Vision Process identified the need for neighborhood multipurpose human service centers to help tailor a variety of mental health, family, youth development, elderly care, job training and other services to the needs of specific areas, making them an integral part of each community. In some cases, programs at existing schools, park and recreation or other community facilities could be expanded. In other areas, new sites would need to be located. The Northwest Human Development Center in the Northwest/Gilmer neighborhood was cited as a successful example.

Coordinated Youth Services

Youth recreation and activity needs can be addressed by schools, the Parks and Recreation Department, private organizations, neighborhood groups, and the Department of Social Services. A centralized means to coordinate programs and facility use, to inform youth of available activities, and deal with special interest groups would increase the effectiveness of existing youth services. The City's Office on Youth can be an important part of this effort.

Higher Education

Graduate study and job training programs are also needed in the city. Efforts to use Jefferson High School as a graduate education center should be supported. In addition, development of intensive job training programs should be encouraged at Virginia Western Community College, other local schools and at employment sites in cooperation with private industry.
Expanded Human Services and Health Care Facilities

Provision of group homes and neighborhood child care facilities can be helped by potential revision to land development regulations or building codes. The expanded use of public school facilities should be considered. For mentally retarded youths, summer programs are needed as well as expanded day and after school care. The City should also consider developing a special recreation program similar to the one currently provided by Roanoke County. More specialized sheltered workshops should also be planned.

One of the major problems identified in elderly service delivery is accessibility for elderly people living in the outlying areas of the city. Creative programs relying on neighborhood volunteer resources could be used to help address this problem.

In addition, housing and services for special groups such as homeless individuals, mentally ill or alcohol or drug-dependent persons are a problem which should be a major agenda item for future human services planning.

Some areas requiring youth recreation activities, pre-school and after-school care, elderly services including transportation, and neighborhood multi-purpose human service and job training centers have been identified and are shown in the Social and Health Services Strategy map.

Crime Watch Programs

Public safety is assisted by the neighborhood crime watch program. The City should continue its coordinated effort in identifying problem areas and developing crime watch efforts. City policies on street lighting should be examined and increased lighting should be provided in problem areas.

SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTION

1. Prepare detailed component human resources plan for facilities and services.
2. Develop human resources strategy as part of neighborhood action plans.
3. Coordinate efficient use of educational facilities.
4. Establish facilities for graduate study/job training.
5. Establish land use regulations to facilitate essential community based human services.
Parks and Recreation

Below: New facilities at Thrasher Park provided through the ongoing park improvement program. Right: The city’s parks are popular and heavily used by all ages.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Roanoke’s park system is the primary source of recreation and open space within the city. The existing park system includes two regional parks, six downtown parks and plazas, nine community parks, eight Roanoke River parks, twenty neighborhood parks, eleven school site parks, and nine community centers. City park facilities have 57 ball fields, 60 tennis courts, two Olympic-size outdoor swimming pools, and a 25,000 person capacity stadium. In addition, nine community centers provide an important opportunity for recreation, especially for the elderly.

Recent Actions and Current Plans
A master plan for the parks system, completed in 1980, has served as the basis for planning decisions for the last five years. Actions have included the development of a downtown urban park system, a strategy of improvements in neighborhood parks and the construction of a new major, centralized sports complex.

Despite Roanoke’s abundant open space, the park system is not geographically balanced: for instance, a significant amount of the total park land is part of the steep slopes of Mill Mountain. The 1980 Plan recommended that this issue be addressed by increasing park land primarily in the northwest (70-125 acres) and northeast parts of the city (37-65 acres). The Parks and Recreation Strategy map indicates areas which lack park facilities.

Current plans for the park system are primarily the continued implementation of the 1980 Parks Master Plan. This includes completion of the Sports Complex at Victory Stadium and improvements to twenty-five other parks and facilities by the end of 1986. In addition, an ongoing maintenance program has been developed to achieve the desired level of quality for all parks.

STRATEGY

Parks and Recreation Objectives
- Encourage development and upgrading of parks serving all neighborhoods.
- Encourage the development of a greenway system along the Roanoke River and major streams, linked to existing parks.

New Recreation Needs
Roanoke’s 1980 Parks Plan clearly identified specific problems with existing individual facilities. Although these recommendations
continue to be valid, an updated parks plan is necessary to define any new needs and to more closely identify potential park sites in the outlying sections of the city.

Neighborhood action plans should help identify local recreation opportunities and needs as a supplement to the city-wide parks plan update. These plans should address maintenance needs as well as facility and program development. Actions on both neighborhood and city-wide levels are required to expand youth recreation opportunities.

Recreation/open space needs should be considered in plans for any new residential development. For large residential developments, zoning regulations should include provisions for developers to provide adequate open space in connection with their developments. Residential developments in areas identified as needing park facilities should be reviewed with special care. Preservation of sufficient land for future park facilities in these locations should be considered.

Undeveloped areas in the flood plains along all rivers or major streams should be preserved as open space to help protect the natural beauty, to mitigate flood damage, and to develop a linear hike and pedestrian trail system. When possible, these natural areas should be linked to existing parks.

**SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS**

1. Incorporate open space development and maintenance in neighborhood plans.
2. Update parks plan to evaluate and identify priority projects and provide links between open spaces.
3. Provide increased youth recreation programs with special emphasis in high need areas.
4. Enact zoning and subdivision regulations to provide adequate open space in connection with new residential development.
5. Develop a greenway system along rivers and streams with a connected system of bikeways or pedestrian paths.
6. Encourage and coordinate joint development and use of public education/recreation facilities.
EXISTING CONDITIONS

Regional Access

Roanoke's transportation system has an important impact on the city's regional markets and tourism as well as the businesses and industries it serves. The major routes serving the city, I-81, U.S. 220 and U.S. 460, have enhanced the city's regional position by providing easy access to other population centers. Roanoke's location adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway provides an important link for regional and national tourists.

