



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your 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: Roanoke County 200 Plan
Program Category: Community Development, Economic Development & Land Use

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Isaac Henry
Title: Principal Planner
Department: Planning
Telephone: 540-772-2140 Website: <https://roanokecountyva.gov/305/Planning>
Email: ihenry@roanokecountyva.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Philip Thompson
Title: Director of Planning
Signature: 

2025 VACo Achievement Award Submission
Roanoke County Planning Department
Roanoke County 200 Plan
Executive Summary

The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* is Roanoke County’s new comprehensive plan, adopted in September 2024 to guide growth and development through 2038 (the County’s bicentennial anniversary). It represents the first major update of Roanoke County’s comprehensive plan since 2005 and sets a long-term vision for transportation, community facilities, natural and cultural resources, and land use and housing. It helps Roanoke County leaders anticipate long-term impacts, to continue to attract economic investment in the County and maximize opportunities, services, and quality of life for County residents.

On top of countywide analysis and recommendations, the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* also includes a separate document for each of Roanoke County’s 11 Community Planning Areas (CPAs), with in-depth analysis and unique recommendations for each CPA. However, the 12 documents that make up the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* do not represent the entirety of the Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan. Also adopted as components of the Comprehensive Plan are four “small area” plans, with authority over geographic areas significantly smaller than the County’s CPAs. This means that the Comprehensive Plan operates at three geographic levels – Countywide, Community Planning Area (smaller), and Small Area (smallest). This greatly enhances the ability of the Comprehensive Plan to support the health, safety, and welfare of those who live, work, or recreate in Roanoke County, as the County is home to many different communities and landscapes with diverse needs.

The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* was developed in-house by the Roanoke County Planning Department, with significant public input to ensure it reflects residents’ priorities. The in-house approach provides a roadmap for how other localities in Virginia can save money on their comprehensive planning processes while simultaneously improving the quality of their plans.

2025 VACo Achievement Award Submission
Roanoke County Planning Department
Roanoke County 200 Plan
Full Submission

Introduction

The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* is Roanoke County's new comprehensive plan, adopted in September 2024 to guide growth and development through 2038 (the County's bicentennial anniversary). It represents the first major update of Roanoke County's comprehensive plan since 2005 and sets a long-term vision for transportation, community facilities, natural and cultural resources, and land use and housing.

On top of countywide analysis and recommendations, the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* also includes a separate document for each of Roanoke County's 11 Community Planning Areas (CPAs), with in-depth analysis and unique recommendations for each CPA. The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* was developed in-house by the Roanoke County Planning Department, with significant public input to ensure it reflects residents' priorities. It helps Roanoke County leaders anticipate long-term impacts to continue to attract economic investment in the County - and maximize opportunities, services, and quality of life for County residents.

Problem, Challenge, or Situation Faced by the Locality

Before the adoption of the *Roanoke County 200 Plan*, the previous comprehensive plan – the *Roanoke County Community Plan* – had been in effect since 2005, and much of its language dated back to 1998. With changing population trends, economic conditions, and development pressures, a new comprehensive plan was needed to maintain economic vitality and quality of life.

The recommendations outlined in the 2005 *Roanoke County Community Plan* were vague in nature. This may have been appropriate at the time, but since the Great Recession of 2009, the

2025 VACo Achievement Award Submission – Roanoke County 200 Plan

County has become increasingly reliant on federal funding, and federal sources are far more likely to award funding for projects that are explicitly recommended in adopted plans. The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* recommends numerous specific projects, greatly improving the County's ability to secure federal funding.

The 2005 *Roanoke County Community Plan* was not designed for public consumption. It is almost entirely text - it contains zero photographs and only a small handful of graphics. The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* is designed to communicate to all County citizens and is filled with color photographs and easy-to-understand graphics.

The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* also brings Roanoke County into compliance with Sec. 15.2-2223(D) of the Code of Virginia, which mandates that comprehensive plans "consider strategies to provide broadband infrastructure." The 2005 *Roanoke County Community Plan* was adopted before high-speed internet was widely available, so broadband is not discussed or considered in that plan.

Per Sec. 15.2-2230 of the Code of Virginia, the comprehensive plan must be reviewed by the local planning commission at least once every five years to determine if updates are needed. The Roanoke County Planning Commission had opted only for minor revisions of the comprehensive plan in the time between 2005 and 2020, and by 2020 a major update was needed to keep the comprehensive plan relevant and effective.

