



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 3, 2019.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Roanoke County

Program Title: Public Schools Planning Workshops

Program Category: Community and Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Title: Planner II

Department: Community Development

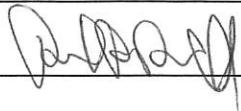
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Dan O'Donnell

Title: County Administrator

Signature: 



Public Schools Planning Workshops: Roanoke County, Virginia

2019 VACO Achievement Awards Application



JUNE 3, 2019

ROANOKE COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
5204 Bernard Drive, Roanoke VA 24018



Public Schools Planning Workshops



Executive Summary and Brief Overview

The Roanoke County Public Schools Planning Workshops sought to address two main problems. First, long-range planning efforts in the past have largely gleaned input from residents over the age of fifty, leaving planners to guess the preferences of younger generations. Secondly, students are rarely exposed to the planning profession and are not aware that it is a career option when they are making college plans. The program is a collaboration between Roanoke County, the City of Roanoke and Roanoke County Public Schools.

In November 2017, a team of planners from Roanoke County and the City of Roanoke met with the Roanoke County Student Advisory Council. Our objective was to involve them in the planning process, solicit their input for the Oak Grove Center Plan, and get their ideas about involving younger generations in community planning. Students participated in several interactive planning exercises. Feedback from the Student Advisory Council informed four subsequent workshops that were held at the elementary, middle and high schools nearest to Oak Grove. Educators participated in envisioning future development, transportation and public amenities in several small group mapping exercises. Afterwards, teachers created ways to use the content for project-based learning assignments and involved students in the Oak Grove planning process.

The Public Schools Planning Workshops program successfully met the goal of soliciting a large amount of public input from residents under age fifty while simultaneously exposing them to the planning profession. The program is straightforward and mobile enough to be used repeatedly throughout the area's school systems. The example can also easily be adapted to other localities. Furthermore, the inter-jurisdictional collaboration has opened the door for future regional cooperation and planning efforts.

Awards Application

State the problem, challenge or situation

The Roanoke County Public Schools Planning Workshops sought to address two main problems. First, long-range planning efforts have historically attracted public input from residents over the age of fifty, leaving planners to guess the preferences of younger generations. It is important to solicit and receive input from younger generations since the plans will largely be implemented during their lifetime. This is particularly true for the long-range planning for economic development that Roanoke County is currently undertaking for various countywide activity centers. Secondly, students are rarely exposed to the planning profession and are not aware that it is a career option when they are making college plans. The Public Schools Planning Workshops program was designed to address both of these problems.



State how the program fulfilled the awards criteria

The Public Schools Planning Workshops proved to be an innovative solution to the stated problems. Rather than hosting typical off-site meetings and trying to target younger generations with advertising, we designed a program that met the students and teachers where they already were. Highly interactive planning workshops engaged students and teachers in planning exercises while providing planners with valuable public input for the Oak Grove Center



Public Schools Planning Workshops



Plan. Additionally, teachers designed classroom projects using the workshop content. These workshops can be reproduced with schools near other activity centers when we undertake plans for those areas.

The program promotes intergovernmental cooperation amongst local entities. The Oak Grove area is located on both sides of the Roanoke County and the City of Roanoke jurisdictional border. Therefore, we engaged the City planning staff as well as the Roanoke County Public Schools staff and administration. All three government entities were involved in the planning and execution of the workshops; this type of collaborative planning is unprecedented in the Roanoke Valley. The program provides a model that other local governments can tailor to their local and/or regional needs and use for long-range planning in their own communities.

Tell how the program was carried out

After securing a partnership with Roanoke City planners for the Oak Grove Center planning process, Roanoke County planners reached out to Roanoke County Public Schools. On November 1, 2017, a team of planners from Roanoke County and the City of Roanoke met with the Roanoke County Student Advisory Council which is made up of middle and high school student advocates representing each County middle and high school. Our objective was to involve them in the planning process, solicit their input to be incorporated in the Oak Grove Center Plan, and get their ideas about involving younger generations in community planning.

After introductions, the group enjoyed taking a Roanoke County trivia quiz and completing an online Visual Preference Survey on Kahoot.it. The results of these online exercises were designed to inform a subsequent brainstorming exercise. Students collaborated in small groups to mark up large maps of the Oak Grove area with their ideas for: new bicycle

and pedestrian infrastructure and connectivity; infill and redevelopment of commercial spaces to include more retail, outdoor and indoor public spaces, as well as locations for parks, recreation and sports facilities; and infill multi-family housing. A planning staff presentation accompanied by a story map (here: <https://arcg.is/0PKafr>) explained the realities that inform planning for Oak Grove. One strong suggestion from the Student Advisory Council was to take planning to students and teachers rather than expect them to attend traditional public meetings. This feedback from the Student Advisory Council guided four subsequent workshops that were held at the elementary, middle and high schools nearest to Oak Grove.



