



## Commercial Development

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

**A**s a regional commercial center, Roanoke offers an exceptionally wide range of services. Through recent urban design efforts, downtown Roanoke has grown as an attractive and vital commercial district. Downtown revitalization has meant new stores, parking structures, major office building construction, park development, and street landscaping. The historic City

Right: View of downtown.



Market District houses an active outdoor farmers' market as well as a variety of shops and restaurants including those in the recently renovated historic City Market Building.

#### ***Office and Retail Use***

Downtown Roanoke is now the preferred office location in the city. South of downtown, the Franklin Road corridor in Old Southwest and the area of South Roanoke adjacent to Roanoke Memorial Hospital are developing as residential/office areas. For both of these areas, proximity to a major hospital, good access and changes to commercial zoning in the 1960s have resulted in use conflicts with adjacent residential areas. In the Old Southwest area, a recent study focusing on Franklin Road noted that parking and clearance of older houses for new office and parking lots are changing the character of the area.

Historically, downtown Roanoke, with its many department stores and specialty

shops, dominated Roanoke's regional retail trade area. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, the growth of regional shopping centers throughout the Roanoke Valley shifted major retailing away from downtown. These centers, located in or immediately next to the city, are now considered assets to the shopping diversity and overall economic health of Roanoke.

Strip development is a term applied to car-oriented commercial uses located along major roads or highways. Commercial strips are often cluttered with unattractive signage and are disruptive of traffic flow. Roanoke has existing strips along Williamson Road, Melrose Avenue and Franklin Road and more are in the process of forming.

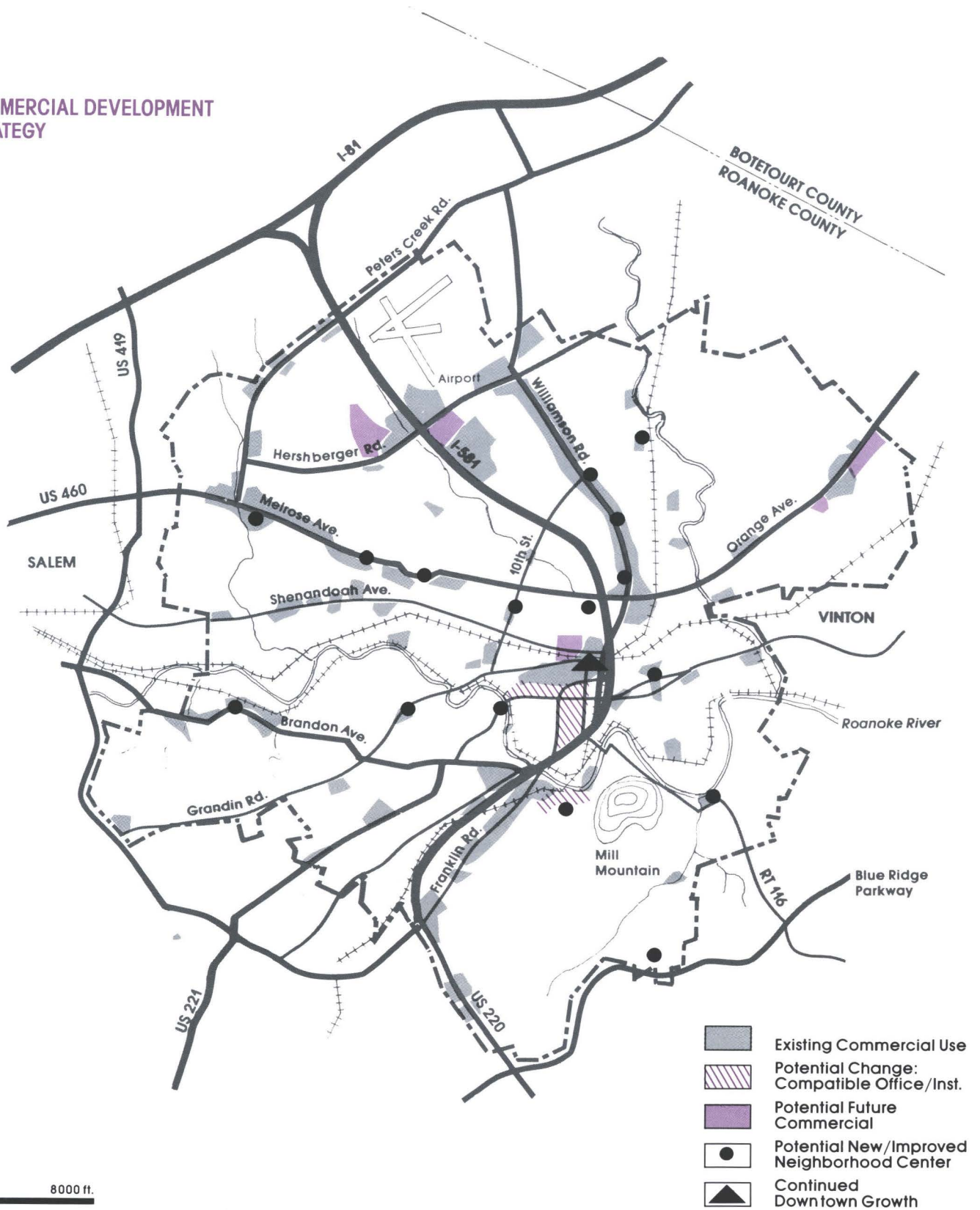
Despite commercial growth in malls and strips, Roanoke still has many concentrated neighborhood commercial centers. A convenient neighborhood center not only can provide local services, but it also greatly contributes to the social fabric and identity of a neighborhood. These facilities are especially important to the elderly and people without cars. The Grandin Road and Crystal Spring Avenue commercial areas are good examples of successful neighborhood centers that warrant preservation. The Commercial Development Strategy map shows both neighborhood centers in need of revitalization and sites for new centers.

