

Water and Wastewater

- IN A23. Promote regional solutions to public water and sewer needs and services, including consideration of water conservation strategies.
- IN A24. Maintain and upgrade sanitary sewer lines to eliminate infiltration and inflow of storm water.

3.5 PUBLIC SERVICES: POLICE, FIRE/EMS, SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT, CODE ENFORCEMENT

BACKGROUND

Public Safety

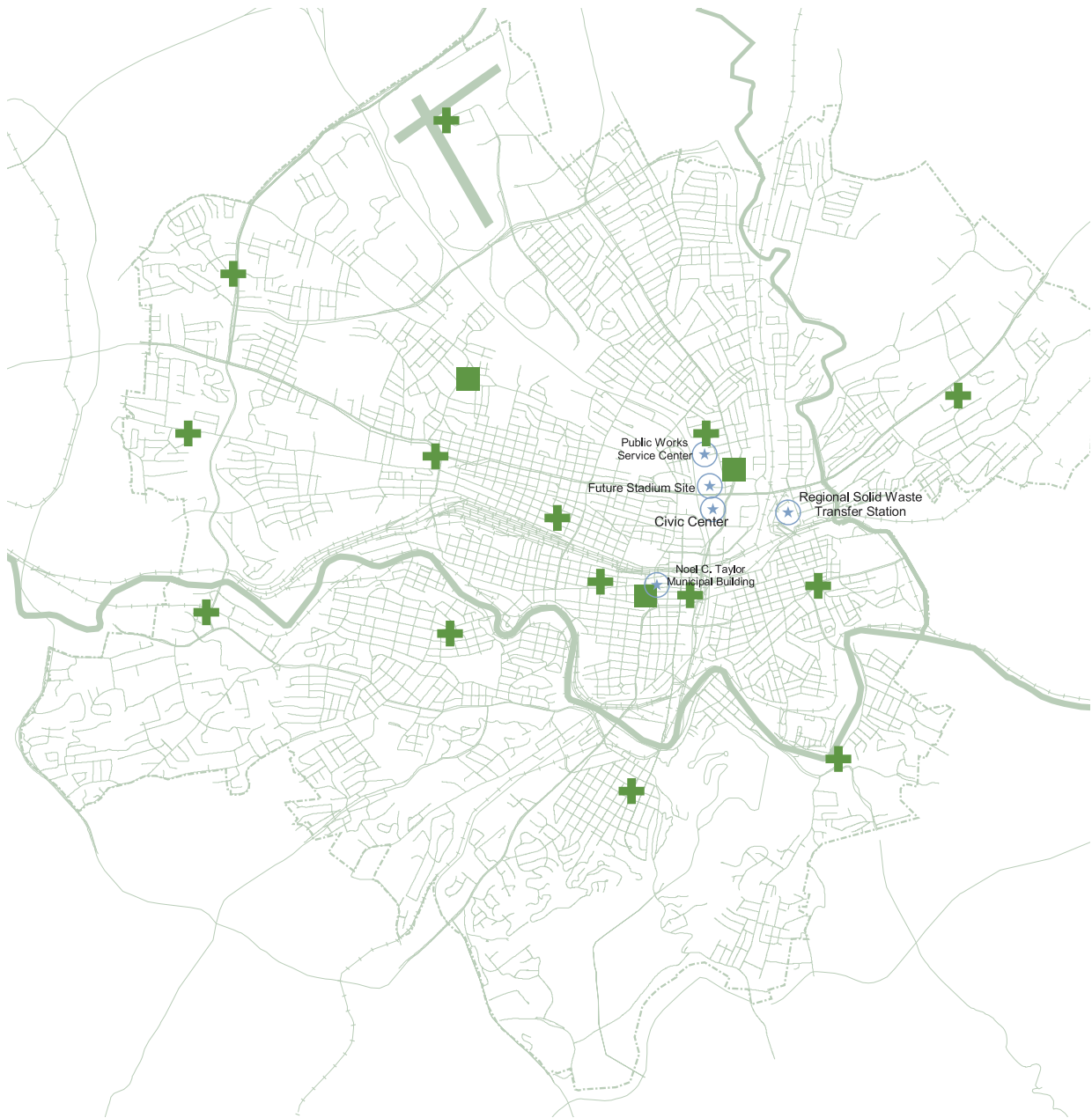
The Police Department operates out of centralized offices in the Municipal Building Annex in downtown Roanoke. The Department has approximately 250 budgeted positions for sworn personnel. Due to numerous vacancies in police personnel, additional emphasis has been placed on recruitment, improving benefits, and retention of existing officers. Police operations patrol 13 districts that are covered by 14 to 18 police cars 24 hours a day. A new police building is under construction and will relieve overcrowded conditions and provide additional space for new operations. Roanoke became one of only two localities in Virginia to be awarded the status of Certified Crime Prevention Community. The designation came out of a new program developed by the state Department of Criminal Justice Services.

