



vation of all those scenic beauties which can be found in the vicinity; and for the welfare of the citizens through facilities for proper and wholesome recreation of all groups.” (Comprehensive City Plan, Roanoke, Virginia, 1928)

1964 PLAN: A SUBURBAN VISION AND URBAN RENEWAL

By 1964, the city had grown to include 26 square miles with a population of 97,110. When the city developed a new plan in 1964, the prevailing wisdom was that many of the city’s older neighborhoods were no longer the most suitable or attractive places to live. Development was moving to outlying areas in suburban areas, and new shopping centers were drawing retail trade away from downtown. The 1964 plan tried to make sense of these changes by recommending reuse of old neighborhood areas as centers for business, industry, offices and institutions. The powers of urban renewal were used to remove deteriorated housing and create sites for new development.

In 1966, the city’s zoning code was changed to reflect this plan. However, this zoning allowed a mix of incompatible uses in many areas without provisions for planning for this transition or dealing with its impact. The result was often the destruction of residential fabric and character as well as many fine older structures. Much of the commercial development that did occur was of an unplanned, strip commercial nature.

NEW VALUES

The negative aspects of the 1964 plan’s development legacy began to be addressed in the late 1970s by a diverse set of public and private actions. Roanoke began to rediscover the rich diversity of the city’s older neighborhoods and the pleasures of downtown. Individuals began to renovate historic buildings and City actions soon followed. New action plans and strategies for downtown, neighborhood, park, and economic development were based on an emerging set of values, which included:

- Historic preservation
- Neighborhood revitalization
- Downtown revitalization
- Quality city services
- Job creation through economic development
- Public/private/citizen cooperation
- Development of arts, entertainment, convention and tourist activities

Citizens once more took the lead and joined in the activities of programs such as Design ’79, the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership and a score of advisory groups and task forces on issues such as housing, crime prevention and park revitalization. These efforts, coupled with significant public and private investments, have led to major improvements in Roanoke within the last decade.

Left: Bridge that once graced Elmwood Park in downtown Roanoke.



4 ROANOKE TOMORROW

Right: Every day is festival time in the old City Market.





ROANOKE: CENTER OF A DYNAMIC REGION

Roanoke, a city of 100,600 people, is located in the broad valley where the Roanoke River meets the Blue Ridge Mountains. As the major city in western Virginia, Roanoke plays a central role in the area's economy and is the regional center of employment, professional services, finance, health care, transportation, shopping and entertainment. The city's regional context is defined on two levels. First, Roanoke is the center of the larger Roanoke Valley metropolitan area of 224,000, the federally defined Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) which also includes the City of Salem, the Town of Vinton and Roanoke and Botetourt Counties. Roanoke contains only 10% of the land area of this metropolitan region, but contains almost half of the area's population and over 50% of its jobs. In addition, Roanoke serves a much greater market area of approximately 800,000, including the 19 counties of the western Virginia region as well as nearby counties in West Virginia.

Transportation plays a key role in Roanoke's focus as a trade and service center for western Virginia. In fact, as far as this region is concerned, "all roads lead to Roanoke." Roanoke developed as a railroad center, and now its location along I-81 and U.S. 220 provides easy automobile access. The Blue Ridge Parkway brings over 19 million tourists to Roanoke's doorstep each year. Its airport facilities serve the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area and much of western Virginia.

ROANOKE AS A MATURING CITY

Roanoke's future is shaped by its people — individuals choosing where to live, work and send their children to school; businesses deciding whether or not to locate or

expand in the city; government officials weighing the economics of investments for public facilities; or volunteers actively working on a wide array of neighborhood, cultural or civic projects. However, Roanoke's future is also shaped by larger economic and demographic trends that affect other Virginia and U.S. cities. In this context, Roanoke may be seen as a maturing city within a dynamic, growing region which shares the following characteristics with many other such cities:

