



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the 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
Program Title: Roanoke County 200 Plan
Program Category: Community and Economic Development

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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email=rcaywood@roanokecountyva.gov, c=US
Date: 2023.06.30 12:15:18 -04'00'



Executive Summary

The Roanoke County 200 Plan (200 Plan) informs decision makers regarding long-term consequences and helps the County direct its planning efforts. It was essential to gather stakeholder input to help identify needs for citizens, property owners and businesses within and across the County and region. The collaborative efforts resulting in the creation of the 200 Plan can be broken down into regional collaboration, community collaboration, and cross-departmental collaboration.

Regional Collaboration: Roanoke County is one of several local government units that make up the Roanoke Valley. As Roanoke County continues to grow, it is important to continue to think of this geographic area as a cohesive unit rather than as a collection of individual localities, often competing for grant funding. Many of the challenges of the twenty first century will know no geographic boundary line and will present all Valley citizens and local officials with opportunities to seek efficient and effective solutions. We must continue to find new and innovative ways to work together for the good of all.

Community Collaboration: Engagement with the community has been the heart of the 200 Plan from its origins two years ago with over 25 community facilities visited across Roanoke County and its eleven Community Planning Areas. These initial meetings began in the fall of 2021 where staff and leadership held the plan reveal meetings to review plans for each planning area based on the feedback received so far. Open house-style meetings were held in various communities around Roanoke County, with virtual exercise alternatives. Twelve planning meetings were held to collect preliminary feedback about community issues and needs. The next effort began in the spring of 2022 with open house meetings. The six early 2023 Plan reveal meetings were held around Roanoke County for citizens to review recommendations in the 200 Plan County-Wide Summary and eleven Planning Area Documents based on the feedback.

Cross-departmental Collaboration and Organizational Development: Roanoke County prides itself on the collaborative efforts of staff and leadership to ensure open communication across the various departments.

Program Overview (Press Release)

The Roanoke County 200 Plan is an update to the Comprehensive Plan that expresses an overarching community vision as well as unique goals for 11 community planning areas encompassing Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton. The 200 Plan was developed based on input received at community meetings and online surveys held over the last two years in more than 25 locations across the County, beginning in fall 2021. It will impact future land use, natural and cultural resources, public facilities and services, and transportation infrastructure. The 200 Plan aims to be an innovative and collaborative approach to create an accessible and legible document that catches the eye of the reader of any age. This Comprehensive Plan seeks to organize local government and its web of resources into a comprehensible, all-inclusive package that serves as a road-map and guides the County toward a better tomorrow based on the thoughts and ideas of the community today. It will evolve over time as current and future generations continue to build upon it.

Plans Schedule

The graphic below outlines the schedule and process of the 200 Plan. In early 2023, Planning Commission Public Hearings were held in Roanoke County to hear feedback from the community on the 200 Plan documents and the Board of Supervisors Public Hearing is set for late summer/early fall of 2023.





The Overarching Problem

County residents and businesses often don't understand the future plans the County has for their neighborhoods and often desire to have their voices heard when it comes to making decisions. There is also a trend of low citizen participation rates in the planning process. Part of this problem stems from jargon and dense documentation that shrouds the process in confusion for these people. It also comes from public meetings held at times and locations that are too distant or inconvenient and/or a lack of access to the planning process.

One of the goals of the planning process for the 200 Plan was to overcome this problem by gathering more public input for a plan than had ever been done in the County's history.

Challenges Faced by Roanoke County and Other Localities

Locality-wide focused Comprehensive Plans: A majority of Comprehensive Plans focus on the entire County or City as a whole rather than parsing out each specific area of the County or City. These are the typical geographies covered by standard Comprehensive Plans and may benefit from additional individual community area-focused plans given their own detailed set of recommendations, maps, images, graphics, etc. with specific existing conditions. In contrast, the 200 Plan provides individual summary documents for eleven localized regions of the County called Community Planning Areas (CPA). The creation of these plans required county planners to gather input from that CPA, analyze input, and make unique recommendations for each CPA.