The Police Department has adopted community oriented policing as a standard method of operation. This approach includes the Community Oriented Policing Effort (COPE) unit, a special police team that moves to specific sites to address particular problems. The COPE team works cooperatively with other departments to solve problems and can work from satellite offices in the community. Currently, COPE teams work from satellite sites located on Williamson Road and Lafayette Boulevard.

The Department has made a significant investment in time and financial resources in the Record Management System, which is a computerized system that enhances officers' ability to transmit and share information electronically. Mobile Data Terminals in vehicles are used to reduce paperwork, improve timeliness and accuracy of information, and reduce response time.

The Department is accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). CALEA accreditation requires police departments to work regionally to achieve goals set out in standards. This cross-jurisdictional cooperation greatly enhances the ability of departments to respond to problems and provides training and education opportunities for personnel.





3.5.1 Public Facilities

- Police Offices
- + Fire/EMS stations
- ★ Public Facility

The Roanoke Fire-EMS (Emergency Medical Services) Department has central offices located in the Jefferson Center building at 541 Luck Avenue, S.W. The Department employs approximately 275 personnel. The Department is a full-service fire and emergency medical service agency providing basic and advanced pre-hospital life support, fire prevention, educational programs, fire suppression services, and arson detection. It also provides vehicle extrication and tactical heavy rescue, and supports a regional hazardous materials team.

Roanoke Fire-EMS operates 14 fire-EMS stations throughout the City with 13 fire engines, four aerial ladder trucks, two water tankers, five ambulances, three command vehicles, and airport firefighting equipment. Each year the department responds to approximately 2,500 fires or first responder calls, of which 240 (on average) are fires. In contrast, 15,500 EMS calls are answered each year, which involve approximately 10,000 ambulance transports to local hospitals.

Improvements to equipment and training methodologies have improved both the overall response time and effectiveness of the force. More than 92% of the Department's personnel are cross-trained to perform both firefighting and emergency medical tasks, greatly increasing the Department's overall effectiveness.

Zoning, Building, and Development

The City has adopted various ordinances that regulate new development and the rehabilitation of existing structures. These include the Zoning Ordinance, Uniform Statewide Building Code, Property Maintenance Code, and Subdivision Ordinance, as well as ordinances for erosion and sediment control and storm water management. Various designated agents and Council-appointed Boards provide administration, enforcement, and appeals of these regulations.

Solid Waste Management

The City disposes of solid waste at the Smith Gap Regional Landfill (established in 1993), which is accessed from a regional transfer station operated by the Roanoke Valley Resource Authority. Solid waste is collected on a weekly basis from its residential customers and on a bi-weekly basis for commercial customers. Recycling is provided citywide and includes composting of brush and yard wastes.

POLICY APPROACH

Public Safety

Studies indicate that the perception of a safe environment is one of the critical factors to a city's success in attracting residents, visitors, and businesses. Roanoke's Police Department is developing an effective and responsive approach to law enforcement that actively involves community policing in developing anti-crime initiatives. The development of satellite offices is an opportunity for officers to work in the community with residents and businesses, as well as other City departments and agencies, to resolve problems and bring resources to the community to address many of the root causes of crime. Roanoke should strengthen career development programs for experienced police officers to stay on active duty patrolling and provide officers with updated equipment based on changes in technology.

The Fire-EMS (Emergency Medical Services) Department is reviewing facility requirements. Further study and planning are needed to investigate the costs and benefits of closing some of the existing facilities and the reassignment of equipment and personnel. Renovated facilities could continue to serve the community as offices or locations for community-based services. Some inter-jurisdictional agreements have been established, but closer coordination should be encouraged between Roanoke and neighboring localities to coordinate fire and emergency services in urbanized areas of the Roanoke Valley.

Zoning and Development Code Administration

Citizens place a strong emphasis on neighborhoods as being an "essential element in Roanoke's quality of life" and as such, the "character and environmental quality" of neighborhoods should be protected. These publicly-identified and important community values focus on the need for better public and private property maintenance through public policy, including stronger controls over unsightly properties and the strengthening of housing maintenance and zoning regulations to ensure improved development quality and community appearance.

As Roanoke positions itself to attract new housing and business, the development process should be streamlined and flexible in order to meet development needs while protecting the public welfare and safety. This process should emphasize excellence in customer service.