Roanoke's airport is also a key element in the region's transportation system. Expansion of airport facilities is critical in maintaining Roanoke's competitive market position. A traveler can fly from Roanoke to 39 cities and return in the same day. In 1985, Piedmont Airlines increased its service from 16 to 21 flights a day; the five airlines serving Roanoke total over 50 daily flights. An Airport Master Plan is currently being completed to coordinate airport development. A new or expanded air terminal is a major element under consideration; together with the recent runway construction, these improvements should provide needed incentives to increase the quality and number of flights into Roanoke.

Local Access

Roanoke's local road network forms a radiating pattern of streets that serve all sections of the city. Most of Roanoke can be reached from downtown within 15 minutes. Although there are no major transportation problems, some local problem areas do exist. Traffic on arterial roads sometimes disrupts neighborhood access. Poor traffic flow and cruising are added problems for strip developments such as Williamson Road. Truck traffic near industrial areas affects traffic flow, creates noise and accelerates the deterioration of street surfaces. About one-third of Roanoke's neighborhoods lack sidewalks. For pedestrians, the City has developed a school safety sidewalk plan focusing improvements around public school facilities and is currently implementing improvements as funds are available.

The Roanoke Valley Area Transportation Plan 1975-1995, prepared by the State of Virginia has provided the guideline for road planning. For the road systems in Roanoke, City Council has designated three major projects for construction over the next five years. Other projects may also be added. Current priority projects include:

- Peters Creek Road extension from Lee Highway to Melrose Avenue,
- A new interchange on I-581, north of 10th Street (exact location has not been determined).
- Franklin Road widening from Third Street to Elm Avenue.

Public Transportation:

Local bus service is provided by the Greater Roanoke Transit Company Inc. (Valley Metro), which is solely owned by the City of Roanoke. Current routing is based upon existing demand.
Improvements to public transportation include the Campbell Court Transportation Center, currently under construction, and plans for a new administrative and operation center for Valley Metro. This center will be housed in the rehabilitated City Stables in southeast Roanoke, a historic property of local significance.

**STRATEGY**

**Transportation Objectives**

- Encourage maintenance and upgrading of the transportation network to facilitate movement into and within Roanoke.
- Encourage the development of landscaped boulevards designed to enhance the city's image and to minimize traffic impacts on adjacent neighborhoods.

**Airport Improvements**

The Comprehensive Plan strongly supports future airport improvements. Quality air service is a critical factor in business location decisions. Quality air terminal facilities are gateways to the city and are important for Roanoke's image and economic growth.

**Scenic Parkway**

A scenic parkway along the Roanoke River is currently proposed as a 25 mile link between Dixie Caverns at I-81 through Roanoke to Smith Mountain Lake. If implemented in conjunction with flood control improvements, this project represents a unique opportunity to preserve the environmental quality of the river and provide needed, yet scenic, access for local and regional travelers. The parkway should be supported as an important transportation asset to area recreation and tourist centers.

**City Image: Landscaped Boulevards**

To enhance the city's image and visual quality, all major access roads into the city and entrance routes into downtown should be upgraded as gateways with signs, landscaping and lighting as appropriate. These routes shape tourists' first impressions of Roanoke as well as city residents' and Roanoke Valley commuters' daily image of the city. They should be attractive entrances offering clear identity and directional signs. Other major residential and commercial streets also can enhance Roanoke's visual quality and should be upgraded as residential or commercial boulevards with appropriate landscaping. These proposed access roads, downtown entrance routes and boulevards are shown on the Transportation Strategy map and include:

**Gateways: Major City Access Roads**

- I-81 and I-581
- U.S. 220 and Roy Webber Expressway
- U.S. 460—Orange Avenue and Melrose Avenue
- Lee Highway/Brandon Avenue
- U.S. 11—Williamson Road

**Residential or Commercial Boulevards: Downtown Entrance Routes**

- Shenandoah Avenue N.W.
- Grandin Road S.W./Memorial Avenue S.W.
- 10th Street N.W. and S.W./Campbell Avenue S.W.
- South Jefferson Street
- Franklin Road S.W.
- Brambleton Avenue S.W./Main Street/Elm Avenue S.W.
- Route 24—Jamison and Bullitt Avenues S.E.
Other Residential or Commercial Boulevards

- Peters Creek Road N.W.
- Hershberger Road N.E. and N.W.
- Colonial Avenue S.W.

Implementation of the gateway, entrance route and boulevard projects would require detailed traffic and urban design analysis. Landscaping efforts could be coordinated through the Parks and Recreation Department's landscaping program and would be aided by the development of the proposed City tree nursery.

Road Improvements

Road improvements to improve traffic flow should be a priority. In addition to the three projects approved by the City Council (Peters Creek Road extension, a new I-581 interchange, and Franklin Road widening), additional improvements to the road system should be made as funds become available.

As shown in the Transportation Strategy map, projects may include improvements to Hershberger Road from Cove to Peters Creek Road and the eastern portions of Orange Avenue, 10th Street N.W., and Williamson Road, as well as completion of 13th Street N.E. and S.E. south of Orange Avenue. The impacts of the new I-581 interchange on plans for improvements to 10th Street N.W. and adjacent streets should also be examined. Improvements to Williamson Road might include selected cross street closings which would decrease traffic impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, provide additional areas for parking and/or landscaping, and improve traffic flow.

Transportation Planning

The City should also be involved with initiating a review process for the State-prepared Roanoke Valley Area Transportation Plan. Based on planning and development activities proposed in this Comprehensive Development Plan, projects included in the previous transportation plan, but not a current priority for the City should be reviewed and new proposals considered.

A parking and traffic management plan is needed for the downtown and major arteries, including better traffic circulation and improved signs to direct residents and tourists to downtown. As noted in the Commercial Development section of this plan, a reduced fee or free “Park and Shop” program for shoppers could be revived to encourage more people to come downtown. In addition, new parking facilities and programs may be needed. A recent parking study revealed that although downtown currently has a surplus of spaces, full occupancy of existing buildings would fully use these spaces. The potential development of the available vacant land in downtown Roanoke would require new parking sites. Plans for feasibility studies for additional parking including the cost of land and accessibility should be prepared for any new downtown development.