Text-Heavy, Incomprehensible Comprehensive Plans: A majority of comprehensive plans lack easy-to-read organizational elements such as legible maps, coordinated chapter color schemes, planning topic-related icon graphics, and a one-to-one text-to-graphic ratio. Typical plans are also completed without sufficient high-resolution imagery highlighting the ground and aerial uniqueness of the land and its accompanying development. The 200 Plan has these qualities in its comprehensive 200 Plan document. In contrast to typical comprehensive plans, a visually appealing supplementary summary document was created to provide direct and accessible information to residents.



Inaccessible Comprehensive Plans: If a locality’s comprehensive plan is found online, it can typically be found by navigating through a series of tabs and links from their main webpage to a page that contains a long list of links to dense documents created in association with the Plan. This way of finding a comprehensive plan is difficult and inconvenient. On the other hand, Roanoke County built an eye-catching webpage with an easy URL to make it easier to observe the current status of the plan and provide public comments for the plan. Additionally, the times, places, and results of the more than 25 public meetings were posted here. The main 200 Plan webpage also made it easy to discover which CPA residents were a part of. By simply typing in an address, page visitors were directed to the webpage of their respective CPA. Each CPA webpage sought to, both, gather input and educate residents about their region through documents and an online virtual story map. These pages also contained the results of prior community engagement activities, including survey results and a general description of the feedback the planning staff was receiving from CPA residents. This allowed page visitors not only to provide public comments, but to see how their comments were being specifically addressed in the planning process.

[A Model for Other Localities](#)

Innovative Technology and Solutions

The internet has revolutionized the way knowledge is shared and circulated, enabling a newfound level of connectivity and access to information. The online presence of the 200 Plan connects people across all boundaries allowing Roanoke County to transcend geographical limitations, and share information instantly and effortlessly with individuals and communities. Unlike long-established forms of communication, the internet provides easy access to information so anyone with an internet connection can access vast amounts of information, regardless of their location or socioeconomic background. In addition, updates can be published and made available to the public within moments, allowing for instant dissemination of information. The 200 Plan webpage also accommodates various formats of information including text, images, and video all while complying to ADA guidelines. This versatility allows for diverse and engaging content that caters to different



learning styles and preferences. The webpage provides individuals the opportunity to become contributors to information that applies to their specific lives and neighborhoods. This platform provides space for users to share their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives on various planning elements that foster a collaborative and participatory environment for information exchange. Lastly, the 200 Plan webpage plays a significant role in the spread of information as users can share content with their network of friends and followers, facilitating the viral spread of information and increasing its reach exponentially. The webpage helps foster partnerships with specialized groups centered on specific interests and topics such as the Masons Cove Historical Society, Preserve Bent Mountain, the Back Creek Civic League, and many others. These groups play a key role in helping facilitate the exchange of information between the community and Roanoke County planning staff which has led to greater community participation overall.

The 200 Plan webpage features story maps that educate page visitors about their CPA. These ArcGIS StoryMaps are cloud-based, data presentation tools used by Roanoke County to communicate geospatial data in a narrative, interactive format. Blending multi-media with map products, this tool leverages design features aimed at enhancing the access, understanding, and use of geographic information by the County's constituents and stakeholders. Citizens use StoryMaps to learn more about their Community Planning Area in an interactive format. Since a story can effect change, influence opinion, and create awareness, StoryMaps are used to help build a stronger sense of place, better illustrate spatial relationships, and add visual appeal and credibility to the narrative of the 200 Plan. For example, the Catawba CPA story map discusses the unique situation of that area compared to the rest of the County.

Throughout the process, Planning staff has provided a visual cornucopia of images, maps, and graphics. In addition to charts and maps, drones have been used to help staff provide visually stunning, high-resolution imagery. These visual aids were used to design the 200 Plan webpage, posters for public meetings, and the CPA summary documents. The striking visuals make it easier to explain complex planning principles and make it easier to keep residents engaged.