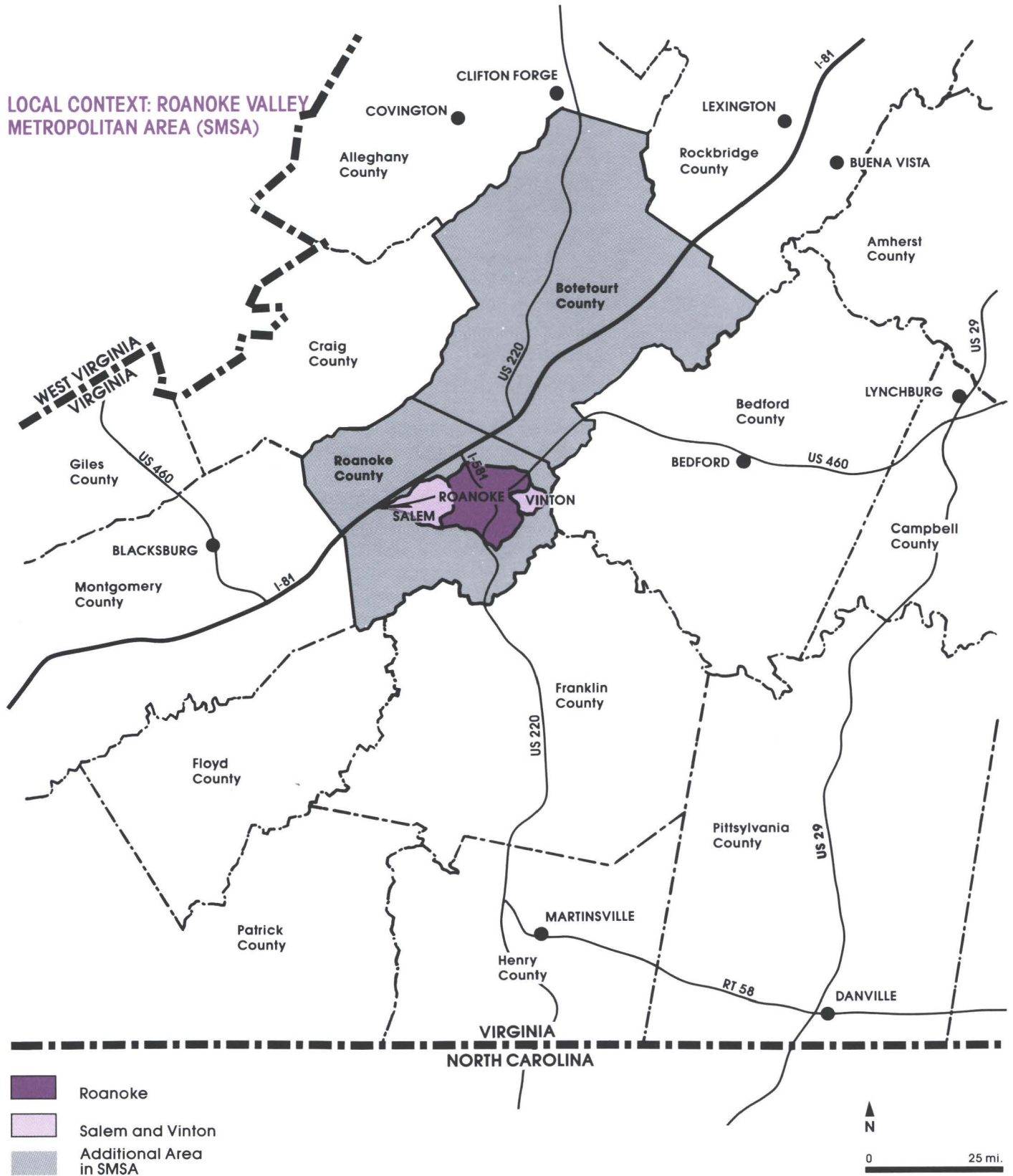
A relatively stable population totalling less than 50% of a growing metropolitan area (SMSA) population.

Roanoke's population has stabilized. No large population gains or losses are predicted. Modest fluctuations may occur: for example, a small decrease by 1990 had been forecast by the Tayloe Murphy Institute in a study for the State of Virginia; however, recent updates to that estimate show slight gains since 1980 to the current 100,600 level. Roanoke's successful economic development and downtown and neighborhood revitalization efforts have contributed to this stabilizing trend during a period when many other central cities have continued to lose population. In contrast, just as many other regions in the southeastern United States, the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area (SMSA) is continuing to grow rapidly. By 1990, its total population is expected to rise from 224,000 to 243,000, with much of the growth occurring in Roanoke County. As a developed, mature city, Roanoke's assets are a critical factor in the metropolitan area's growth. While the city may not gain the direct tax revenue of expanded populations, with careful planning it can share the economic benefits which result.



Above: Roanoke Regional Airport, a major facility serving the Roanoke Valley.

**LOCAL CONTEXT: ROANOKE VALLEY
METROPOLITAN AREA (SMSA)**



A population with a substantial number of elderly and young residents.

The age structure of Roanoke's population influences the city's economic dynamics and service needs. The largest segment of Roanoke's population (58.4%) falls into the working age brackets from 19-64. Those in the 19-34 age group are now, and will continue to be, the largest segment of this population. However, Roanoke's elderly residents, age 65 and over, and youth, age 18



and under, together comprise 41.6% of the city's population. These non-working age groups are a vital part of the community, but do require a variety of health, education, recreation and other human services. The elderly population in Roanoke is rising while contributing a smaller share to current City revenues. In 1970 it was 13.6% of the city total and in 1980 it was 15.7%. Nationally, the population is aging at a similar rate, but the total is only 11.7%. The youth population is declining, from 29.8% in 1970 to 25.9% in 1980. Again, this trend in Roanoke is following the slight decline in the number of youth 18 and under at a national level. This change indicates that the public school population in the city may continue to decline modestly.

A reduction in household size and an increase in the number of households.

Decreasing household size is another national trend Roanoke shares. This change in Roanoke from 2.85 persons per household in 1970 to 2.6 in 1980 means that more people now live alone or in smaller families and groups. More housing units are required to house the same number of people. In Roanoke the increase in occupied housing units, from 32,000 in 1970 to 40,000 in 1980, is a much higher percentage increase (20%) than the city's population increase of approximately 10% during the same period. This means that even with the stable population projected for the city, there will be increases in housing demand, particularly for smaller units.

A minority population larger than the other jurisdictions in the metropolitan area.