How the Program Fulfilled the Awards Criteria

Innovation

The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* consists of a main countywide document as well as separate, fully developed documents for each of the County's 11 Community Planning Areas (CPAs). These CPA documents go beyond one-size-fits-all planning, providing detailed, localized goals and

2025 VACo Achievement Award Submission – Roanoke County 200 Plan

analysis tailored to the distinct needs of each community. This level of granularity is exceptional for any comprehensive plan—especially one completed in-house by locality staff. The 12 documents that make up the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* include a total of 196 maps and 143 charts and figures, all designed to be informative and legible to the average citizen. One can learn a massive amount about Roanoke County from the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* without reading any of its body text - just by skimming through it and looking at the maps, charts, and figures. These graphic elements are designed with a broad audience in mind - they are designed to communicate, not overwhelm. The maps, charts, and figures in the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* have been praised by social media experts and Planning academics alike for their visual appeal, legibility, and content.

However, the 12 documents that make up the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* do not represent the entirety of the Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan. Also adopted as components of the Comprehensive Plan are four “small area” plans – the *419 Town Center Plan* (2019), *Hollins Center Plan* (2020), *Oak Grove Center Plan* (2021), and *Route 460 Land Use and Connectivity Study* (2023) - with authority over geographic areas significantly smaller than the County’s CPAs. These small areas were chosen due to their potential to support an increase in commercial activity and need for transportation improvements – and the small area plans provide recommendations for land use and transportation that, if implemented, will simultaneously maximize each area’s potential as a commercial destination *and* improve the livability, walkability, and human-scale feel of each area.

The small area plans are not only elements of the Comprehensive Plan, they provided the blueprint for the planning process, aesthetic approach, and document structure used in the *Roanoke County 200 Plan*. They were essentially pilot projects that allowed Roanoke County to

2025 VACo Achievement Award Submission – Roanoke County 200 Plan

test and refine its in-house planning approach before taking on a countywide Comprehensive Plan rewrite. The *419 Town Center Plan* and *Route 460 Land Use and Connectivity Study* were produced by consultants with significant input from Roanoke County staff, but the *Hollins Center Plan* and *Oak Grove Center Plan* were produced completely by Roanoke County Planning staff using what was essentially a reduced-scope version of the process used to create the *Roanoke County 200 Plan*.

The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* builds upon the aesthetic palette used in these small area plans to create a consistent aesthetic identity for all of the County’s planning efforts. Aesthetic consistency, with a focus on simplicity and legibility (without sacrificing precision or detail), makes the entire suite of documents that make up the Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan easy to understand and use, even for those with no prior understanding of land use patterns, development procedures, or transportation networks. Once a citizen familiarizes themselves with one of the component plans that make up the Comprehensive Plan, they can easily understand almost all of the other component plans. Roanoke County has built trust with citizens and stakeholders via this transparent approach and will continue to build upon this trust to make decisions that steadily improve quality of life for all Roanoke County citizens.

The adoption of the *419 Town Center Plan*, *Hollins Center Plan*, *Oak Grove Center Plan*, and *Route 460 Land Use and Connectivity Study* as elements of the Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan mean that the Comprehensive Plan operates at three geographic levels – Countywide, Community Planning Area (smaller), and Small Area (smallest). This greatly enhances the ability of the Comprehensive Plan to support the health, safety, and welfare of those who live, work, or recreate in Roanoke County, as the County is home to many different communities and landscapes with diverse needs. If the Comprehensive Plan only considered the

2025 VACo Achievement Award Submission – Roanoke County 200 Plan

County as a whole, it would likely overlook many of the needs of the parts of the County that are less populated and served by less infrastructure. If the Comprehensive Plan considered the County as a whole and at the Community Planning Area (CPA) level, but not at the “small area” level, it would likely miss opportunities to support the specific areas throughout the County with the most potential for increased commercial activity, which would leave these areas infrastructurally unprepared for increases in commercial activity. Conversely, if the Comprehensive Plan only considered subareas of the County like CPAs and “small areas,” it would likely ignore the big-picture goals that would not be priorities of any individual communities but would enhance quality of life for all County citizens.