Solid Waste Management

Recycling and resource recovery programs are progressive, long-range approaches to managing Roanoke's solid waste and increasing the life of the Smith Gap Landfill. Roanoke should evaluate and implement additional programs that encourage cost-effective methods of recycling. Composting should be considered as a method to increase the life of the landfill.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE



Multi-Service Facilities: Providing needed public services in accessible locations in the community is important to improving customer service and working relationships with neighborhoods and businesses. Community multi-service facilities are proposed as neighborhood-based service centers to provide easy access to City services, community education programs, and other

community not-for-profit agencies, acting as an information and referral outreach service. Specific programs that could be located in multi-service centers include Code Compliance, Recreation Facilitators, Human Service Department intake counselors, Treasurer's Department, Health Department programs, and COPE officers. Other activities may include after-school programs, adult education, computer centers for Internet access, general health clinics, senior citizen services, and employment centers. The facilities should augment existing services by operating as branch offices with the range of services tailored to meet the needs of patrons.

City Services and Delivery

Improved communication and computer technology provide opportunities to re-examine how services are delivered. Satellite work sites at dispersed multi-service facilities could serve as information sites in neighborhoods for businesses and citizens to work with City staff, pay taxes, obtain vehicle decals, or for information and referrals for various programs and services. Code compliance activities should be coordinated among City department and state agencies.

POLICIES

- PS P1. **Community policing.** Roanoke will continue its community policing approach to strengthen close interaction and mutual cooperation between police, residents, businesses, and community groups.
- PS P2. **Public safety services.** Public safety services will maintain a high degree of excellence that meets or exceeds nationally-recognized accreditation standards.
- PS P3. **Fire and EMS services.** All areas of the City will have fire and emergency services that are located to provide the most effective and equitable protection.
- PS P4. **Code administration.** The City will continuously review development and building codes and their administration to ensure appropriate regulations and review processes that encourage quality development and protection of the public’s health, welfare, and safety.
- PS P5. **Recycling.** Recycling and resource recovery will be promoted as a regional solid waste management tool. Roanoke will be known as a city that recycles all recyclable material, where feasible.

ACTIONS

Public Safety

- PS A1. Develop strategies that strengthen community-policing (i.e., COPE) efforts between the police department, residents, businesses, and community groups.
- PS A2. Public safety agencies will maintain or exceed nationally-recognized standards such as the Commission for Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies .
- PS A3. Revise zoning ordinance to integrate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design in the development review process.
- PS A4. Promote citizen participation in public safety programs such as the Citizens Police Academy.
- PS A5. Study and promote regional approaches to providing public safety services that ensure their location and operation provide the most equitable, effective, and efficient service to citizens.

Code Administration, Boards, and Commissions

- PS A6. Revise zoning ordinance regarding nuisance offenses to provide for civil fines and on-site ticketing to increase compliance.

- PS A7. Provide code enforcement information to residents and inspectors in satellite service centers.
- PS A8. Provide ongoing training for boards and commissions related to zoning, property maintenance, and development codes through certified training programs.
- PS A9. Revise zoning and other ordinances to address new development patterns and land uses.
- PS A10. Coordinate regulations, where feasible, with neighboring jurisdictions for consistency.
- PS A11. Increase the use of information technology to improve services.

Solid Waste Management

- PS A12. Develop and expand recycling and educational programs that promote its use.
- PS A13. Consider developing a staffed recycling center with a household hazardous waste component.

City Administration and Service Delivery

- PS A14. Pursue innovative service-delivery strategies that improve customer service. Increase the use of computers and information technology to reduce reliance on paper and provide greater access and sharing of information.
- PS A15. Ensure that all public schools and City-owned facilities are located, designed, and maintained to complement neighboring land uses.
- PS A16. Pursue regional efforts for solid waste management and recycling.
- PS A17. Consider development of community service centers to provide direct services and serve as information and referral centers.
 - Identify community service needs for two pilot locations (north and south) for centers.
 - Develop an administrative plan that provides services and management of the centers.
 - Involve private and non-profit sector organizations such as the Council of Community Services in planning for the facilities.

3.6 PEOPLE: EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, LIBRARIES

BACKGROUND

Public Schools

The Roanoke Public School System consists of 2 high schools, 6 middle schools, 21 elementary schools, and 2 alternative schools (see map 3.6.1). The schools offer a number of special programs, including the Magnet School program, CITY School, the Noel C. Taylor Learning Academy, and the Blue Ridge Technical Academy. Enrollment in 2000 totaled 13,867 students.