Racial composition is another factor in the city's demographics. In 1980, 78% of Roanoke's citizens were white and 22% were black. Roanoke's recent history is marked by improved race relations in the city's political, economic, educational and cultural life. The city's inner neighborhoods remain centers of black population, but approximately one quarter of the other neighborhoods in the city now have a significant racial mix. Within the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area (SMSA), Roanoke has the largest percentage of minority residents. This difference is expected to continue.

A predominately middle income and mobile population.

Roanoke is a predominately middle-income community that benefits from a relatively reasonable cost of living. The 1983 median income in the city was \$18,596. Although this is \$2,000 lower than the national average, in Roanoke the cost of living for a family of four is more than \$4,000 lower than



Left: Lunch time at a community day care center.
Above: A wide range of attractive apartments are available in Roanoke.



Above: Quality suburban living in the city.

the national average. This middle income characteristic makes a positive contribution to the city's overall quality of life.

Roanoke's population is also relatively mobile. More than 40% of the city's residents have moved within the last five years. This indicates the potential for continuing demographic change and vitality in Roanoke. Areas with stable neighborhoods are a basic strength to the city. However, even stable areas need gradual change to avoid the situation currently facing several of Roanoke's neighborhoods where the population has been so stable that they now have large aging populations with relatively low or fixed incomes. This means that entire neighborhoods could experience major changes in the composition of their communities within short periods of time.

Based on these factors, Roanoke's future development must consider the following:

Roanoke's stable population size can be a significant asset.

Costly municipal infrastructure is largely in place. Future facility and service needs can be more easily planned. Once basic needs are met, resources can be directed to further improving the quality rather than the capacity of the city's transportation and utility infrastructure as well as its educational, recreational, human service and public safety programs and facilities. Also, as the quality of such programs and facilities continues to

improve, the city will be in a better position to attract the working age residents most able to contribute to the city's economy.

Roanoke can share the benefits of the region's growth by continuing its active economic development efforts.

As the employment center for the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area, Roanoke must continue to create jobs for its 19 to 34 year old working age "population bulge," maintain good road access to the city's principal employment centers for the commuters in the work force, and stimulate growth of retail and other support services for these workers.

Housing development will be important to the city's overall health.

There will be an increase in the need for housing catering to new households comprised of single adults, childless couples or smaller families. The development of new housing or the renovation of existing housing for these groups can be an important factor in attracting new residents to the city. Even though stable population levels are forecast, this assumes a dynamic housing market. The more responsive the city's real estate market can be, the larger the share of the region's growth Roanoke can attract.

Changing neighborhood demographics will require adjustments in the locations and types of public services and facilities.

While the overall capacity needs of schools and other public services and facilities are not expected to increase, demand for services for some groups such as the elderly and lower income residents will increase. In addition, changes in age and household composition will require timely and responsive adjustments in the provision of services. This must be a key strategy if quality services are to be provided for all population groups throughout the city.



THE PLANNING APPROACH: A CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Roanoke is a city of diverse neighborhoods. These neighborhoods, the basic building blocks of the city, contain a range of residential, industrial, retail, office, institutional and park/open space uses. They are also strong social communities, well-defined by topographic and other natural or man-made features. Because of this diversity, the Roanoke Vision process developed a neighborhood-specific, strategic planning approach which provides a city-wide framework for planning and development recommendations.

This approach to neighborhood development focuses on both developed and vacant parcels:

- Strategies for *existing development* propose ways for analyzing and revitalizing existing neighborhoods

- Strategies for *vacant land* propose ways to define locational criteria and design standards for new development.

EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

Healthy neighborhoods are those in which the private housing market is strong and vital. In neighborhoods where the market is weak or not present, a variety of physical, social, or economic problems often exist. These problem areas can be improved or changed through public or private sector actions.

The goal for public sector efforts is therefore to *maintain, improve, or change* conditions to achieve the best possible environment for each neighborhood and to encourage maximum functioning of the private real estate market.

Above: A mountain view of Roanoke neighborhoods.

Planning Approaches

Three proposed levels of public sector effort are described below:

1. MAINTAIN the high quality of strong and stable neighborhoods.

Strong neighborhoods may be characterized by the vitality of their real estate markets. Houses for sale at fair prices will sell relatively quickly, indicating that the neighborhood is perceived as a desirable place to live not only by its residents, but also by outsiders. Housing quality is good, there are few conflicts between adjacent land uses, and social problems are minimal. The public sector strategy in these strong neighborhoods is, therefore, to maintain and enhance the existing quality of the area.

2. IMPROVE transitional or problem areas.

Some neighborhoods are characterized by a mixture of good housing conditions and some noticeable deterioration. Housing deterioration may be due to deferred maintenance by either home-owners or rental property owners. In addition, there may be a lack of needed special services for elderly, young or unemployed residents. There may also be specific public utility problems or inappropriate commercial or industrial uses within or on the edges of the neighborhood. All of these factors negatively affect the private real estate market in these areas.

Right: New housing that fits into the character of the Old Southwest neighborhood.
Above Right: New plans are proposed to redevelop the Henry Street commercial area adjacent to downtown.



