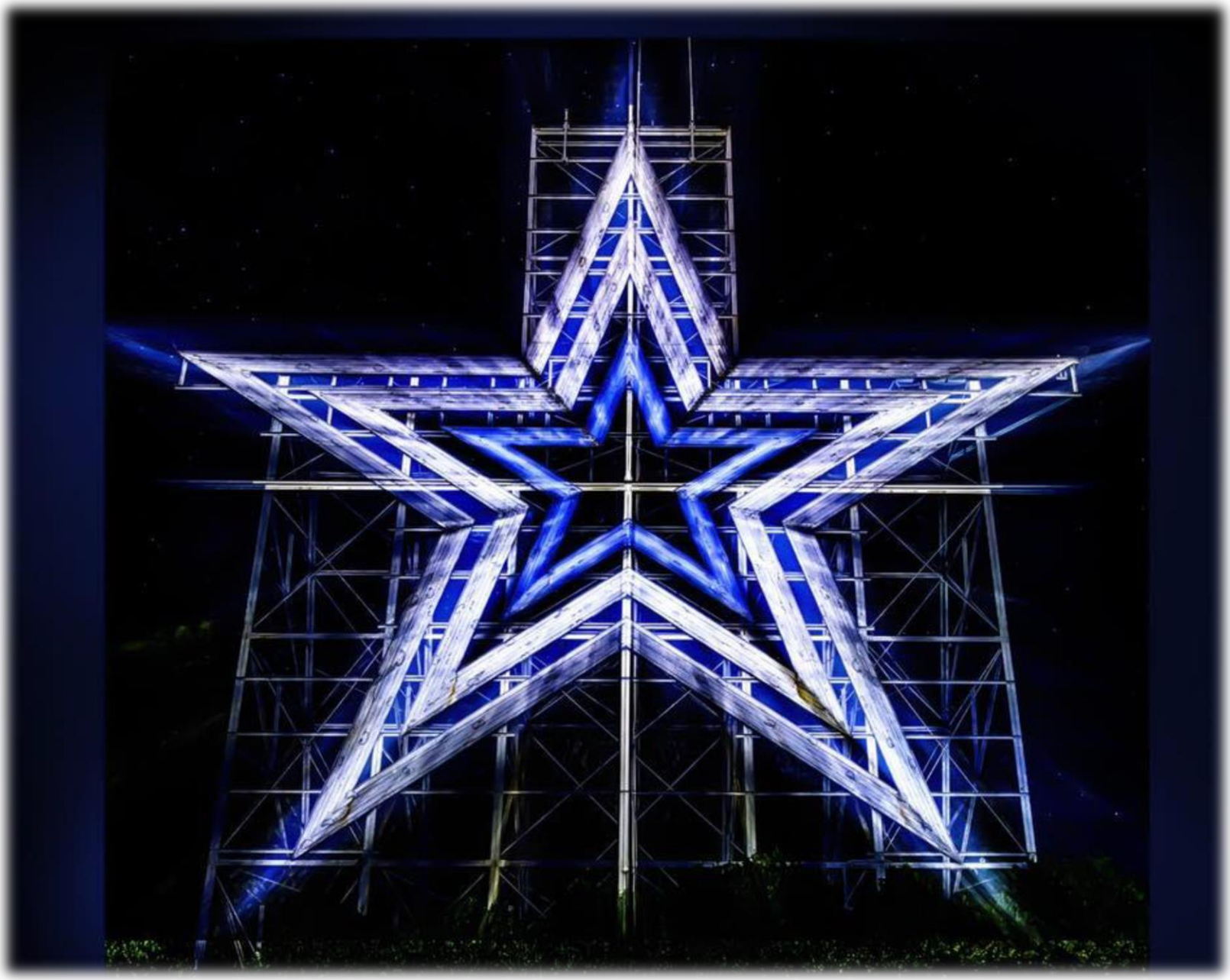

Roanoke, Virginia

Strategic Plan – Star City Strong

2021-2022

Adopted February 16, 2021

Roanoke City Council 2021

Roanoke City Council

Mayor Sherman Lea, Vice-Mayor Trish White-Boyd, Bill Bestpitch, Joe Cobb, Stephanie Moon-Reynolds, Robert Jeffrey, Vivian Sanchez-Jones

Mayor Sherman P. Lea, Sr.