Other localized transportation problems should be identified in neighborhood plans. However, since transportation is a unifying element, a plan to coordinate minor street improvements and maintenance will also be needed. Problems with dangerous intersections, unpaved or poor quality roads and truck traffic conflicts should be addressed on both a neighborhood and city wide basis. The current sidewalk improvement plan should eventually be expanded to include the entire city.
Public Transit

Public transportation within Roanoke should continue to serve areas of greatest demand. Need and demand should be studied on an ongoing basis to determine service levels and the potential for alternatives such as new routes, smaller vehicles or expanded hours. Programs such as new elderly/handicapped ride services should be supported. Availability of public transit should be one of the criteria for locating public or subsidized multi-family housing.

SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Participate in revising State-prepared Roanoke Valley Area Transportation Plan as part of preparation of city thoroughfare plan.

2. Prepare traffic management plan with special emphasis on circulation and parking in downtown Roanoke.


4. Support development of a scenic river parkway.

5. Improve the city's image through aesthetic/traffic improvements to major entry roads into the city and downtown.

6. Implement plan for street improvements, new roads and interchanges.

7. Continue to provide public transit to areas of greatest demand and for populations with special needs.
Utilities

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Regional Concerns

In the Roanoke Valley, most utilities are shared concerns of the jurisdictions in the metropolitan area. Roanoke supplies some water and sewer service to surrounding jurisdictions as well as to the city. Storm drainage is largely determined by the natural topography of the region and does not respect governmental jurisdictions. Solid waste disposal is also currently provided through a regional facility.

Water Supply

Water is a critical issue in the Roanoke Valley. Although the city is well supplied with water, the surrounding area is not. Given development trends, especially in Roanoke County, it is anticipated that an additional water source will be required by 1995. Without this, the region may face a 29 million gallon per day deficit within 50 years. Negotiations are currently underway between Roanoke, Salem and Roanoke County for the potential of developing a regional reservoir.

Since 1976, water service has been systematically extended or improved in outlying parts of the city. As indicated on the Utilities Strategy map, few developed areas are without services. Within the system, low water pressure problems occur in isolated areas of the city. New water storage tanks are now proposed for several parts of the city to improve water pressure problems.

Sewer System

Roanoke’s sewer system serves the city, Salem, Vinton, Roanoke County and parts of Botetourt County. The system was originally designed to meet needs until 1985. In addition to the need for expanded sewage treatment capacity, interceptor lines are now reaching capacity. A study is currently underway to address future sewer system needs.

Only isolated sections of the city are now without sewer service. Unserved areas, including very low elevations as well as undeveloped areas, are shown in the Utilities Strategy map. On a local level, many of the existing sewer lines are old. Regular maintenance requires a substantial amount of time. In many of the outlying areas information regarding the exact size and location of the pipes is difficult to confirm.

Storm Drainage

Roanoke’s storm drainage is a collection of small systems. Actual piped sections are few. Surface drainage in ditches, overflow on streets, and natural drainage channels, form most of the system. The City of Roanoke is only responsible for the piped portion and major stream clearance. Open channels, whether rivers, streams or ditches, are difficult to maintain, and since maintenance of individual ditches is done by property owners, it is sporadic, resulting in increased localized flooding.

New development has the greatest potential impact on increasing storm water runoff. Hard surfaces reduce the absorption of water into the soil. Since Roanoke has minimal vacant land left to develop and does not allow any additional runoff from new developments, the major factors affecting future changes in stormwater runoff and increased flooding will be policies and development activities in the surrounding jurisdictions.

To address the need for intergovernmental coordination, a feasibility study in the Roanoke Valley Comprehensive Stormwater Management Program was completed in March 1985 by the Fifth Planning District Commission. This study only represents a first step in defining the problem.

To improve flood conditions for the Roanoke River, the U.S. Army Corps of
Engineers has proposed a flood control plan which includes a preliminary plan for approximately ten miles of channel widening, retaining walls adjacent to Victory Stadium and at Cleveland Avenue, cleaning the stream bed of obstructions, replacement of two low-level bridges on Wiley Drive, waterproofing the Roanoke Sewage Treatment Plant and the Roanoke Memorial Hospital, and a flood warning system. The next design phase depends on funding by the U.S. Congress.

**Solid Waste**
The regional landfill is located just off Route 116 in Roanoke County. It handles an average of 600-700 tons per day. By 1993, it is estimated that the landfill will be at capacity.

**STRATEGY**

*Utilities Objectives*
- Encourage regional cooperation in planning and operating utility systems.
- Encourage completion of existing utility systems to serve current development and priority sites.

*Water Supply and Sewage Treatment*
The participation of the City of Roanoke in the development of a new regional water supply is important. Although Roanoke itself is well supplied, water needs are an important regional issue. Similar regional cooperation should continue in plans for sewage treatment improvements for both the interceptor lines and expansion of the treatment plant capacity.

Overall, within Roanoke, utility services are good. In addition to selected low water pressure areas identified by the City, localized problems should be cited in neighborhood action plans. For new developments, utilities should be extended as required from the major lines now in place.

*Storm Water Management and Flood Control*
Flood control should be approached on both a local and regional level. The City of Roanoke should participate with the Fifth Planning District in encouraging the development of storm water plans for all drainage basins in the region. The flood control implications of the development of a new water source should be re-examined. Roanoke should also pursue potential flood control improvements for the Roanoke River.
through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The City should play an active role in protecting the environmental quality of areas affected by proposed flood control projects, including new landscaping as necessary.

On a city level, Roanoke should explore diverse ways of reducing problems caused by flooding. The sum total of many small measures may result in a substantial reduction in flood damage. Areas to examine include:

- improvement of local storm drainage systems,
- neighborhood action plans that include neighborhood drainage ditch maintenance programs,
- a regular program of inspection and maintenance and clearing of debris from major streams and rivers,
- restriction of any new development in the flood plain or on steep slopes,
- changes in existing flood plain regulations limiting outdoor storage, expansion of facilities, or any obstruction of drainage patterns,
- relocation or additional protection of existing utility substations located in the flood plains or flood prone areas,
- examination of potential for a series of smaller retention ponds along drainage channels, and
- strict enforcement of “no additional runoff” policies for new developments.

**SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS**

1. Develop regional storm drainage plan and implement improvements.
2. Develop regional water supply plan.
3. Resolve future regional facility needs for waste water treatment and solid waste disposal.
4. Extend utilities to new development areas as needed.
5. Use neighborhood planning process to identify service needs or problems.
6. Continue to implement zoning policies regarding limitation on runoff.

**Solid Waste Disposal**

Regional studies of future solid waste disposal should examine sites for relocation of the regional landfill or other alternative methods of solid waste management. These studies should begin as soon as possible because development of a new landfill is a five year process.
Environmental Quality

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Natural Areas
Roanoke’s natural environment is one of its most important assets. Although the city is a mature urban environment with little remaining undeveloped land, its location amid the Blue Ridge Mountains and close proximity to other significant natural areas provide its unique environmental quality.

Human involvement with natural environments creates most environmental issues, and it is important to recognize the few remaining undisturbed natural resources in the city. Natural habitats for wildlife must be large, contiguous areas to have a significant environmental value. In Roanoke, Mill Mountain with its connections to the Blue Ridge Parkway and the natural areas along the Roanoke River are important habitats. Not only do these areas add to the visual beauty of the area, but they provide unique opportunities for exposure to the natural environment within the city limits.

Air and Water Quality
Air and water quality are issues of concern for all regional municipalities within the boundaries of the Roanoke Valley. Fortunately, both air and water quality are good in Roanoke, but these elements should continue to be monitored on a regional level.

The geological and meteorological conditions of the Roanoke Valley frequently result in a condition known as an air inversion. During inversions, the Roanoke Valley is especially sensitive to pollutants. Since industries with “point source” emission (i.e., smoke stack, etc.) require a permit from the state to evaluate potential pollutants prior to construction, future growth may be affected by air quality controls. Industry type, location, and the degree of air quality deterioration permitted are variables considered in the state permit process.

Water, like air, relates to geographic rather than political boundaries. The surface and ground water quality in Roanoke is generally good. Water resources are important not only as a habitat for fish but as a prime recreation resource for the city.

STRATEGY

Environmental Quality Objective
To encourage the improvement and preservation of Roanoke’s environmental quality.

Vegetation
A significant part of Roanoke’s beauty lies in the city’s lush vegetation. To maintain this quality, programs for replacing or installing new trees should be developed. The 1980 Parks Master Plan recommended that the City of Roanoke start its own nursery to provide a continual supply of new trees for both the streets and parks. This should be pursued.

Site plan controls for new developments should encourage preservation of existing vegetation.

The City, through the Department of Parks and Recreation, is currently updating an urban reforestation plan that includes tree planting along thoroughfares and replacing neighborhood street trees that are...
diseased or damaged. This should be expanded to incorporate the boulevards, entranceways and gateways indicated in the transportation section of the plan; a policy should be initiated to ensure replacement of every tree which is removed.

**Impacts of Roanoke River Flood Control Project**

The proposed Roanoke River flood control plan, summarized in the preceding utilities element of the plan, will have a major impact on the natural environment in and around the river. A current condition of the plan's implementation is that a landscape architect representing the City be involved with the project's design. Even more important, the development of new open space, bike and pedestrian paths and a scenic parkway in conjunction with the flood control improvement is a major opportunity for landscape design. The City should use this opportunity to influence both the visual quality and potential recreation benefits of the flood control project. Because this project will remove approximately seventy-five acres of existing vegetation, careful review of plans and adequate funding for new vegetation should be required before proceeding beyond the planning stage.

**Water Quality**

Although water quality is generally good, preventive measures should be encouraged to maintain or improve this quality, including:

- enforcement of erosion and sediment control regulations for new construction,
- identifying and addressing non-point source problem areas such as litter, open refuse, and impervious areas, and
- promotion of a recycling program.

**SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS**

1. Implement appropriate flood control measures and minimize development in flood plain.
2. Develop open space conservation areas to protect natural resources and sensitive land.
3. Enact zoning regulations to protect or enhance visual quality in neighborhoods.
4. Use neighborhood planning process to identify environmental problems.
5. Establish tree-planting program for priority areas in the city.
Roanoke Tomorrow: The Comprehensive Development Plan

The Comprehensive Development Plan for Roanoke is a composite projection of Roanoke's future, indicating ways to resolve land use conflicts and take advantage of opportunities for revitalization of existing areas, where necessary, and development of available land, where advisable. In addition, as summarized in the preceding component strategies, the Plan identifies a variety of human resource, education and public service issues critical to Roanoke's development. These programmatic concerns have important impacts on the physical development strategies summarized and mapped in the following pages.

DEVELOPMENT THEMES
Several common themes are embodied in the Plan's proposed land use strategies. These themes include:

Preservation
The neighborhood conservation theme that resonates throughout the Plan is a direct expression of citizen desires for continued revitalization and neighborhood development efforts. The Plan's strategy of "maintain/improve/change" provides a framework for detailed neighborhood planning and development actions. Revised zoning and related land development regulations will help guide infill, limit demolition, and encourage rehabilitation.

Quality New Development
The creation of new neighborhoods and commercial areas worth preserving in the future is as important as preserving existing quality structures. The Plan carefully specifies locations for various new land uses. These proposed uses are designed to minimize impacts on adjacent areas and reduce the kind of conflicts which have led to housing deterioration and other problems in some existing neighborhoods. Revised site plan and subdivision regulations and procedures should help ensure quality new development.

Image/Appearance
Enhancing Roanoke's image as an attractive, vibrant city is a central focus of the Comprehensive Development Plan. The Plan relates new boulevard treatments and park development to the visual quality of the city—a pragmatic concern that affects the activity of the real estate market, the mind of the convention visitor, and the attitudes of residents about their neighborhoods and city. Roanoke can be a city of trees; it can boast freshly-painted houses and attractive new buildings that relate to the best of their surroundings.