However, none of the conditions in these neighborhoods have deteriorated to the point that selective positive actions could not substantively restore the neighborhoods' attractiveness and private market appeal. Here, targeted public sector investments in the maintenance and renewal of the housing stock, essential human services or selected public utility or other infrastructure, can bring needed improvements and encourage further revitalization efforts by neighborhood residents, organizations and other private investors. Detailed planning with residents is needed to identify problems and define appropriate action strategies.

3. CHANGE seriously deteriorated or deficient conditions.

Within some of Roanoke's neighborhoods, deterioration has progressed to the point that major corrective action is needed. Entire blocks may contain a mix of vacant lots and vacant or seriously deteriorated houses. In many instances, conflicts between incompatible industrial and residential uses have helped to create these conditions. Here the private housing market is almost non-existent. Social or economic problems are often pervasive.

In these neighborhoods, areas of strength and areas of weakness must be defined. Detailed planning with residents,

NEIGHBORHOODS

Neighborhood areas developed for
Neighborhood Statistics Program,
1980 U.S. Census.



1. Williamson Road
2. Monterey — Old Mountain Rd.
3. Hollins
4. Eastgate
5. Mecca Gardens
6. Thrasher Park — Kimball
7. Fallon Park
8. Kenwood
9. Belmont

10. Morningside
11. Riverdale
12. Garden City
13. Walnut Hill
14. South Roanoke
15. Chestnut Ridge — Southern Hills
16. Old Southwest
17. Downtown
18. Gainsboro

19. Washington Park
20. Melrose
21. Fairland Lake — Rugby
22. Oakland West
23. Roundhill
24. Arrowwood
25. Fairhope
26. Norwood
27. Washington Heights
28. Villa Heights

29. Fairview
30. Ridgewood
31. Wilmont — Signal Hill
32. Shenandoah West
33. Loudon Avenue
34. Harrison Avenue
35. Gilmer/Northwest
36. Cherry Hill
37. Hurt Park
38. Mountain View

39. Norwich
40. Wasena
41. Raleigh Ct. — Va. Heights
42. Windsor Hills
43. Grandin Court
44. Jefferson Hills — Lakewood
45. Colonial Hts. — Franklin Rd.



Above: Setting priorities at a neighborhood planning meeting sponsored by the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership.

supplemented by expert technical assistance, should examine options to change those conditions which are so serious that building rehabilitation alone may not help.

Public sector actions should, at a minimum, include:

- Strategic renovation of housing units combined with new infill construction or relocation of usable structures in deteriorated areas to vacant sites in strong areas;
- Removal of unusable structures and development of new land uses: either open space (new permanent parks or temporary "greening" until future development is feasible) or employment-related uses of benefit to the adjacent neighborhood (new commercial or industrial development physically separated from residential areas by open space buffers).

Neighborhood Analysis

Participants in the planning workshops ranked conditions in city neighborhoods according to the "maintain, improve, or change" approaches described above. The following matrix, *Future Growth and Development Strategies for Roanoke Neighborhoods*, summarizes some of the criteria used to determine which development approach is suited to a particular neighborhood.

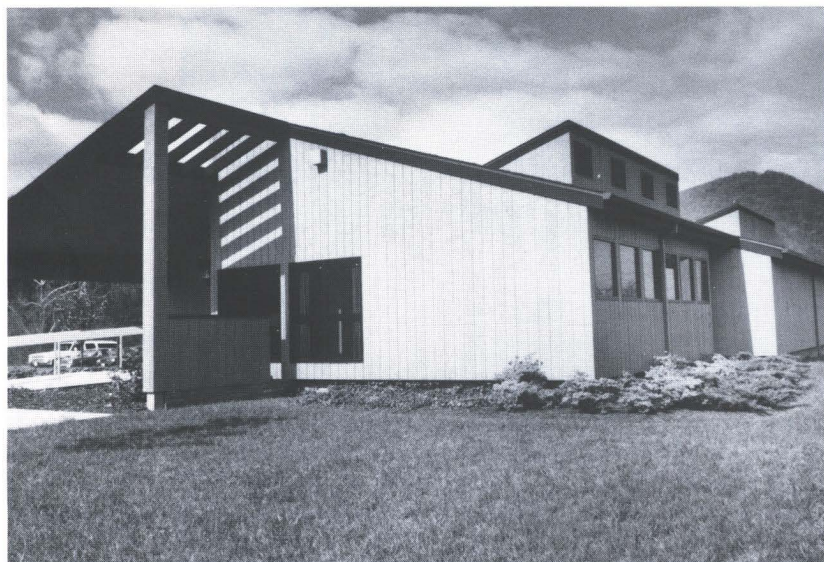
In order to test the applicability of these approaches, a more detailed investigation of conditions in each of the city's neighborhoods was carried out as part of the comprehensive planning process. This examination evaluated each neighborhood according to nine elements: housing, commercial development, industrial development, historic and cultural resources, human development, parks and recreation, transportation, utilities and environmental quality. The level of effort needed to 1) maintain stable areas, 2) improve problem areas, or 3) change seriously deteriorated or deficient conditions was estimated for each of the nine components of each neighborhood. The results of this ranking provided general background information for the Comprehensive Development Plan recommendations and specific direction for the detailed neighborhood planning which must be done during the next five years in order to implement the Plan (See Chapter 5).