As Mayor of the first city inducted into the All-America City Hall of Fame and a seven time All-America City it is my pleasure to serve alongside a Council and City Administration that recognizes the importance of thinking strategically and acting on priorities. This plan captures the Council's strategic priorities and defines the outcomes we seek to achieve on behalf of the citizens. The Strategic Plan, our City's comprehensive plan, related specific purpose or place-based plans, and our annual budget represent what it is we as a City do and why we do it. It is through these efforts we work to ensure we continue to have a City offering the best opportunity for the most people – in short, that it remains a great day in Roanoke!

I encourage you to read this document to better understand our Vision for the community, how we plan on getting there, and how you can measure our progress.

City Manager Bob Cowell, Jr.

It is my honor to serve the Mayor and Council and on their behalf, the community, to lead an organization that works every day to deliver the services demanded and to offer opportunity to each and every resident and business of Roanoke. This plan provides the Vision established by Council and the steps necessary to realize that Vision. This plan also provides how we as an organization will conduct our business and sets the stage for the annual budget and capital improvements program. With the leadership of the Mayor and Council, we continue to make progress as a City - routinely recognized as one of the best places in America to live, operate a business, secure an education, or visit.

I encourage you to review what follows and join us in keeping Roanoke a wonderful place for all that call it home.

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Purpose of Strategic Planning

A strategic plan should serve as the physical product of *strategic thinking* – that is, delineation of a community vision and the strategies and actions that will be necessary to progress toward that vision. The Council, City Government and community should ideally evaluate every opportunity or challenge that presents itself against this vision and its associated strategies to best determine how to allocate their time, money, and other resources – all of which are limited.

The Strategic Plan is a companion to the City's Comprehensive Plan which represents how the City will physically change over time. Together, the Strategic Plan and the Comprehensive Plan provide a firm foundation upon which to build more detailed neighborhood and special purpose plans, the annual budget, the multi-year capital improvements program, regulations and ordnances, and other associated public policy and implementation documents and initiatives.

> …ideally evaluate every opportunity or challenge that presents itself against this vision and its associated strategies to best determine how to allocate their time, money and other resources…

Ideally one should be able to review this document and gain a firm understanding of where the City intends to go, and generally how it proposes to get there, as well as gain insight into how progress along the way is intended to be measured.

Strategic Planning Process

This document represents an update to the previously adopted Strategic Plan, formally adopted for a two-year period in 2019 – prompted by the need to address recovery from COVID-19 and the intentional advancement of equity and well-being within the communitiy. The City has engaged in strategic thinking for many years. Much of what is included in this plan has for a number of years, been included in the annual budget and other policy documents.

The process used in the development of this plan was an enhancement to that used in crafting the previous version. This update was built upon the framework of:

- Listen
- Learn
- Discuss
- Present
- Act

The first step in this process was *listening* to the community regarding the City's seven priorities, the strategies used to progress on those priorities and the outcomes that are sought. This was achieved through virtual conversations involving focus groups led by Council with attendees around each of the seven priorities. These focus groups complemented the earlier COVID-19 recovery virtual conversations led by Council. The virtual conversations were accompanied by key stakeholder interviews. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in each of the priority areas regarding the priorities and the strategies currently used to advance on the priorities. Finally, these were accompanied by a dedicated phone line and email, enabling any Roanoke resident or business owner to leave a brief message about the priorities and strategies.

The second step was *learning* from the community and the staff about each of the seven priorities, the strategies used to progress on those priorities and the outcomes that have been achieved. This occurred during the most recent Council Strategic Plan retreat. This step included presentation of information, studies, briefings, etc. by senior City staff and other content experts.