A meeting was held with education leaders to discuss how the workshops would fulfill curriculum needs for the schools while addressing our initial goals of obtaining input and providing an interactive demonstration of the planning profession. School administrators and educators embraced the fact that the workshops provided valuable curriculum for project-based learning. Teachers created ways to use the content for project assignments and to involve students in the Oak Grove planning process. Ultimately, a group of high school students created a survey for elementary, middle and high school students to establish their preferences for Oak Grove Park. Results of the survey were then incorporated into a redevelopment scenario by the high school Computer Aided Design (CAD) and technical drawing class. This proposal was

presented by the teachers at one of the Oak Grove community meetings (see Supplemental Materials).

Planning workshops were held in January and February, 2018, with Oak Grove Elementary Faculty, Hidden Valley Leadership Team educators, and faculty from Hidden Valley High and Middle Schools. Educators were asked to redesign the Oak Grove area based on businesses and public amenities that would enhance daily life. Working in small groups they mapped their ideas for new restaurants, shops and entertainment; infill or redevelopment of commercial spaces; bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure; walkable, connected areas; and outdoor and indoor public spaces (including parks and sports facilities). Educators also voted on their preferences of architectural styles, multi-modal design, public spaces, mixed-use development, and more in a Visual Preference Survey. Planning staff explained some of the complicating factors involved in planning Oak Grove, including the city/county jurisdictional boundaries and zoning differences, market conditions, vacant or underutilized properties, and community engagement.



Reports on these workshops have been presented multiple times during City and County Planning Commission meetings and during public hearings of Roanoke City Council and



Public Schools Planning Workshops



Roanoke County Board of Supervisors. Additionally, a summary of the workshops was presented at the Hidden Valley High School Titan 21 Expo and at a Roanoke County School Board meeting. The Supplemental Materials include a display that was created for the Oak Grove Design Reveal community meetings. Articles were also published on the Roanoke County “Community Developments” weblog and the program was highlighted on Roanoke Valley Television (RVTV):

<https://www.roanokecountyva.gov/Blog.aspx?IID=64#item> (see Appendix A)

<https://www.roanokecountyva.gov/Blog.aspx?IID=69#item> (see Appendix B)

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10157289618553747>

How the program was financed and staffed

The Public Schools Planning Workshops were financed from existing resources within the departments’ operating budget. No extra financing was needed. Roanoke County planning staff created the maps, presentations and surveys, and provided materials from our inventory. Five Roanoke County planning staff members and two City of Roanoke staff members facilitated the workshops. No extra staffing was needed.

The program's results



The program was successful at eliciting input from residents under age fifty and in sparking interest in the planning profession. Within the Student Advisory Council there was general consensus that a variety of private establishments would improve the livability of the Oak Grove community. These include more variety of restaurants and coffee shops, more retail including niche shops and chain stores, grocery stores, a sports complex including hockey, and a garden center, all housed in modernized developments accessible on foot. Additionally, they agreed that Oak Grove would be greatly improved by adding public infrastructure and amenities.

Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity throughout residential and commercial areas was a high priority for younger participants. The students suggested installing a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Route 419, signalized pedestrian crossings at intersections along Route 419, and an off-road multi-use path paralleling Route 419 connecting to multi-use trails leading to residential and commercial areas. Other desired public amenities included plazas, improved parks, and mass transit. Higher density residential developments near the commercial areas

were also discussed. Students envisioned Oak Grove becoming an attractive village for residents to enjoy.

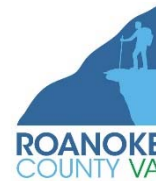


Educators strongly supported generous additions of outdoor public spaces. They wanted to see expanded parks with features built for kids that were handicap-accessible. Multi-use paths connecting Hidden Valley Middle School, Keagy Village, Oak Grove Elementary, Oak Grove Park, and commercial zones along Route 419 were a high priority. They desired pedestrian bridges and crosswalks over and across Route 419 and sidewalks in neighborhoods as alternatives to driving.