Area Planning

Roanoke County is comprised of 11 Community Planning Areas (CPAs). These 11 CPAs are the pieces which make up Roanoke County as a whole and provide an outlet for more detailed recommendations for future development than the County-wide comprehensive plan. While the CPA plans and the County-wide plan are valuable in their respective contexts, there are several reasons why CPA level plans may be considered an innovative method.

First, CPA level plans allow for more localized decision-making. Since these areas and neighborhoods are smaller and more specific in scope, residents and stakeholders have a better understanding of the unique challenges, opportunities, and needs within their own community. This enables them to address specific issues and promote the well-being of their corner of the County.

Second, CPA plans take into account the specific characteristics and dynamics of a particular area. Each neighborhood has its own distinct identity, culture, history, and built environment. By focusing on the neighborhood level, planners can gain a deeper understanding of these factors and create plans that align with the existing context of the area. This ensures that interventions are more relevant and effective in meeting the specific needs of the neighborhood's residents.

Third, these plans also encourage greater community engagement and participation. Since the plans are developed at a smaller scale, it is easier for residents to be involved in the decision-making process.

Fourth, CPAs also offer greater flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances. Local conditions and priorities can vary significantly within a County. By focusing on specific areas, planners can respond more effectively to the unique needs and dynamics of each area.

Finally, detailed plans such as these also enable a more targeted response to local priorities. Communities often have specific issues or goals they want to address, such as improving local amenities, enhancing safety, or preserving historical or natural sites. By focusing on the neighborhood level, planners can allocate resources and develop strategies that align with these localized objectives.



In-House Planning

The common trend has been for municipalities to outsource their Comprehensive Plans to private consultants due to limited resources such as staffing, funding, time, etc. Outside perspectives can lead to new, creative thinking, specifically for smaller area studies or master plans; however, this should not be the norm for Comprehensive Plans as they require institutional knowledge and ongoing engagement with the community and various stakeholders to provide an accurate and implementable plan. Third-party experts are often from outside the region to which the Plan is being crafted. This provides a difficult barrier for communication and involvement by the consultant in the community. It is also important to mention that these consultants often have many additional projects in other jurisdictions which may draw their efforts and attention away.

There are several reasons why conducting Comprehensive Plans internally, rather than outsourcing, can be advantageous, which include control, flexibility, quality assurance, cost efficiency, competency, and punctuality. When a Comprehensive Plan is handled internally, localities have greater control and flexibility over its execution by setting the standards, timelines, and quality expectations according to specific needs. This control allows for more efficient decision-making, customization, and adaptability to changes. Internal processes often benefit from quicker decision-making, streamlined communication, and faster execution. When a task is outsourced, it may involve additional coordination, communication channels, and potential delays due to the involvement of external parties. Maintaining control internally can lead to faster response times and better adaptability to changes.

Maintaining high quality standards can be more challenging when relying on external vendors or service providers. By handling a task internally, localities have direct oversight and can establish robust quality control measures. This can lead to better consistency, improved quality, and a higher level of citizen satisfaction. While outsourcing can often be appealing to localities as they appear cost-effective on the surface, it's essential to consider the long-term implications. Initial cost savings can be offset by hidden expenses like communication challenges, rework, delays, or the need for additional



management resources to coordinate with the consultant. By keeping processes in-house, localities have more control over costs and can identify potential efficiencies over time. By performing tasks internally, like Roanoke County has done, organizations can concentrate on the unique, internal capabilities and provide a competitive advantage. Keeping essential operations in-house enables you to retain and develop specialized skills and knowledge within the organization. Lastly, certain tasks or processes may be closely tied to the organizational culture, values, or strategic objectives. By handling them internally, you can ensure alignment with your overall vision and mission. Outsourcing may introduce cultural and operational differences that could impact the consistency and cohesiveness of the organization and the intended direction of the Plan.

In regards to information pertaining to financing and staffing, local governments engage in long-term financial planning to ensure fiscal sustainability. This involves assessing current and future staffing and budgeting needs by setting financial goals used to implement strategies to ensure these objectives are met. The 200 Plan, like all comprehensive planning efforts, required an extensive amount of resources.