The third step in this process was the Council *discussing* what they heard and learned regarding each of the seven priorities, the strategies used to progress on the priorities and the outcomes that have been achieved and/or are sought. This was done at the most recent Council Strategic Plan retreat.

The fourth step proposed in this process was *presenting* the draft strategic plan and items that warrant further development. For example, it was determined through the first three steps, that a change in strategy related to Youth Sports was warranted and thus a working group was established that is addressing this initiative directly, working with various parties necessary to further the development of a revised strategy. As the work on these types of revisions progresses they will be incorporated into further discussions with Council and where appropriate into the development of annual budgets.

The final step proposed in this process is *acting* upon any revisions in priorities and strategies. Some of this action may come about as a result of a working group's efforts along the way, while the majority will come about via formal adoption of a revised Strategic Plan and the proposal and adoption of the FY22 budget. Much of the groundwork for this step was set at the most recent Council Budget Planning Retreat held prior to the kick-off of the annual budget process and will be concluded upon adoption of the FY22 and FY23 budgets.

This process has been designed to be responsive to the discussion held by Council in the adoption of the FY21 budget; timely and meaningful - bridging the political call for action and the necessary bureaucratic work of devising legislation and formulating budgets. This intentional process is necessary both to better the chances that quality and sustainable strategies are the result and also in response to the continued economic uncertainty associated with COVID-19. The Council will review the Strategic Plan on an annual basis, making adjustments as appropriate, following a process similar to that used in the creation of previous plans. Additionally, City Management will provide the Council with semi-annual progress reports on the Plan and a performance measure report annually.

Community Profile

The City of Roanoke is a mid-size independent city with a population of approximately 100,000 located within a region with a population of approximately 350,000. The Roanoke region is located within the south-western portion of the Commonwealth of Virginia with the City of Roanoke as the largest city west of the State Capitol of Richmond. Roanoke serves as the region's education, medical, shopping, and cultural hub anchoring Virginia's Blue Ridge. Built upon success of the growth in the rail industry, Roanoke grew very rapidly in the 19th and early 20th centuries. After a period of economic challenges Roanoke is experiencing a rennaisance built upon the strengths of medical research and care, technology, and advanced manufacturing. Recent economic growth, a vibrant downtown, unparalleled outdoor amenities and numeorus arts and cultural offerings have led Roanoke to national recognition.

Population Estimate (2019) – 99,143

Median Age – 38 with 7% under 5 years of age and 16% age 65 and older

Race – 62% of the current population is White alone, 29% Black or African descent alone, and 6.3% Hispanic or Latino

Households and Income – There are 41,740 households in Roanoke with 47,011 housing units with a median value of $135,100. 52% of the homes in Roanoke are owner-occupied. 2019 Median income is $44,230with 21% of the population living in poverty. 86% of the adults in Roanoke are high school graduates or higher

Industry & Business - there are 3,132 business establsihments in Roanoke employing 68,842 with a total annual payroll of $3 billion. Health care and social assistance is the lagest employment sector in Roanoke accounting for more than 12,000 jobs. There are currently more than 100,000 students pursuing degrees at 25 colleges and universities located wihtin the Roanoke region

Roanoke Community Vision

The City of Roanoke is a safe, caring and economically vibrant community in which all have equitable opportunities to live, learn, work, play and prosper

A vibrant urban center with strong neighborhoods set amongst the spectacular beauty of Virginia's Blue Ridge

Strategic Areas of Importance

This vision is pursued by focusing on seven areas of strategic importance

Education

Community Safety

Human Services

Infrastructure

Good Government

Livability

Economy

The City Council expects that as a City we will act on each of the strategic priorities grounded in the following:

Equity – All, regardless of location, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, or ability will have access to equal opportunity for successful outcomes

Community Engagement & Inclusion – Intentional involvement of citizenry in the direction and actions of their government

Well-Being – Physical and social environment that promotes healthy outcomes for all residents regardless of their location

Creativity – innovation in programming and addressing opportunities and confronting challenges

Education

Foster an environment for lifelong learning which encompasses cradle to career and beyond through shared services and community involvement

Path to Results

We will join our community in ensuring access to educational opportunities through the course of each individual's life. We seek to help develop successful students and productive and educated adults, prepared to succeed to full extent of their abilities.