There was strong support for a variety of new businesses and housing to boost livability in the Oak Grove area. While the educator's suggestions included much of the same amenities desired by the Student Advisory Council, they also wanted to see more adult-oriented or child-friendly businesses with accessible infrastructure. This included a variety of restaurants, coffee shops, bistros, breweries and entertainment, high quality apartments, retail including niche shops and chain stores, a farmer's market and grocery store, and a sports complex, all arranged in modern, walkable developments.



Public Schools Planning Workshops



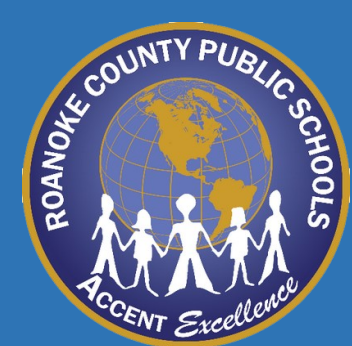
Participants were shown staff-generated design ideas for redevelopment of the area.

“Before” photos of existing conditions and “after” concepts for redevelopment sparked awareness of future possibilities and generated excitement about potential changes.

Lastly, educators made many recommendations for involving youth and young adults in community planning efforts.

Conclusion

The Public Schools Planning Workshops program was successful in meeting the goals originally set by Roanoke County planning staff. The program provided a large amount of public input from residents under age fifty while simultaneously exposing them to the planning profession. The program is straightforward and mobile enough to be used repeatedly throughout the area’s school systems. The example can also easily be used by other localities. Furthermore, the inter-jurisdictional collaboration has opened the door for future regional cooperation and planning efforts.



ROANOKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS OUTREACH



Planners from Roanoke County and City of Roanoke conducted several planning exercises with Roanoke County Public School students and teachers, targeting the Oak Grove study area. Participants brainstormed ideas for the future, mapped potential recreation, commercial, educational and public spaces, and considered transportation problems and solutions. We also presented a summary of these exercises at the Titan 21 Expo and at a Roanoke County School Board meeting.