With the adoption of the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* as the new Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan in 2024, and adoption of “small area” plans as components of the Comprehensive Plan, Roanoke County raised the standard for both detail and legibility in comprehensive planning in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Partnership or Collaboration

The planning process for the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* lasted just over four years from its kickoff in August 2020 to the Plan’s adoption in September 2024, and was overseen by three different Principal Planners whose clear communication and high standards for work ensured that these leadership transitions were smooth to the point of being barely noticeable. Three rounds of public outreach were held – first in Fall 2021, then Spring 2022, then Winter 2023 – that consisted of a total of 25 community meetings attended by a total of 934 people. Surveys were disseminated during the first two rounds of public outreach, which elicited 717 responses. Twenty-six different stakeholder groups were engaged throughout the process, including Roanoke County elected officials, various departments of Roanoke County government,

2025 VACo Achievement Award Submission – Roanoke County 200 Plan

neighboring jurisdictions, state agencies, regional advisory commissions and governing boards, nonprofits, and subject matter experts.

The use of Community Planning Areas (CPAs) in the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* and the inclusion of separate “small area” plans as elements of the Comprehensive Plan allowed for greatly enhanced public participation in the creation of the Comprehensive Plan. First off, there was a good deal more public participation than would have been conceivable if the County was only considered as a whole. During the public outreach processes for the *419 Town Center Plan*, *Hollins Center Plan*, *Oak Grove Center Plan*, and *Route 460 Land Use and Connectivity Study*, Roanoke County hosted a total of 23 community meetings that were attended by approximately 1,700 people, distributed 10 surveys that elicited approximately 2,000 responses, and consulted with 24 unique stakeholder groups. This means that public outreach for the entirety of the Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan consisted of 48 community meetings that were attended by approximately 2,600 people, 12 surveys that elicited over 2,700 individual responses, and the consultation of 50 different stakeholder groups. This amounts to truly massive public participation in the planning process, which results in vastly superior adopted plans than would be possible without the consideration of such a large number of individual local perspectives.

Model for Other Localities

The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* sets a new standard for in-house public sector comprehensive planning in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is a feat for any locality to produce its comprehensive plan in-house, but Roanoke County went a step further by producing what are essentially individual plans for each subarea of the County. This provides a level of detail that would be notable in any comprehensive plan, and Roanoke County accomplished this with staff labor alone. There were no paid consultants or subcontractors involved in any component of the

2025 VACo Achievement Award Submission – Roanoke County 200 Plan

Plan – each map, chart, and figure was made, and paragraph written, by a Roanoke County planner, and Roanoke County planners created all of the final documents (i.e. Countywide, CPA Summaries, Appendices) that make up the *Roanoke County 200 Plan*. Not only is this an impressive feat for a staff that juggles many other responsibilities, it also saved the County hundreds of thousands of dollars in consultant fees.

The in-house approach also positively impacted the quality of the *Roanoke County 200 Plan*. The plan was created by those who understand Roanoke County’s planning issues best, those who engage with Roanoke County planning issues on a daily basis, as opposed to a group of consultants who are learning basic facts about the jurisdiction at the same time that they are crafting a regulatory document with many implications for the jurisdiction’s future. The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* provides a roadmap for how other localities in Virginia can save money on their comprehensive planning processes while simultaneously improving the quality of their plans.

The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* is a groundbreaking, entirely in-house comprehensive plan created by the Roanoke County Planning Department—without the use of consultants or subcontractors. This effort not only saved the County hundreds of thousands of dollars, it ensured that the people most familiar with Roanoke County’s challenges and goals shaped the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* from the ground up. The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* not only sets a new standard for quality and detail in local comprehensive planning—it serves as a model for how other localities can save money and improve outcomes by relying on internal expertise.

How the Program Was Carried Out

Development of the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* took just over four years between project kickoff in August 2020 and plan adoption in September 2024. County Planning staff spent the first year of the project collecting data and conducting research. Public outreach was conducted in three

2025 VACo Achievement Award Submission – Roanoke County 200 Plan

phases between late 2021 and early 2023. From mid-2023 to September 2024, the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* was assembled, formatted, and finalized.

Adopted by the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors on September 24, 2024, the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* represents the first major update to the Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan since 2005. It is a 15-year plan that will guide land development, public services, and resource protection in Roanoke County through the County’s bicentennial anniversary in 2038, hence the name *Roanoke County 200 Plan*. Chapter 9 of the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* enumerates an overarching community vision for Roanoke County and outlines thirty-six objectives concerning regionalism, natural and cultural resources, educational opportunity, provision of public services, transportation, economic development, housing, and thoughtful design. Chapter 10 provides specific policy and project recommendations in the areas of Natural & Cultural Resources, Community Facilities, Transportation, and Land Use & Housing.