VACANT LAND

The City of Roanoke, as a maturing urban area, has a dwindling supply of vacant land available for development. Ensuring the best use of this scarce resource must therefore be carefully considered. In preparing the Comprehensive Development Plan, two major factors have organized land use deci-

FUTURE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR NEIGHBORHOODS

	1. Maintain Stable Areas	2. Improve Problem Areas	3. Change Deteriorated Conditions
Existing Conditions			
Real Estate Market	Strong	Spotty	Nonexistent
Neighborhood Amenities	Attractive	Declining	Few if any
Infrastructure	Solid	Needs work	Needs major repair
Business Climate	Healthy	Soft	Very weak
Public Actions to be Taken to Implement Plan			
Real Estate Market Strategy	Support market	Stimulate market	Create substitute for market
Land Development Regulations	Control new development & construction to maintain existing neighborhood character	Develop effective zoning & design guidelines for renovation and infill	Use zoning controls to accommodate redevelopment and change
Public Sector Programs	Maintain current level of services	Attack problems & guide new development	Implement intensive redevelopment and revitalization programs
Public Investments	Small investment	Moderate investment	Large investment
Land Use Objectives	Ensure new uses on individual parcels, compatible with existing zoning & development patterns	Encourage development on multiple parcels to reinforce existing zoning and development	Change uses in deteriorated areas to create new opportunities for housing, jobs or open space



Above: Office development with quality site design and landscaping enhances commercial areas.

sions: achieving optimum location for land uses and maximum quality of new development.

Optimum Location

Market forces have a major influence on where new land uses are located. Other site criteria such as access, visibility, and the relationship to adjacent building and land uses also help determine the development potential of a particular parcel of land. The purpose of the Comprehensive Develop-

ment Plan is to ensure that, by examining the potential range of impacts of possible development, uses are established for vacant parcels that meet both city-wide and neighborhood needs including:

- for the city as a whole, achieving a properly-balanced inventory of developable land for a variety of needed uses;
- for neighborhoods, locating development to reinforce positive development trends and minimize negative impacts such as traffic, noise, or visual conflict.

Quality Development

Encouraging quality new residential, commercial or industrial development is critical to Roanoke's image and continued growth as an economically vibrant and attractive regional center. Quality development means not only visually attractive construction, but also the careful siting of buildings to preserve environmental features, provide organized traffic flows, services and parking, and promote proper "fit" with adjacent uses, through provision of open space buffers, landscaping, or careful building design.

Techniques for encouraging quality development include not only controls such as zoning, subdivision, and site plan regulations (now being refined and improved in the Roanoke Vision planning process), but also positive actions, such as provision of roads and utilities or active packaging of desired projects by the City, neighborhood groups, business associations, or other public and private organizations.

Comprehensive Development Plan Elements: A Strategy for Planning and Development Actions



The ultimate intent of the comprehensive planning process is to combine and coordinate city-wide needs, opportunities, and projects into a single, interrelated strategy. This strategy has been developed by creating a composite overlay of individual plan elements in order to establish the basis for future public and private development decisions.

The Comprehensive Development Plan includes:

Neighborhood elements: Individual land uses which combine to form the basic fabric of neighborhood areas:

- housing
- commercial development
- industrial development
- historic and cultural resources

Unifying elements: Networks of infrastructure or services and facilities which tie the various neighborhood elements into the city as a whole:

- human development and public safety
- parks and recreation
- transportation
- utilities
- environmental quality

The Comprehensive Development Plan, however, is more than just the sum of its parts. The issues and opportunities that Roanoke faces are primarily the result of how the various elements of the city relate to each other in either negative or positive ways. These negative or positive relationships may be characterized either as *conflicts*, (in which, for instance, a new road through a residential neighborhood might create problems) or as *congruences*, (in which, for example, the need for a new park might coincide with available open space in flood prone areas). The recommendations proposed in each of the following plan ele-

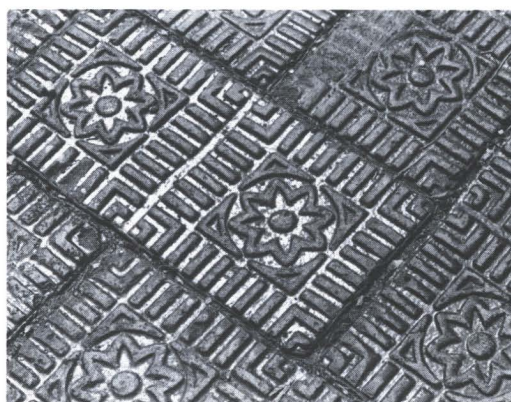
ments have been designed to minimize possible conflicts and build on positive congruent relationships. The resulting strategies and actions have also been designed to meet the goals and community values defined by citizens in the Roanoke Vision public participation process.

The following reviews of each of the plan elements include:

Review of existing conditions: Summary of issues and opportunities, current plans and programs.

Proposed planning strategies: Summary of long-term objectives and rationale for maintaining, improving or changing existing conditions and initiating new programs or development actions.

Planning and development activities: Summary of proposed recommendations and implementation priorities.