Environmental Concerns
The relationship of land use and development decisions to environmental concerns was brought home clearly during the unexpected disaster of the 1985 flood. The importance of working with nature raised several issues including: controlling development in the flood plain, the problems of insufficient runoff controls in the region, the need for better maintenance of storm beds and drainage ditches, and the need for limits on building on steep slopes in order to better control runoff.

Regional Cooperation
Finally, the Plan has been prepared with an understanding of the recently completed comprehensive plan for Roanoke County as well as plans for Vinton and Salem. It attempts to achieve a good "fit" between the city and the surrounding Roanoke Valley metropolitan area, establishing continuity between Roanoke's priorities of maintaining and improving its existing neighborhood-based structure while achieving high quality new development. Even more important
THE ROANOKE COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
In the Context of Other Regional Plans

CRAIG COUNTY

BOTETOURT COUNTY

ROANOKE COUNTY

SALEM

ROANOKE

VINTON

BEDFORD COUNTY

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

FRANKLIN COUNTY

FLOYD COUNTY

Residential

Commercial/Inst

Industrial

Open Space

Neighborhood Centers

Rural Centers

0 20000 ft
will be the establishment of complementary land development regulations to guide future growth.

Strong support for Roanoke to continue as the central focus for office employment, air transportation, cultural events and convention/tourism activities provides new opportunities for cooperation among jurisdictions in the Roanoke Valley. Finding appropriate ways to share the benefits and costs of needed services and infrastructure on a regional basis is critical for the Roanoke Valley’s continued growth and development.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES
Because the Comprehensive Development Plan is general in nature, it focuses on how proposed strategies and actions affect the entire city, defining broad areas of land use as opposed to particular proposals for specific sites.

Key land use action strategies identified in the Comprehensive Development Plan Strategy map include:

Special Action Areas
Areas of special focus include:

- **Downtown**: A continued emphasis on office/government/cultural uses for downtown Roanoke should include tourism-related developments such as a potential new convention center, hotel and restaurants. Continued expansion of the City Market area and development of Henry Street should be accompanied by new traffic management/parking/street improvements and aggressive marketing for new and renovated office/commercial space. New or renovated housing units, to make downtown a true 24 hour center, are a major priority.

- **Airport**: New or improved airport terminal facilities should be supported to comple-
measures along the Roanoke River, could be a mutually beneficial approach for both projects, minimizing parkway costs and providing a means to acquire, preserve, and landscape needed land.

Treating major entry roads and arterials as gateways and boulevards, with improved signage, landscape, lighting, or traffic improvement as appropriate is an important project to improve Roanoke’s image to itself and the visitors.

Open Space Conservation Areas
The expansion and linkage, where possible, of land along the Roanoke River as well as tributary streams is an important environmental recommendation. Limitation of new development in the flood plain and acquisition of key areas for open space preservation and flood control measures can provide the framework for a linear park development, including the potential for bikeways and pedestrian paths.

Neighborhood Centers
The Comprehensive Development Plan Strategy map indicates possible sites for development of new or improved commercial service centers for neighborhoods. These centers can provide needed local retail or office space, such as small supermarkets or drug stores, space for clinics, job training centers, or other human services, or even sites for mixed use residential/commercial development.

Potential Neighborhood Change Areas
Neighborhood areas where deteriorated conditions or land use conflicts may require major corrective action are defined in the strategic plan as priority “change” areas. Detailed neighborhood planning should focus on these areas either for revitalization (intensive housing renovation, provision of human services, or new uses such as temporary or permanent open space) or for compatible residential/employment use (selective redevelopment for compatible industrial, office, or institutional uses, while preserving quality housing where possible and buffering adjacent residential uses with open space and landscaping).

As shown on the Comprehensive Development Plan Strategy map, priority revitalization or employment use areas include portions of the neighborhoods of Gainsboro, Gilmer/Northwest, Harrison
Avenue, Loudon Avenue, Shenandoah West, Norwich, Mountain View, Hurt Park, Old Southwest, Belmont, Riverdale, Morningside, Eastgate, Thrasher Park, and Williamson Road. Other areas may emerge in detailed neighborhood planning.

**New Development**
The eventual uses of currently-vacant land for residential or employment development have also been identified. These uses were identified based on evaluation of access, market, adjacent use or potential impact. New industrial/commercial employment areas include land on either side of Orange Avenue adjacent to the Roanoke Centre for Industry and Technology, land around the airport, and land adjacent to the potential new I-581 interchange. New residential land includes land with new access resulting from the extension of Peters Creek Road, as well as a variety of larger, scattered infill sites throughout the city adjacent to other residential development.

**DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY**
Successful implementation of the planning and development actions proposed in this Comprehensive Development Plan will result in the continuing evolution of Roanoke as the major center of the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area and western Virginia.

Further downtown revitalization, airport development, and cultural/entertainment growth should be complemented by a new emphasis on developing tourist destination attraction events and facilities. Development of a river parkway tied to flood control and landscaping improvements, will provide a new regional boulevard, tying together the western county with the Blue Ridge Parkway, the proposed Blue Ridge Zoological Park and Smith Mountain Lake. The impact of these projects on the image Roanoke projects to the rest of Virginia as well as to adjacent states will be felt in the city's continuing economic development and resulting improvements in its real estate market, retail economy, cultural life, and neighborhood stability. Equally important to the City's future are key human resource planning efforts, improved educational programs and facilities and other human service programs to enhance the quality of life for all of Roanoke's citizens.
Right: The Roanoke Valley.
For Roanoke to achieve the goals and values set forth in this Comprehensive Development Plan, active implementation of the proposed development projects and revitalization approaches through public, private and civic efforts is critical. Four priority areas of effort have been identified for action within the next five years to establish new development directions and momentum as well as to refine plans, procedures and regulations. These four areas of effort include:

Revised land development regulations: Zoning, site plan and subdivision ordinances are being created as a part of the current Roanoke Vision planning process. Their implementation is critical in order to refine standards, promote preservation and establish new incentive mechanisms for quality development and revitalization. However, as controls for development, these ordinances have the greatest impact within a strong and active real estate market.