As Roanoke County includes many different communities with different values and needs, the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* also includes separate documents for each of Roanoke County’s 11 Community Planning Areas (CPAs) which provide individualized analysis of, and goals for, each CPA, including specific project recommendations. The inclusion of what are essentially distinct plans for each CPA ensures that the divergent needs of each of the County’s communities are considered and planned for. The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* runs 479 pages between the main countywide document and the 11 CPA documents (not including appendices) and masterfully balances information density with aesthetic appeal.

The entirety of the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* was created in-house by the Roanoke County Planning Department – a massive undertaking to begin with, but especially massive

2025 VACo Achievement Award Submission – Roanoke County 200 Plan

considering the inclusion of separate documents for each of the County's 11 CPAs. The in-house creation of the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* required Roanoke County to expend funds to:

- Pay staff salaries
- Pay subscriptions to necessary software
- Publicize the planning effort via direct mail and local media
- Rent community meeting venues
- Print Plan documents

Hiring a consultant to create a similar plan would require a locality to expend funds for all of these items, plus an additional \$100,000 - \$1 million for consultant services.

Taken in its entirety, the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* provides a detailed roadmap for the next decade-and-a-half of development in Roanoke County. It will help Roanoke County maximize the benefits of development while minimizing potential negative side effects, and will help Roanoke County secure funding for the transportation improvements needed to accommodate changes in development patterns. In doing so, the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* will safeguard and enhance the health, safety, and welfare of those who live, work, and recreate in the County, and will maximize the likelihood that in 2038, quality of life in Roanoke County will be higher than it has ever been at any point in the County's 200-year history.

Program Results

With its adoption by the Board of Supervisors in September 2024, the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* entered its implementation phase, which is intended to continue through the County's bicentennial anniversary in 2038. The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* is intended to serve Roanoke County citizens, business owners, the development community, and the County as an organization.

2025 VACo Achievement Award Submission – Roanoke County 200 Plan

The *Roanoke County 200 Plan* was adopted only nine months ago, so direct, quantifiable impacts *since* adoption have been minimal, but Roanoke County aggressively publicized the planning effort from its kickoff in 2020 until adoption in September 2024, and was able to leverage the planning effort and draft recommendations of the *200 Plan* to bring about the following successes (among many others):

- In October 2023, Carilion Clinic opened a \$11.5 million mental health facility at Tanglewood Mall, providing the first consolidated mental health treatment hub in the Roanoke Valley. This facility employs over 300 people and serves about 800 patients per week. (*419 Town Center Plan – 2019*)
- Since 2022, approximately 175,000 square feet of the Tanglewood Mall parking lot have been redeveloped into new-to-market restaurants, personal services, and retail businesses. (*419 Town Center Plan – 2019*)
- In September 2023, Wells Fargo announced an \$87 million expansion in the Hollins area, which is projected to add around 1,100 jobs and make Wells Fargo the Roanoke Valley’s largest employer. This expansion effort is underway, and once complete is expected to add \$322 million annually to the local economy. (*Hollins Center Plan – 2020*)
- In February 2024, Mack Trucks announced a \$14.5 million expansion of their manufacturing facility in Roanoke County, which will provide 51 new jobs.
- In June 2023, the Galen School of Nursing opened in the Oak Grove neighborhood, a \$4 million redevelopment of a former corporate office building which has created 50 new jobs. (*Oak Grove Center Plan – 2021*)

2025 VACo Achievement Award Submission – Roanoke County 200 Plan

- Since 2020, Roanoke County has been awarded over \$80 million in state and federal funding for transportation projects. Draft sections of the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* were submitted as supporting materials with many successful funding applications.
- Since 2021, Roanoke County has received over \$6.5 million in outside funding (state and private sources) to expand broadband availability in rural areas, bringing high-speed internet access to over 1,400 previously unserved addresses.
- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately half of Virginia’s net manufacturing growth between 2019 and 2023 occurred in the Roanoke region.
- In 2025 and 2026, the Roanoke region will host the USA Cycling Endurance Mountain Bike National Championships, including events in Roanoke County.
- The Roanoke region is currently outpacing many larger metro areas, including Northern Virginia, in rates of employment growth and in-migration.
- In February 2025, the *Roanoke County Safe Streets and Roads for All Comprehensive Safety Action Plan* was adopted by the Board of Supervisors as a component of the *Roanoke County 200 Plan*. This plan advances many transportation recommendations of the *Roanoke County 200 Plan*.
- In February 2025, the *Glenvar Center Plan* was announced, which represents the first Activity Center planning effort recommended by the *Roanoke County 200 Plan* to be undertaken.
- In April 2025, Roanoke County announced a *Housing Market Analysis Study*, as recommended by the *Roanoke County 200 Plan*.