Mapping Exercises

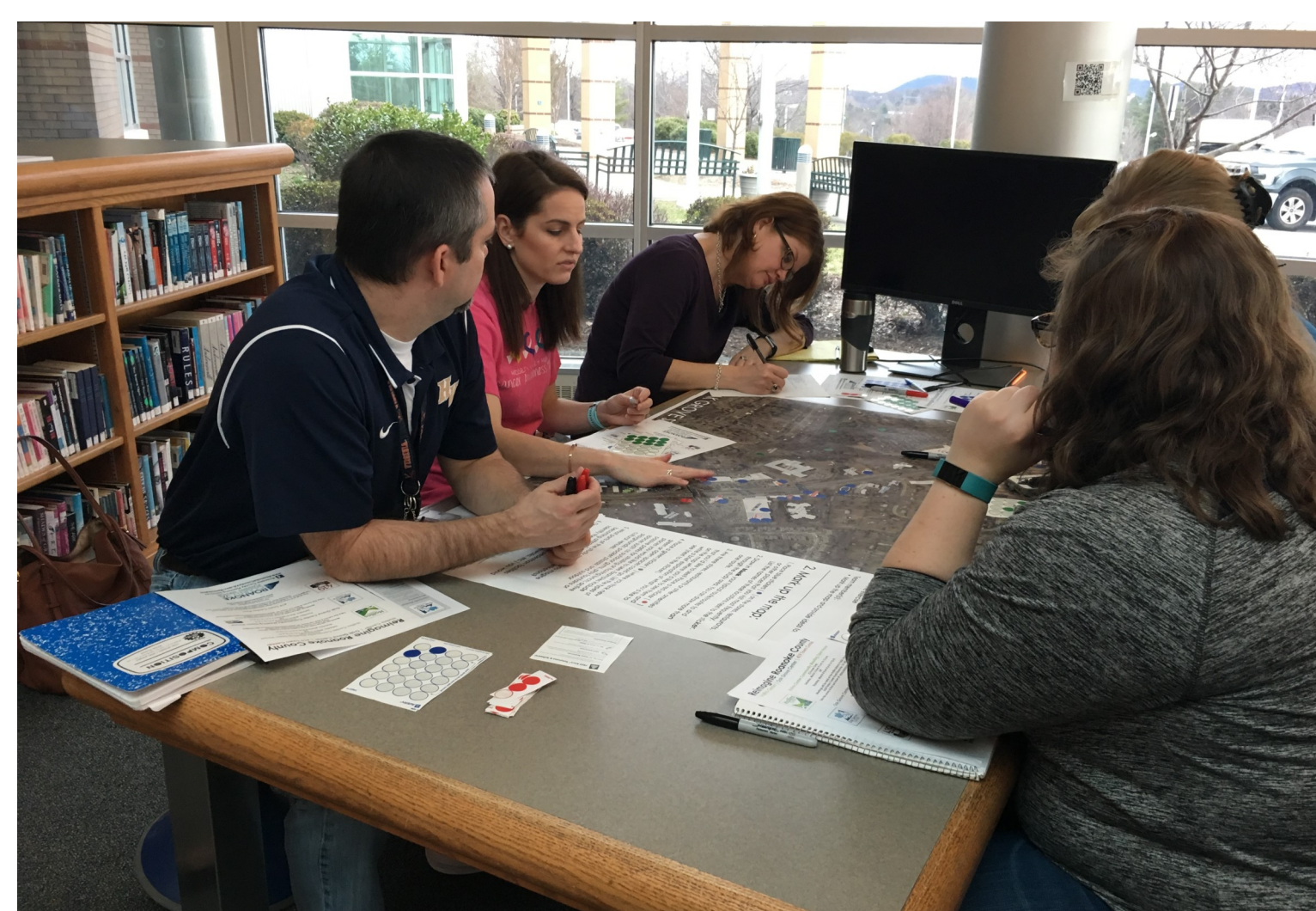


Student Advisory Council
November 1, 2017



Oak Grove Elementary Faculty
January 24, 2018

Brainstorming Future Scenarios and Possibilities, Reporting Group Findings



Hidden Valley High Faculty
February 16, 2018



Hidden Valley Middle Faculty
February 28, 2018

Learning About Planning and Reporting Results



Titan 21 Expo
April 18, 2018



Roanoke County School Board
March 22, 2018

Summary of Input



- More grocery and restaurant options
- More recreation areas and parks connected by trails; improve Oak Grove Park
- Safe walkability along and across Route 419
- Pedestrian/bicycle connections throughout Oak Grove Center
- Create gathering spaces with public art and landscaping
- Construct mixed use buildings with residential uses
- Facilitate safer transportation
- Redevelop strip malls and improve commercial facades
- Keagy Village anchor store

HVHS students conducted a survey amongst elementary, middle and high school students about potential renovations to Oak Grove Park. Winning features included a dog park, trails, tennis courts, pond, play structures and fitness area.



Community Developments

Collaborating on Future Plans with the Student Advisory Council

Posted on November 13, 2017 at 4:56 PM by Bailey Howard-DuBois



In the first of many steps to engage youth in planning efforts, Roanoke County Planners collaborated with a City of Roanoke Planner to show Roanoke County Student Advisory Council (SAC) members how they can influence the future of their community. SAC is a student group composed of 8th-12th graders from every County school who serve the School Board by advocating for student issues. They provide communication between the students, the administration and the community.