Improved administrative procedures: Revised administrative approaches and lines of responsibility for both planning reviews and zoning approvals are also key recommendations. Improved coordination and efficiency will lead to greater effectiveness in both protecting the public interest and simplifying the approvals process for private development.

A partnership approach: The public, private, and civic participation so important to the planning process must be continued in the implementation of action projects. The framework for the partnership efforts is now in place in the many existing organizations which can be enlisted to help on projects of interest. New organizations, such as a nonprofit housing corporation or a neighborhood business advisory committee, may also be needed.

Planning and development actions: A set of positive public/private programs must be initiated immediately to provide critical coordination and development momentum. Neighborhood action plans for priority areas must be coordinated with the preparation of detailed component plans for various items such as housing, parks, human services, or flood control. These plans should identify, where possible, recommended development actions to be accomplished within the five year target period.

Below: New housing under construction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>BY WHOM</th>
<th>PROPOSED SCHEDULE (YEAR)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Revised Land Development Regulations</td>
<td>OCP</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete draft regulations</td>
<td>PC/CC</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Commission/Council review &amp; approval</td>
<td>OCP/PC/CC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revise zoning map/review &amp; approval</td>
<td>OCP/PC</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Detailed design guidelines where applicable</td>
<td>PC</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation of new regulations</td>
<td>OCP/PC</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Continuing review of regulations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Administering the Plan</td>
<td>PC/City</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Revise plan administrative structure</td>
<td>PC/OCP</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiate continuing planning activities</td>
<td>OCP/PC</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish comprehensive data system</td>
<td>PC/BZA/ARB</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Revise zoning administrative structure</td>
<td>OCP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish improved review/reporting procedures</td>
<td>OCP</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Implement continuing planning/zoning reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Partnership Approach</td>
<td>PC/OCP/RNP</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Enlist participation of private advisory groups</td>
<td>City/PC/RNP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create new public/private vehicles: Housing Corp., etc.</td>
<td>PC/OCP/RNP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continue coordination of partnership activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Planning and Development Actions</td>
<td>OCP/RNP</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare neighborhood data inventory</td>
<td>City/OCP/RNP</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare detailed component plans</td>
<td>PC/OCP/RNP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Select priority neighborhoods for initial efforts</td>
<td>PC/OCP/RNP</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiate neighborhood action planning</td>
<td>City/OCP/RNP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical assistance for defined action projects</td>
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</table>

CC: City Council  •  City: City Administration  •  PC: Planning Commission  •  BZA: Board of Zoning Appeals  •  ARB: Architectural Review Board  •  OCP: Office of Community Planning  •  RNP: Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership
Revised Land Development Regulations

One of the major implementation tools for recommendations contained in the Comprehensive Development Plan are the revised land development regulations developed as part of the Roanoke Vision planning process. These revised regulations have been drafted, not only to resolve specific problems found in the existing ordinances, but also to address issues identified by citizens, neighborhood organizations and the development community. A zoning handbook will supplement the text of the official ordinances to help ensure that both citizens and professionals will have a clear understanding of the revised regulations.

A central focus of these new zoning, site plan and subdivision regulations are neighborhood and historic preservation strategies. This element of the Roanoke Vision planning process was supported by a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Critical Issues Fund, in recognition of the importance of developing new regulatory tools for preservation through a public participation approach.

The proposed text revisions to the current zoning ordinance take into account new mechanisms for achieving the Plan. These include:

Residential zoning changes: One of the intentions of the revised zoning regulations is to resolve conflicts between the existing built fabric of neighborhoods and the underlying zoning classifications. Many neighborhoods are now zoned for much higher densities than the existing buildings provide. This situation invites the development of new, obtrusive buildings out of scale with the surrounding neighborhood character. Revised ordinances recommend new zoning classifications to adjust densities to levels which will maintain existing conditions and allow appropriate infill development. New classifications also recommend restoration of the smaller single family lot sizes found in many of the city’s older neighborhoods. These lots were judged to be too small in the previous ordinance, a situation which has contributed to disinvestment and the proliferation of vacant lots. The new classification will help encourage infill housing development.

An overlay zone for neighborhood conservation: Certain areas of the city are experiencing land use conflicts between residential and commercial uses. The Franklin Road area of Old Southwest, for example, has been analyzed in detail, focusing on how office/institutional uses and parking needs can be accommodated while still maintaining the residential character of the area. A recommended approach is to create a special zoning district, to be applied as an overlay to the primary zoning classification. This district should contain special procedures to discourage demolition of usable structures, encourage landscaping of parking lots, and provide standards for quality infill development to maintain neighborhood character and scale.

New approaches for large-scale development: For larger tracts of land, recommendations should encourage better site planning and combination of uses on the site. A “cluster development” provision would allow units on large tracts to be more tightly grouped in order to preserve large areas of open space for recreation, flood control, or preservation. New residential and industrial “planned unit development” procedures would allow flexibility in density in return for providing desirable mixes of residential, commercial or employment-related uses and building types. Special provisions would make these approaches...
applicable to older center-city neighborhoods as well, to help shape new infill development and rehabilitation of existing buildings.

Improved standards for commercial and industrial development: The existing zoning regulations set very few standards for commercial and industrial site design. The Plan's objective of improving the image of the city should be implemented, in part, through appropriate new commercial and industrial site development standards. These standards should improve the visual quality of development, preserve and enhance the character of adjacent neighborhood land uses, encourage the efficient use of land, and ensure a desirable business environment.

New Commercial District Zoning: A new "neighborhood commercial" zone would allow creation of small pockets of commercial/mixed-use developments as neighborhood service centers. These areas, similar in scale to the Grandin Road commercial district in Raleigh Court, could also contain second-level residential space as well as the potential for community service facilities such as day care, job training or other human service centers.

Downtown Development: Supplementing the positive development actions planned in the Design '85 study, new zoning approaches for downtown include provisions to encourage downtown housing, a "contextual zoning" approach which mandates height restriction adjacent to the City Market area, and new approaches for calculating building density and creating additional open space.