Left: Traditional paving bricks in many neighborhoods are worth preserving as a part of the city's past.



Housing

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Roanoke's neighborhoods are dominated by single family houses in a wide range of styles, ages, sizes and costs. The city has a significant inventory of well-maintained housing in older neighborhoods as well as contemporary homes in newer subdivisions.

Residential Market Characteristics

The availability of good quality housing plays a major role in the city's economic health. Since household size is declining in Roanoke, as it is across the nation, new housing units within the city can help maintain the existing population level. This is an important goal so that the city can continue to maintain its revenue base, supply of employees, diversity of residents, and quality of occupied buildings.

Roanoke's residential market strengths include its improving city image based on its active and successful public and private partnerships, improved appearance, and resulting neighborhood pride. Other factors which can positively affect Roanoke's residential markets include continuing improvement in City schools, competitive tax rates relative to adjacent jurisdictions and good maintenance of neighborhood infrastructure: utilities, streets and curbs, street lighting and street trees.

A healthy real estate market requires both existing and new, ready-to-occupy units. Currently, very few of the new housing units in the Roanoke Valley are being built in the city. Although limited undeveloped land is available in Roanoke, the development of sites suitable for residential construction should be stimulated to capture a larger share of the new home market. In addition, other potential sites for developing quality housing units in the city exist. Vacant lots suitable for new "infill" housing development are available in many

of Roanoke's older neighborhoods. These neighborhoods also have existing homes available for renovation.

The market in the city's older neighborhoods is affected by several factors. The need for renovation deters some potential buyers in favor of new, ready-to-occupy units. According to real estate brokers, low resale values and length of resale period also influence new buyers who are often skeptical of the ability of older city neighborhoods to maintain their stability over time. Increased neighborhood revitalization efforts can help change this perception.

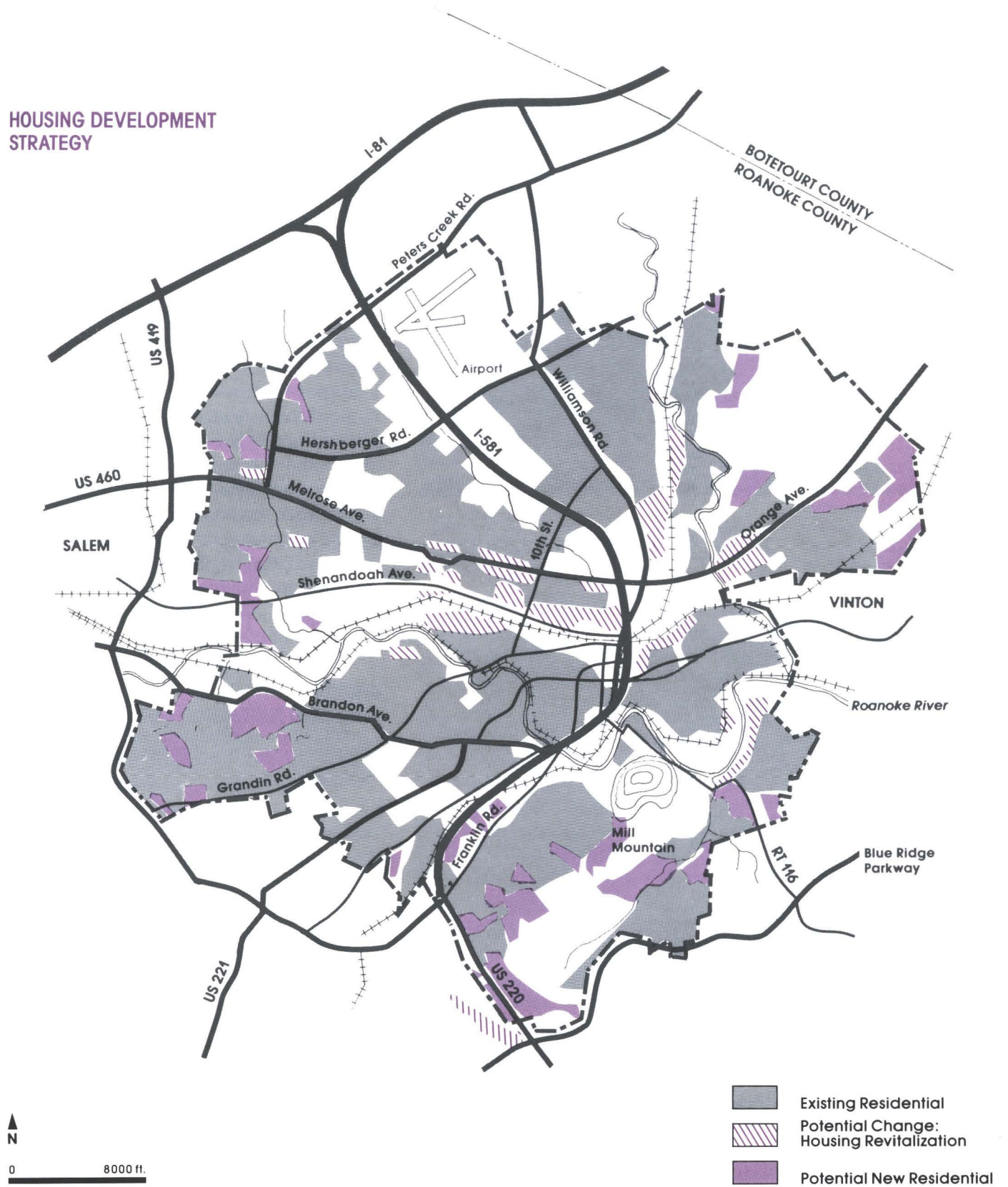
In neighborhoods further from the city center, the relative newness of the housing stock and surrounding facilities present a different set of issues and opportunities. While markets in these areas are often strong, efforts are needed to correct problems as they are identified in order to maintain housing values.