Early Learning and School Readiness – we will invest time, money and resources in preparing children to read proficiently by the end of the third grade.

Preparation for Post High-School Success – we will work with the community to identify and support programs and initiatives that equip students to succeed beyond high school, whether their path leads them to college, a trade or vocation, or community service.

Support of K-12 Educational Program – we will invest time, money, and resources in ensuring Roanoke City Public Schools are able to provide the facilities, curriculum, and teachers, necessary to deliver quality educational programs.

Adult Learning – we will invest time, money, and resources in opportunities for adults to continue to learn to enhance skills, broaden their general knowledge or further their creativity.

Targeted Actions

Continue support of the Virtual Learning Centers and the restoration of RCPS operations

Libraries reopening and restoration of services

Enhanced youth career exploration and skills development

Indicators

We will determine success by:

Improving PALS Scores;

Securing and Maintaining Accreditation for all public schools;

Improving Graduation Rates;

Improving Student Learning Outcomes;

Increased Adult Learning Opportunities;

Workforce Participation Rate,

Percentage of residents with post-High-School Education/Certification.

Community Safety

Foster a community where citizens feel safe and they and their property are safe in their homes, businesses and neighborhoods

Path to Results

We will ensure that our community comes together to plan for and to the extent practical, prevent harm from man-made and natural risks. We will take steps to ensure our homes, businesses, public places, streets, and neighborhoods are safe and desirable places to live, work and play. Together we will ensure that when a response is necessary it is done in as efficient, fair, and appropriate manner as practical.

Prevention – We will invest the time, money and resources necessary to ensure that to the extent practical harm to property or persons is prevented through the use of programs, education, and code and law enforcement and addressing underlying causes including poverty, trauma, and inequity.

Responsiveness – We will maintain the equipment and personnel necessary to meet or exceed established national standards related to response time for public safety and that our resources and services will be delivered in an equitable and just manner.

Communication & Engagement – We will invest the time, money and resources necessary to ensure the ability to reliably communicate to and engage with the general public, between staff locally and throughout the region during routine business operations and times of emergency response.

Quality of Standards and Laws – We will ensure that our codes, practices and policies are consistent with recognized best practices and are legally sound

Targeted Actions

Public Safety Reforms – MARCUS Alert, Use of Force Policies, etc.

Continued response to gun violence

Enhanced response to substance use disorder

Indicators

We will determine success by:

Accreditation by recognized national or regional organizations will be secured and maintained by departments/divisions engaged in delivery of public safety services;

ISO ratings of the highest level will be secured and maintained by the departments/divisions engaged in delivery of public safety services;

Public Safety services will consistently be evaluated as "good" or better by customer surveys conducted by the City on a periodic basis,

Crime statistics will be actively monitored and reported and demonstrable improvements in all areas over time will be secured.

Human Services

Foster a caring community that uses an equitable, regional and collaborative approach to encourage preventative measures, intervention services, and self-sufficiency while providing a social safety net for citizens

Path to Results

We will unite public and private institutions as a caring and compassionate community assisting individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency and live healthy lives. We maintain a commitment of focusing on prevention and the provision of information and where necessary and when appropriate in the delivery of compassionate services grounded in fairness, equity, and accountability

Prevention – We will invest the time, money and resources necessary to prevent poverty, promote self-sufficiency, promote positive youth development, and promote healthy and safe neighborhoods.

Intervention – When appropriate and necessary we will intervene in situations through early identification of need, using a holistic approach that involves the family, support the deinstitutionalization of individuals – integrating citizens back into society.

Caring Community – Through direct involvement with those impacted we will foster positive relationships and empower them to succeed to the best of their abilities and circumstances.