Costs associated with the 200 Plan can be divided into four parts: 1) marketing, 2) community outreach notices, 3) meeting facility costs, and 4) material costs. Marketing and outreach costs include posters, postcards, roadside banners, social media advertisement, mailing costs, and automatic mailer fees to citizens in the County. These costs totaled approximately \$20,000 over the course of the 200 Plan as it relied heavily on community input which requires an abundance of resources. Facility space costs include rental fees which equated to approximately \$1,700 with materials costing around \$800. Roanoke County spent a total of \$22,500 over the project period. All planning and research was conducted in-house by salaried employees over the two year period. The primary tasks were completed by the Roanoke County Long-Range Planning division with assistance from other divisions such as Transportation and Zoning, and the Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism staff with recommended approval by elected and appointed officials.



Engagement, Partnerships, and Collaboration

Stakeholder meetings and community surveys have played a crucial role in the creation of the 200 Plan. Since it informs decision makers regarding long-term consequences and helps the County direct its planning efforts, it was essential to gather stakeholder input to help identify regulatory, development, and environmental needs for citizens, property owners, and businesses. Roanoke County Planning staff met with a variety of stakeholders in 2021 and 2022 including staff and leadership at several neighboring localities, public organizations, and economic development organizations.

Regional Plans also played an important role in the development of the 200 Plan. Roanoke County is one of several local government units that make up the Roanoke Valley and each of these localities have their own set of plans and studies that help guide the continued and ongoing planning efforts. The development of the 200 Plan sought to harmonize with the strategies of the County's neighbors. As the County continues to grow, it is important to continue to think of this geographic area as a cohesive unit rather than as a collection of individual localities, often competing for grant funding. Many of the challenges of the twenty first century will know no geographic boundary line and will present all citizens and local officials with opportunities to seek efficient and effective solutions. Critical issues such as economic development, natural resource preservation, transportation, cultural opportunities, and housing opportunities require a regional perspective and regional solutions. We must continue to find new and innovative ways to work together for the good of all.

Plan Engagement Results: In fall 2021, there were 499 total attendees across all meetings combined. Additionally, a general survey was disseminated and 289 people responded to it. In spring 2022, there were 134 total attendees across all meetings combined. The spring 2022 survey received approximately 289 responses. The survey had 50 questions that pertained to county-wide interests and initiatives. Lastly, in early 2023, there were 287 total attendees across all meetings combined with approximately 40 individuals who commented on the County-wide document, as well as specific Community Planning Area documents with eight individuals providing feedback at the Planning

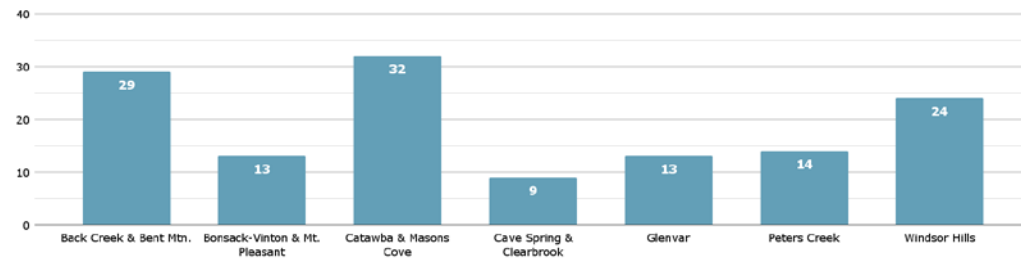


Commission Public Hearing. This represents the most intensive and comprehensive public outreach Roanoke County has ever done.

The 200 Plan community engagement has been a success. With such a high rate of public participation and continued collaboration with the community on a local level in the creation of the Plan, Roanoke County hopes to see just as much success implementing the Plan in the years to come.

Spring 2022 Community Meeting Attendance

133 Total Attendees



Number of Responses to Spring Survey

428 Respondents