Housing Problems and Revitalization Approaches

The most serious housing problems are generally concentrated in the city's central neighborhoods which have been negatively affected by suburban development trends, past policies and regulations, and a combination of demographic, income and market forces. Noise and visual conflicts associated with industrial or commercial uses adjacent to residential areas also negatively affect real estate markets in some of these neighborhoods.

Substandard conditions, vacant and abandoned units and vacant lots created by housing demolition are serious problems in some areas. Housing maintenance is also a problem in many of the city's older neighborhoods, particularly in the rental housing stock and in homes owned by elderly residents on fixed incomes. There is strong

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



Right: Housing renovation and park revitalization are bringing new life to neighborhoods.



community support for continuing housing rehabilitation programs and for more effective enforcement of existing property maintenance codes, including the possible development of stronger regulations, an effort which might require changes in state law now limiting local property maintenance regulations.

The City of Roanoke's current strategy to address housing problems is a mixture of public policy approaches and housing rehabilitation loan and grant programs in conjunction with private and neighborhood efforts. One goal of these efforts is to upgrade or eliminate over 950 substandard housing units identified in a recent survey plus another estimated 250 seriously deteriorated units (2-3% of Roanoke's total housing units) by 1995.

In addition, the City of Roanoke provides most of the publicly assisted housing in the Roanoke Valley through the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) which owns and operates 1,500 units in eleven projects. Other public programs to supplement the supply of affordable housing include more than 800 units of

federally subsidized Section 8 housing also administered by RRHA.

In 1979, neighborhood revitalization became a central focus for City housing programs. A housing task force established the need for more public and private efforts to reduce the number of houses in seriously deteriorated condition. Through City programs and private support, more than 800 houses have been rehabilitated in the last seven years.

Since 1980, the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership has been instrumental in influencing City housing policies, helping neighborhood organizations with their own housing development strategies and bolstering neighborhood confidence by improving general neighborhood conditions. In 1985, the Partnership added a housing planner to work directly with neighborhood organizations to develop housing action plans for specific neighborhoods.

STRATEGY

Residential Development Objectives

- Encourage expansion of Roanoke's population base.
- Encourage variety of housing choice in existing neighborhoods through a balance of preservation, rehabilitation and new development.
- Encourage quality construction and attractive design.
- Discourage insensitive new construction and demolition of usable units.

The intent of the Plan's housing strategy is, therefore, to improve and enhance existing neighborhoods by building on areas of strength, to provide additional new housing units through rehabilitation and new construction, and to promote diversity of housing type and cost.

Housing Revitalization and Neighborhood Change

Most of the vacant and substandard housing units in Roanoke are found in the city's older, central neighborhoods. Based on preliminary neighborhood analysis, the Housing Development Strategy map depicts areas where major housing improvements or land use changes are needed for neighborhood revitalization. Although each situation varies, common patterns influencing housing deterioration can be identified. Conflicting uses such as unsightly, noisy industries or commercial uses often affect the desirability of nearby housing. If appropriate buffers are not provided through landscaping, topography or design features, housing and neighborhood deterioration are a common result in blocks which form the edge between conflicting uses. In neighborhoods such as Gilmer/Northwest, Hurt Park, Shenandoah West or Belmont, blocks adjacent to these conflicting edges are often up to 90% vacant, while vacancy in the interiors of the neighborhoods is much lower. Current industrial or commercial zoning in areas which have continued to be primarily residential reinforces this pattern by encouraging deferred maintenance and by discouraging new residential investment.

Neighborhoods affected by conflicting land uses can change patterns of deterioration. Where appropriate, poor quality edges could be converted into new open space or employment-related industrial or commercial uses. Housing units which are removed should be replaced within the neighborhood; good quality housing units could even be moved to more stable blocks in the neighborhoods. Careful design and site plan controls could ensure compatible new development with adequate open space buffers to protect the remaining community from future land use conflicts. Effective pro-

grams to carefully maintain any new open space would be critical.

The essential strategy for such seriously deteriorated conditions is to reinforce and expand the stable areas of neighborhoods by focusing housing revitalization in a smaller, more defined territory and finding appropriate new uses for the remaining land. This has several positive effects:

- Housing rehabilitation funds can be targeted for visible results.
- Neighborhood safety, confidence, image and quality are enhanced.
- Dangerous, substandard housing units unable to be renovated are removed.
- Sites for attractive new open space or industrial or commercial land uses are made available.

Below: The work of many is revitalizing the city's neighborhoods. Private investments and improved maintenance by homeowners can be seen throughout Roanoke.