Accessibility to Services – We will ensure those who live in our community are aware of the resources available to them and will ensure our services are delivered in an efficient and effective manner.

Targeted Actions

Support of COVID recovery for individuals, households, and non-profit social service providers

Enhanced focus on addressing social determinants associated with disparities in health outcomes

Expanded mental health services

Indicators

We will determine success by:

Demonstrated compliance with all applicable laws and regulations that govern the delivery of health and human services;

Human services will consistently be evaluated as “good” or better by customer surveys conducted by the City on a periodic basis,

Improved demographic and socio-economic trends such as rates of poverty, number of homeless, service recipients, deaths due to overdose, etc.

Infrastructure

Maintain and build quality infrastructure that supports healthy residential neighborhoods, successful commercial areas, and accessible public facilities and amenities

Path to Results

We will work to ensure the facilities, equipment, materials, and services that are necessary to meet the communication, mobility, life-safety, recreation, and basic needs of our individuals, families, businesses, and visitors are provided and maintained in a manner that contributes positively to safety, livability, and economic advancement

Environment – We will work locally and regionally to ensure the quality and sustainability of our natural resources and features with a particular emphasis on clean air and clean water.

Buildings, Parks and Greenways – We will work locally and regionally to deliver buildings, parks and greenways that are functional, accessible, and sustainable, and that can be operated in an efficient manner.

Transportation – We will ensure our transportation network enables a full-range of mobility options that are delivered, maintained and operated in an efficient manner.

Equipment and Vehicles – We will ensure that the equipment and vehicles we use to deliver our services are safe and well-maintained and procured and operated in an efficient manner.

Technology – We will ensure that the technology we use to deliver services and to communicate to and engage with our community is functional and reliable, and is procured and operated in an efficient manner supporting businesses processes and community needs.

Targeted Actions

Design and community engagement in preparation for Wasena/Main Street Bridge replacement

Increased investment in street and sidewalk maintenance

Indicators

We will determine success by:

Demonstrated compliance with all applicable laws and regulations that govern infrastructure assets and natural features;

Infrastructure-related items/services will consistently be evaluated as "good" or better by customer surveys conducted by the City on a periodic basis,

Accreditation by recognized national or regional organizations will be secured and maintained by departments/divisions engaged in delivery of infrastructure services,

Good Government

Provide exceptional and competitive government services that are collaborative, transparent, responsive, and innovative

Path to Results

We will, on behalf of our citizens, provide top-quality services and programs that are cost-competitive and responsive, efficient, collaborative, and transparent. We will build a culture around honesty, respect, responsibility, teamwork, diversity and inclusion that address the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century

Effective Leadership – Through collaborative and visionary leadership we will set clear direction and high expectations for Roanoke based upon Council priorities. We will emphasize strategic vision, responsiveness, results, accountability, and adherence to clear values in the delivery of our services.

High-Performing Employees – Our employees understand how their actions contribute to the City's vision and strategies and are committed emotionally and intellectually, and motivated to provide the best service they are able. Our organization provides the clear direction, resources, and opportunities for our employees to excel in what they do.

Efficient and Effective Operations – We acknowledge we are stewards of the public's resources and therefore seek to deliver community services in a cost-competitive manner requiring the least amount of time and effort necessary. We will seek partnerships, relentlessly and continuously

pursue service improvements and efficiencies, and strive to implement best practices on behalf of our community.

Responsible Financial Management – We will ensure sound management of revenues, expenditures, assets, in a strategic, coordinated and deliberate manner aligned with generally accepted and best practices, Council priorities, and the needs of the community.

Valued, Engaged & Informed Community – We believe a successful City values an active and engaged citizenry in the conduct of its government. We will ensure community members are informed and offered opportunities for engagement as policies and actions are formulated and services are delivered.