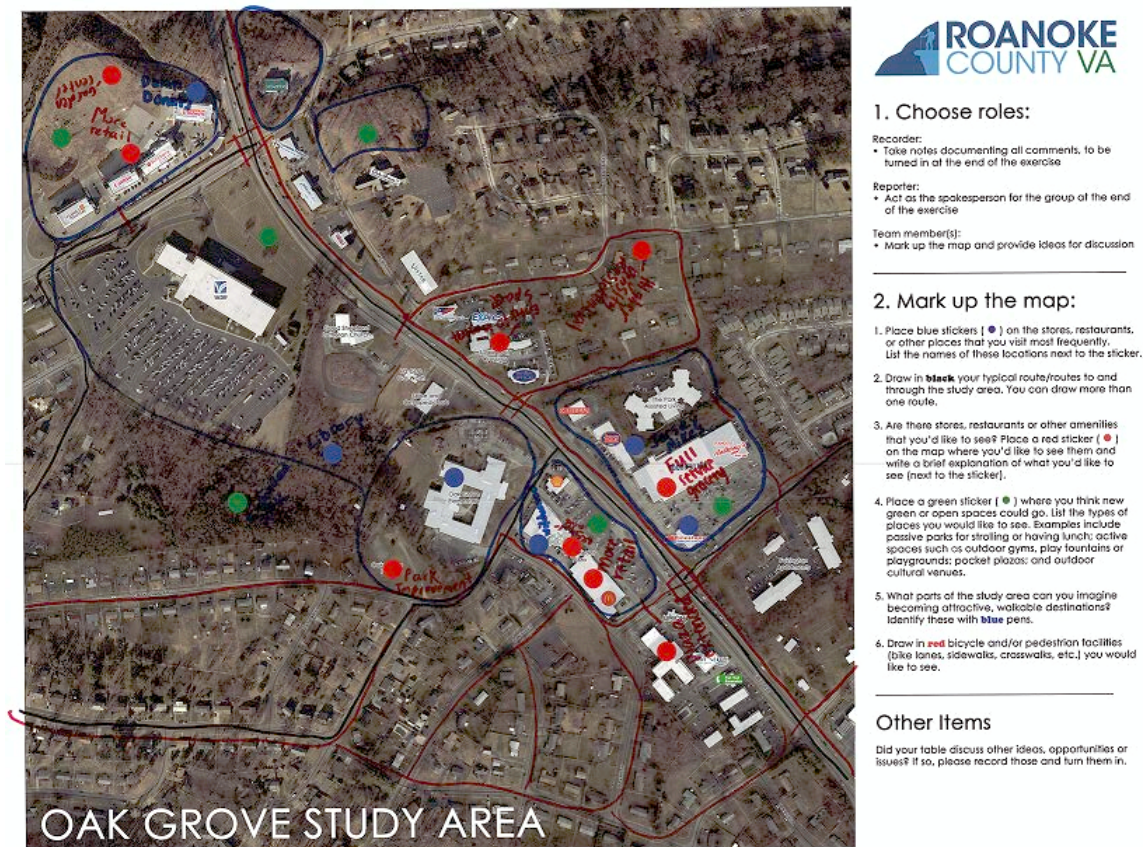
Students were asked to redesign the Oak Grove area based on the shops and amenities they'd like to see there. They worked in small groups to mark up maps with their ideas for new restaurants, shops and entertainment; infill or redevelopment of commercial and residential spaces; bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure; walkable, connected areas; and outdoor and indoor public spaces (including parks and sports facilities). Students also voted on a Visual Preference Survey on Kahoot.it to indicate their favorite styles of architecture, multi-modal design, public space, mixed use development and more.

Planning staff then explained some of the complicating realities of planning for Oak Grove. This included discussion of jurisdictional boundaries and different zoning, market conditions, vacant or underutilized properties and community engagement.

Student Suggestions

There was general consensus that a variety of new businesses could improve the livability of the Oak Grove community. These included restaurants and coffee shops, much more retail including niche shops and chain stores, grocery stores, a sports complex including hockey, and a garden center, all housed in modernized developments accessible by foot.

Appendix A



[See full-size images](#) of the map exercise.

The groups agreed that Oak Grove would also be improved by adding public infrastructure and amenities. Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity throughout residential and commercial areas was a high priority. The students suggested installing a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Route 419, signalized pedestrian crossings at intersections along Route 419, and an off-road multi-use path paralleling Route 419 and connecting to multi-use trails leading to residential and commercial areas. Other desirable public amenities included plazas, improved parks, and mass transit. Higher density residential developments near the commercial areas were also discussed.

To wrap up, students were shown staff-generated design ideas for redevelopment of the area. These possibilities of “before” photos and “after” concepts for redevelopment helped them understand what could be possible and generated excitement about potential changes.

About 70 percent of the students submitted feedback after the exercise, and their response was overwhelmingly positive. Students recommended that staff bring future planning activities to the schools directly in order to involve many more of their peers in community planning.

Community Developments

Collaborating on Future Plans with Oak Grove Elementary Faculty

Posted on January 31, 2018 at 2:16 PM by Bailey Howard-DuBois



As part of the new Reimagine Oak Grove planning study, staff engaged Oak Grove Elementary School faculty on January 24, 2018 in a community visioning exercise to help demonstrate how public input can influence future development. Roanoke County and City of Roanoke Planning staff worked through several planning exercises with faculty in a real-world example of project-based learning. This was the second exercise held through a growing partnership with Roanoke County Public Schools.