This approach depends on the active involvement of neighborhood residents in detailed neighborhood action planning. A careful examination of existing neighborhoods, strengths, housing conditions, adjacent land uses, market potential and more would be needed.

In neighborhoods where there are concerns about the impact of larger, multi-family housing units on the surrounding areas, the relationship of adjacent uses can be improved in several ways. Additional landscaping or design features to reduce the visual contrast is one approach. Increased human service programs including organized youth activities, job training, or family services would be effective where social problems are the primary issues. Neighborhood development efforts to foster increased communication and neighborhood identity would be additional tools.

Reinforcement for seriously deteriorated areas of neighborhoods as well as for other neighborhoods needing improvement will require a concentrated public/private effort. Housing strategies and neighborhood plans need to be developed and coordinated on a city-wide basis. City zoning regulations should reinforce preservation and housing infill efforts. City maintenance codes must be effectively enforced.

New Residential Development

Strategies for new, large-scale residential development on scarce vacant land should be encouraged in order to expand Roanoke's population base and respond to the demand for a diversity of housing choices. Building setbacks, materials, and other design characteristics should relate to the existing neighborhood context. Clustering of units can promote attractive residential settings by slightly increasing densities as a trade off for achieving large areas of common open space. "Planned unit developments" may contain appropriate retail development and community service facilities in addition to housing units. In all undeveloped areas, construction on steep slopes and in flood plains should be minimized. The Housing Development Strategy map shows potential

parcels in the city that would be appropriate for new housing development.

Downtown also provides sites for new housing development. The public participation process indicated significant interest in downtown housing: the creation of a 24-hour activity center, for living as well as working, will increase the vitality and attractiveness of downtown as a cultural, entertainment and retail center as well as a desirable office location. Loft renovations in now vacant floors above existing commercial uses or new housing development on sites immediately adjacent to the central business district are the kinds of projects which can respond to this potential market.

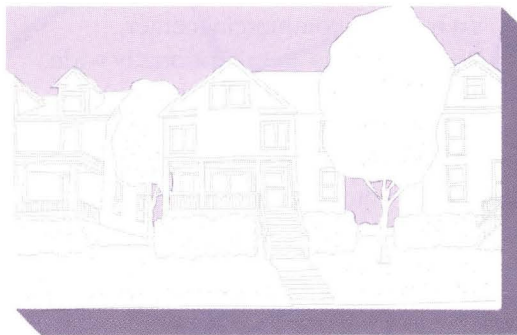
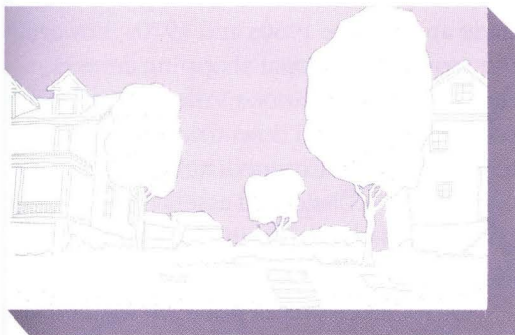


Such housing could be a major effort of residential programs sponsored by a new housing development corporation. Current zoning which restricts residential uses in the downtown area should be modified to increase design flexibility and ease the administrative approvals process for renovated or new downtown housing development.

Non-profit Development Corporation

To achieve the proposed housing strategies, preserve the character of the city's older neighborhoods, and provide a variety of affordable housing choices, significant new housing investments will be required.

Right: Garden apartments in the rapidly developing area near Valley View Mall.



Left: Before and after sketches of new infill housing that should be encouraged on vacant lots in older neighborhoods.

Current local, state and federal programs administered by the City and the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) will not adequately meet Roanoke's continuing maintenance and rehabilitation needs for the city's significant stock of older and substandard housing units. A non-profit development corporation should be founded as a key ingredient in an expanded housing strategy. Such an organization would be able to coordinate increased public and private investments and initiate housing rehabilitation and new construction projects, independently or in conjunction with neighborhood organizations. It could also offer needed financial and technical expertise to neighborhood organizations.

The non-profit corporation, modeled on similar projects in cities such as Charlotte, N.C., should be spearheaded by local financial and business interests. As an independent non-profit organization, the corporation would have the flexibility to leverage both public and private funds and to attract major grants and loans from sources such as the Ford Foundation's Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) or the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Inner City Ventures Fund. Roanoke does not now have an appropriate non-profit development vehicle to attract such major funding; however, the city's impressive track record in neighborhood revitalization would make it an at-

tractive investment site if the right vehicle did exist. The housing development corporation would not duplicate existing public sector efforts, but rather act to bring critical new investments by expanding the private and non-profit sectors' roles.

In addition, a housing development corporation could participate in selected new construction projects in areas such as downtown or to provide housing for populations with special needs.

SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

1. Develop public/private housing strategy plan.
2. Create non-profit development corporation.
3. Emphasize housing strategy in neighborhood plans.
4. Enact zoning to facilitate preservation, infill, and more downtown housing.
5. Ensure maximum possible enforcement of housing maintenance codes.
6. Improve existing neighborhood environments.
7. Define design guidelines as examples for new or renovated housing.