Targeted Actions

Enhanced Employee Compensation

Restoration of public services impacted by COVID-19

Adapt Budgeting for Outcomes to Budgeting for Equitable and Empowering Outcomes

Advance efforts of Equity and Empowerment Advisory Board

We will determine success by:

Demonstrated compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies that govern financial management;

Overall City governance will consistently be evaluated as "good" or better by customer surveys conducted by the City on a periodic basis;

Recognition by national or regional organizations secured and maintained for application of innovative approaches and best practices;

Improved employee satisfaction and retention/advancement,

Increased utilization of engagement opportunities by residents and businesses.

Livability

Enhance Roanoke's exceptional vitality as an attractive, diverse, culturally inclusive, vibrant and active city in which to live, learn, work and play

Path to Results

We will collaborate with others in our region to ensure Roanoke retains a quality social, built and natural environment making it a vibrant place to live, learn, work, play and visit. We will ensure Roanoke remains a desirable place to invest in, whether as a homeowner, business owner, client, or tourist

Attractive Community – Together with the community, we will work to foster pride in home and business ownership working to ensure our neighborhoods, business corridors, and districts remain safe, clean, diverse, and attractive, and encourage continued pride and investment.

Accessible and Inclusive Community - We will ensure that public transportation, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian ways are convenient and safe, and provide mobility options and ease of connection between our neighborhoods, with our public spaces and throughout the region.

Quality Amenities – We will collaborate with others to provide activities, facilities, and exhibits that encourage active living and foster cultural awareness. We will ensure the protection of unique community assets and natural resources found within our City.

Targeted Actions

Implementation of Comprehensive Plan

Implementation of Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Advancement on various initiatives – Compassionate City, Human Rights Diversity Index, Age-Friendly Community, Youth Services, etc.

Indicators

We will determine success by:

City's desirability as a place to live, operate a business, or visit will consistently be evaluated as "good" or better by customer surveys conducted by the City on a periodic basis;

Recognition by national or regional organizations, secured and maintained for application of innovative approaches and best practices,

Increases in population, number of visitors, home ownership, home value, and participation in events.

Economy

Cultivate a thriving business environment and innovative workforce opportunities to ensure the prosperity of our community, recognizing our role in both the regional and global economies

Path to Results

We will collaborate with others in the region and State to ensure the continued economic vitality of Roanoke and its place as the region's center of economic activity. We will emphasize the development of individual's skills and abilities, development of unique economic assets, the promotion of economic assets that afford us a competitive advantage and the development of business opportunities

Workforce Development– Together with others in the community, we will ensure our workforce is prepared to productively contribute to the local economy and better the lives of themselves and their families. We will seek to attract and retain talent, expand employment opportunities, raise awareness of job and business opportunities, and attract higher-wage opportunities to Roanoke.

Asset Development – Together with others in the community, we will build upon existing natural, cultural, structural, and leadership strengths creating an economic environment that capitalizes upon our uniqueness and creates opportunity for the generation of wealth –personal, business, and community.

Business Development – We will collaborate with others throughout the region to make Roanoke as attractive as possible for investment by individuals and business by ensuring regulatory and

business processes are responsive, regional partnerships are fully embraced, strategic use of business incentives, and maintenance of a responsible tax structure. We will continue to ensure Roanoke remains a vibrant and attractive portion of Virginia's Blue Ridge for visitors and guests.

Asset Promotion –We will collaborate with others throughout the region to curate and nurture an authentic and representative brand for Roanoke and the region, and will ensure access to trusted and reliable information about the benefits of living, visiting, and doing business in Roanoke.

Economic Inclusion – We will remove barriers and pursue opportunities to ensure every individual, family and business in our community have equitable opportunities for economic success.