Review and approval of these new preservation and development ordinances are critically important to implementing the desires expressed by Roanoke residents through the planning process. These desires include: improved quality and appearance of new development, provision of convenient services and facilities, encouragement of downtown housing and development, minimization of land use conflicts, and most importantly, preservation of Roanoke's neighborhood character and scale.

The subsequent approval of a revised zoning map incorporating locations for these new provisions and reflecting the land use objectives of the Comprehensive Development Plan is an equally important second step.
Clarifying the ongoing responsibility and procedures for planning and zoning activities within the City of Roanoke's governmental structure is a critical part of implementing the objectives of the Comprehensive Development Plan. Changes in two major areas of organization are proposed:

- the administration of comprehensive planning activities
- the administration of land development regulations

**Administration of Comprehensive Planning Activities**

This Comprehensive Development Plan has been designed as a strategic framework for the ongoing planning and development actions carried out within the City of Roanoke's legislatively-appointed and administrative structures. As shown in the following chart, entitled *Administration of the Comprehensive Plan*, the City's planning responsibilities are carried out on many levels. City Council delegates central responsibility for ongoing comprehensive planning to the Council-appointed Roanoke City Planning Commission. The Office of Community Planning serves as staff to the Planning Commission to assist it in carrying out this role. City Council also delegates authority for planning responsibilities such as capital budgeting, project planning and implementation of departmental functions to the City Administration through the City Manager and the Directorates of Public Works, Utilities and Operations, Administration and Public Safety, and Human Resources.

In addition to these lines of authority, City Council also delegates planning responsibility for special functions such as education or housing redevelopment to the appropriate Council-appointed bodies — the Roanoke City School Board and the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority, respectively. These bodies, in turn, delegate planning responsibilities to their staffs.

Coordination of the various planning functions needs to be strengthened. Currently, there is no single point of responsibility or coordination for all of the City's planning activities. The City needs:

- a unified repository of planning data and information;
- better coordination of both neighborhood and detailed component planning efforts which can be linked to the capital budget process;
- a single focus for technical planning assistance for proposed public and private implementation actions; and
- an advocate and primary staff resource for ongoing implementation of Comprehensive Development Plan recommendations and for future comprehensive planning efforts.

The City's existing planning structures must be enhanced to meet the above needs. The Office of Community Planning was created in 1979 to bring a community focus to the City's planning and development efforts. In addition to providing technical assistance for short term action planning efforts and technical staff assistance to both the Roanoke City Planning Commission and the Architectural Review Board, the Office initiated and staffs the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership. The Office also supervises the human services planning efforts of the City's Office on Youth. A primary emphasis of all of the Office of Community Planning's work has been to stimulate and assist neighborhood and city-wide revitalization efforts.

The Office of Community Planning should now add a new focus to improve the organization and provision of basic planning
PROPOSED ADMINISTRATION OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

City Council

Planning Commission

City Manager

Other Agencies

Capitol Budgeting/Project Planning/Implementation
- Schools
- Housing Redevelopment

Comprehensive Planning

Capitol Budgeting/Project Planning/Implementation
- Parks
- Transp.
- Util.
- Human Serv.
- Etc.

Directorates
- Utilities and Operations
- Admin. and Public Safety
- Human Resources

School Board
- Roanoke Redevel. & Housing Authority

Office of Community Planning

Legend:
- Current Relationships & Responsibility
- Need to Strengthen Interaction
- Need to Formalize Relationships & Responsibility
needs within the City's administrative structure. This should be accomplished by establishing more formal relationships and lines of responsibility between the Office of Community Planning and the many commissions, departments and agencies with planning roles. In addition, the interaction between the capital budgeting, project planning and program responsibilities of the City Directorates and related agencies (such as the Roanoke City Schools or the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority) and the ongoing comprehensive planning process, directed by the Roanoke City Planning Commission and carried out by the Office of Community Planning, should be strengthened. These proposed changes are also illustrated on the Administration of Comprehensive Plan chart.

The active implementation of these proposed administrative recommendations would provide enhanced strategic and comprehensive planning services for the City.

**Administration of Land Development Regulations**

A second function of the larger Roanoke Vision planning process has been to revise and update Roanoke’s land development regulations: its zoning, subdivision and site plan ordinances.

The following chart, entitled Administration of Land Development Regulations, illustrates proposed changes in the administration of Roanoke’s land development regulations process. The chart delineates the responsibilities which City Council has given to its three appointed land development regulatory bodies including:

- the Planning Commission's responsibility for reviewing subdivisions, zoning changes, and site plan and zoning issues;

- the Board of Zoning Appeals' responsibility for reviewing zoning variances, special permits, and appeals; and

- the Architectural Review Board's responsibility for review and approval of development plans in special historic districts.

The objective of these proposed administrative recommendations is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory review and appeals processes. This would facilitate the implementation of improved preservation and development-oriented regulations. The result would better protect both the public interest by effectively carrying out the new Comprehensive Development Plan and the private interest by improving the thoroughness and speed of reviewing, analyzing and approving development proposals.

To achieve this objective, improved staff support to and coordination among the Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals and Architectural Review Board are needed. The Office of Community Planning should be directed to supplement its current responsibilities as staff to the Planning Commission and Architectural Review Board by providing similar staff support to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Currently, this function for the Board of Zoning Appeals is handled by the City Building Department and Zoning Administrator.

This organizational change would provide a "one-stop" source for land development information, response, and program assistance within the Office of Community Planning. It would also provide a single staff
to coordinate review procedures among the three regulatory bodies. Alexandria, Virginia, as well as many other cities around the country, has rationalized its planning review procedures around a similar model. Their review and reporting procedures for analysis of land development proposals include preparation of consistently-formatted reports to each board on a professional and timely basis.