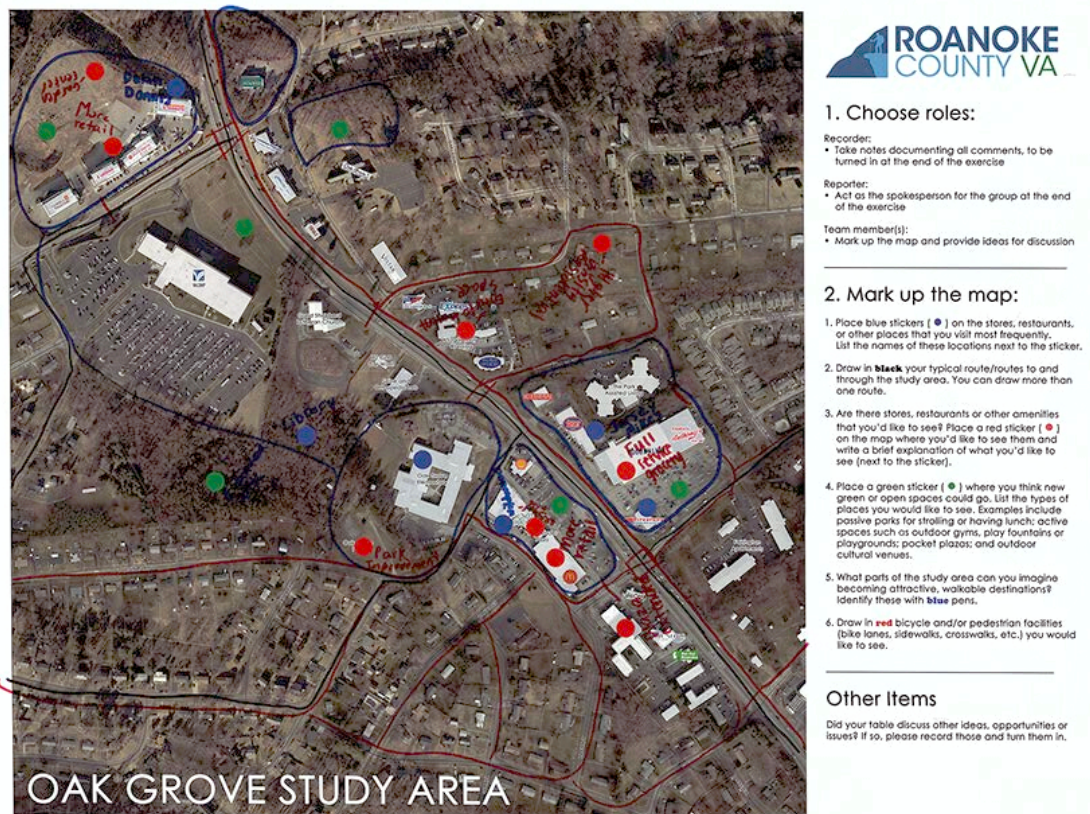
Similar to the exercise with [Student Advisory Council](#) members held last November, educators were asked to redesign the Oak Grove area based on businesses and public amenities that would enhance daily life. Working in small groups they mapped out their ideas for new restaurants, shops and entertainment; infill or redevelopment of commercial spaces; bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure; walkable, connected areas; and outdoor and indoor public spaces (including parks and sports facilities). Educators also voted on their preferences of architectural styles, multi-modal design, public spaces, mixed-use development, and more in a Visual Preference Survey.

Planning staff also explained some of the complicating factors involved in planning Oak Grove, including the city/county jurisdictional boundaries and zoning differences, market conditions, vacant or underutilized properties, and community engagement.

Educator Suggestions

Educators strongly supported generous additions of outdoor public spaces. They wanted to see expanded parks with features built for kids that were handicap-accessible. Multi-use paths connecting Hidden Valley Middle School, Keagy Village, Oak Grove Elementary, Oak Grove Park, and commercial zones along Route 419 were a high priority. They desired pedestrian bridges and crosswalks over and across Route 419 and sidewalks in neighborhoods for an alternative to driving. Bike rental kiosks were also suggested for the commercial corridor.

Appendix B



Results of one of the exercise maps

There was strong support for a variety of new businesses and housing to boost livability in the Oak Grove area. While their suggestions included much of the same amenities desired by the Student Advisory Council, they also wanted to see more adult-oriented or child-friendly businesses with accessible infrastructure. These included a variety of restaurants, coffee shops, bistros, breweries and entertainment, high quality apartments, retail including niche shops and chain stores, a farmer's market and grocery store, and a sports complex, all arranged in modern, walkable developments.

Participants were shown staff-generated design ideas for redevelopment of the area. These “before” photos of existing conditions and “after” concepts for redevelopment sparked awareness of future possibilities and generated excitement about potential changes.

Lastly, educators made many recommendations for involving youth and young adults in community planning efforts.