Targeted Actions

Support COVID-related economic recovery

Advance on Target Neighborhood initiatives

Advance on Gainsboro: A New Way Forward initiatives

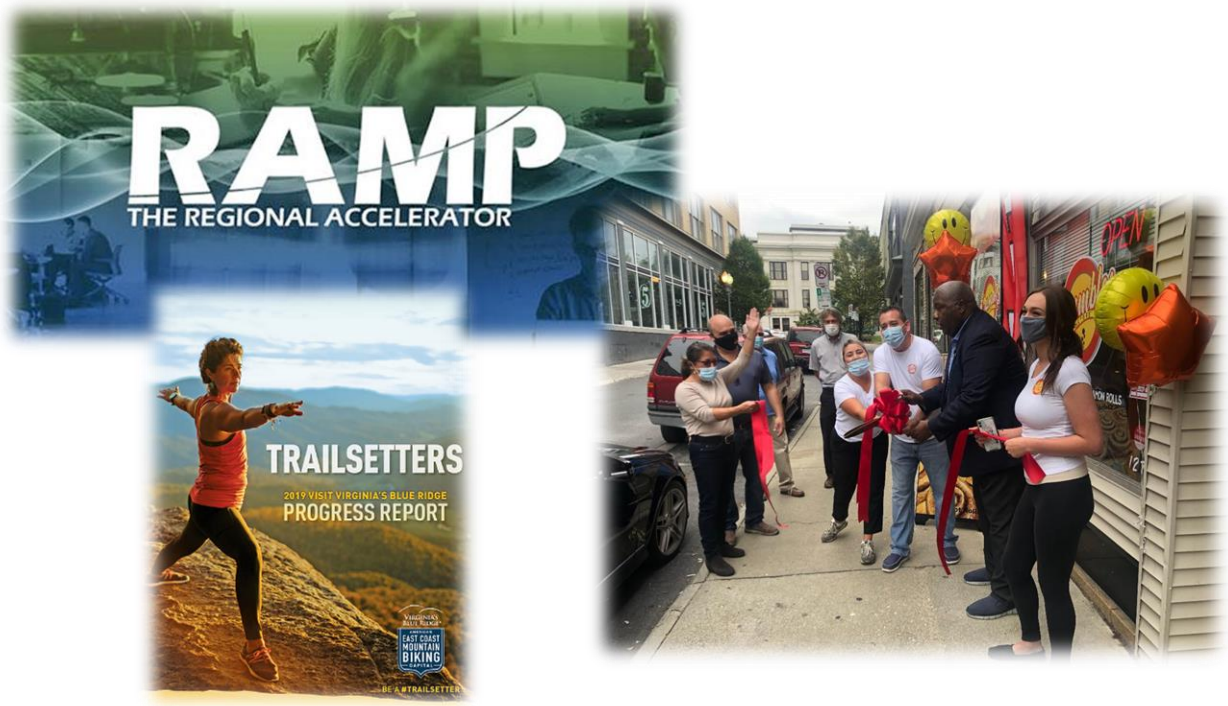
Advance on economic inclusion initiatives

Enhance regional outdoor assets

Indicators

We will determine success by:

Increases in tax revenue, number of jobs, occupancy rates, number of visitors, and decreases in poverty and unemployment rates.



Organizational Response

The City Government will respond to each of the priorities, take action and deliver services aligned with the following core values:

Integrity and Honesty
Diversity and Inclusion
Respect for Others
Listening and Communication
Continuous Improvement
Accountability

Organizational Framework

Pursue long-term high-impact regional change – make the Roanoke region the premier place to locate, stay and visit

Build strength from within – enable the success of residents, families, and businesses regardless of their physical location within the City

Strategies

Prioritize – time, money, and attention

Take Strategic Action – everything should progress toward objectives

Seek and Enhance Collaborative Partnerships – we cannot and should not do this alone

Innovate – new ideas, new approaches, new partners

Empower Organization – free up talent, time, money, and resources

As an organization, we will do this within a culture where all employees are leaders oriented toward results and positive outcomes, where organization and community assets meet or exceed recognized standards and where the services provided are recognized as "best in class".

As departments, we take action and deliver our services guided by our Departmental Service Plans and secure the necessary resources by budgeting for the intended outcomes.

As individuals, we perform in accordance with our personal development and operational goals established annually.

ROANOKE