As part of this effort, the ability to rapidly file and retrieve land use information so that it may be easily analyzed and clearly presented to the board, the applicant, and the public is extremely important. To this end the implementation of a computerized land use indexing and mapping procedure would be extremely valuable. As a first step in this process, the continuing land use information collection recommended as an ongoing planning activity should be organized so that data can be collated and incorporated in an eventual computer system.
Successful implementation of the planning and development actions proposed in the Comprehensive Development Plan requires efforts by more than the City and public sector alone. Roanoke has a strong tradition of civic and business involvement in planning issues. Several recent examples of public/private partnerships have shown that successful development is a direct result of the combined efforts of citizens, the business and financial communities and appropriate public departments or officials. The kind of partnership approach needed for both the planning and implementation of proposed development actions is one which has characterized projects such as the Design '79 downtown development program, the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership neighborhood planning and assistance programs, the Williamson Road Urban Design Study and subsequent improvement projects, and the Roanoke Vision planning process itself.

A major implementation strategy of the Comprehensive Development Plan is to foster and expand these successful partnership approaches primarily through existing private sector organizations, City Council-appointed advisory committees and City administration task forces. New public/private organizations may also be needed. The non-profit housing development corporation proposed as part of the Plan's housing strategy or the business advisory committee to assist neighborhood business development efforts, as proposed in the commercial development section of the Plan, are examples of possible new organizations.
Planning and Development Actions

Positive, active programs and projects, needed both to spur the private market and to supplement zoning controls, must take place within the context of a five-year planning and development framework. In order to meet this ambitious agenda, a series of immediate next steps must be designed.

As discussed in the initial description of the Roanoke Vision planning process, the Comprehensive Development Plan is only the important first step. The following diagram, entitled Detailed Planning and Implementation, illustrates the relationship between the comprehensive land use planning process and two finer-grained, action-oriented processes: neighborhood action plans for priority sub-areas of the city, and detailed component plans for certain city-wide issues, such as housing or human services.

Neighborhood Action Plans
One of the major roles the Comprehensive Development Plan will play in the next five years is as a framework for detailed planning and development actions at the neighborhood level. The city-wide values and objectives that have been defined must be investigated at the local scale.

The first step in this process is to use the Comprehensive Development Plan’s neighborhood analysis as the basis for more detailed information gathering. On a block-by-block basis, City staff and neighborhood residents can help gather up-to-date information on such items as residential, commercial, and industrial building conditions, adequacy of utilities, traffic issues and human service needs. This data base, prepared so that it may be eventually computerized for easy reference and updating, can also be used to set priorities among neighborhoods and establish a rational sequence of detailed planning efforts.

Finally, based both on the planning data and the concurrently-prepared detailed component plans (for topics such as housing or human services), neighborhood action plans should be sequentially prepared, defining items to be maintained, improved, or changed and balancing necessary land use changes in deteriorated areas with housing, services, or amenity improvements in adjacent areas.

Detailed Component Plans
The continuing preparation or updating of strategic plans for a variety of special components, such as housing, human services, or transportation, should proceed in conjunction with the neighborhood action plans. These plans should be prepared by individual City departments or other designated task forces, and can use the Comprehensive Development Plan’s framework and
neighborhood planning data base as background information.

Some plans should be prepared on a regional basis rather than for Roanoke alone. Flood control, for instance, is a function of how water is dealt with at its source as well as in its downstream impact: a regional approach is needed which will coordinate retention standards, runoff controls, floodway channelization where required, and land use regulations.

**Implementation and Continuing Comprehensive Planning**

Individual action projects should be undertaken, based on detailed planning at both the neighborhood and city-wide levels. At the same time, new information and ideas generated in the detailed planning/development process should become an ongoing part of the continuing evolution of the Comprehensive Development Plan. This ongoing development should be reflected, not only in each subsequent five-year update, but also in the continuing roles of the Roanoke City Planning Commission and Office of Community Planning as coordinators of planning actions and data for the city as a whole.
Right: The Mill Mountain star over Southeast Roanoke.
In 1930, John Nolen, the Boston-based landscape architect who had prepared the 1907 plan for Roanoke and had just completed the City's 1928 plan, looked back at his original work from the perspective of his most recent experience. In an article for a national planning magazine, he discussed "missed opportunities": in 1907 his plan had recommended a variety of development activities; many of these were carried out, including the building of various bridges and the creation of Elmwood Park. However, a number of other actions were not acted upon, including the widening of downtown streets, such as Jefferson or Campbell, into boulevards. By 1928, these actions, due to other investments and construction, were no longer feasible. The 1907 plan suggested setting aside river and stream flood plain areas for permanent open space; by 1928, "existing industrial use" descriptions had already appeared on the plan in many riverfront tracts. Subsequent plans have repeated this call for an environmentally-based open space system, but the potential for its accomplishment has been steadily eroded.

In the year 2005 we look back at the 1985 plan, what actions will we regret not having taken? What ideas will have been rejected as politically or economically impractical, that twenty years of hindsight will suggest could have been accomplished with more detailed design or planning?

The Roanoke Vision planning process has been designed as a strategy for attempting to avoid these later regrets. The importance of first defining what can be done and then taking appropriate actions are the central objectives of the Plan and its recommended implementation mechanisms.

The definition of priorities is part of the City's ongoing capital budgeting and administration process; the allocation of responsibility between the City and adjacent jurisdictions is part of the emerging regional political process. The Comprehensive Development Plan itself addresses neither of these issues, but rather, as its name implies, attempts to establish a long-term vision for the City of Roanoke, coupled with short-term actions which can begin to accomplish its objectives.

The participation of a wide cross-section of Roanoke citizens in the Plan's preparation gives a solid base of support to both its recommendations and to the public and private partnership approaches needed for Roanoke's continued revitalization and growth.
The Roanoke Vision Comprehensive Development Plan was a project of the Roanoke City Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is staffed by the Office of Community Planning which was responsible for directing this project.

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**Roanoke Vision Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee**
The following 15 member Advisory Committee was appointed by City Council to assist the City Planning Commission and to insure broad public representation in the preparation of the Comprehensive Development Plan.

Mrs. Susan S. Goode, Chairwoman
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Mr. Glynn D. Barranger, Roanoke City Board of Zoning Appeals
Mr. John P. Bradshaw, Jr., Roanoke City Planning Commission
Mrs. Jane B. Bulbin, Roanoke City Economic Development Commission
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