#### ***Tourism***

Roanoke has a growing tourist/convention industry which generated over \$120 million dollars for the Roanoke Valley economy in 1984. New hotel and motel rooms have been added, as well as jobs and tax revenues. However, with the exception of the Blue Ridge Parkway, western Virginia and the Roanoke Valley lack a major tourist destination. And, while the Blue Ridge Parkway draws over 19 million visitors to the

**ZONING COMMISSION**  
District of Columbia  
CASE NO.86-26  
EXHIBIT NO.527A4

## COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



Right: The revitalized Market area preserves a Roanoke tradition for the farmers who have long made it a special asset to the city.

Roanoke area each year, few stop in the Roanoke Valley. Convention and exhibit facilities are also limited in capacity and do not reflect the current state-of-the-art required by many users.

Efforts to tap Roanoke's tourist potential, further expand the regional economy and add new recreation and cultural facilities are being developed with a regional focus. The Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau is a major advocate and coordinator of regional tourism. Current City efforts include a study for improvements at the Roanoke Civic Center possibly to include plans for a new convention center with related development or improvement of adjacent hotel rooms.

The River Foundation, a non-profit organization, is directing the development of the Explore Project, a major, family-oriented tourist attraction which would include the proposed Blue Ridge Zoological Park, educational and research facilities, and a wide range of lodging and dining facilities. Additional tourist attractions include the development of a 25 mile scenic river parkway along the Roanoke River from Dixie Caverns through the city to Smith Mountain Lake and a steam train ride from the City Market area to the proposed project site in Roanoke County at the intersection of the Blue Ridge Parkway and Roanoke River. The Virginia Museum of Transportation may also be relocated and linked to the Explore Project. Preliminary plans call for completion of the project's first phase by 1990.

Other visitor-related projects now in the planning or development stages include the completion of the Victory Stadium Sports Complex and continued growth of the City Market area as a major regional draw.

## STRATEGY

### *Commercial Development Objectives*

- Encourage continuing growth of downtown as an office, commercial and cultural center.
- Encourage the growth of tourism in Roanoke.
- Encourage revitalization or creation of neighborhood centers.
- Discourage new strip commercial, speculative multi-building office parks, and land use conflicts.



### *Downtown Revitalization and Image*

Downtown Roanoke should continue to be the focus of office and supporting commercial activities. The impacts on downtown of any new multi-building office parks proposed for sites outside the central business district should be evaluated. Plans developed in Design '85, a recent downtown development study, propose new initiatives to link areas within the core and create new sites for office and entertainment development. This includes establishing a connection to the Hotel Roanoke across the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks, the possibility of a convention/exhibit center, and the introduction of downtown housing as well as continued rehabilitation of the retail and office uses. The Design '85 effort, initiated by the downtown business community, should be supported and reinforced by the City. This

support should include careful examination of public actions which could help leverage private investment: these possible projects could include street improvements, traffic improvements, and streetscaping, planting and lighting to continue to improve downtown's image.

Citizen response identified several other important ideas to enhance downtown including: a system of coordinated identity and directional signs on all major routes into and within downtown; expanding retail store hours; more convenient parking; and improving the image of downtown through coordinated marketing. To further improve the image of downtown, neighborhood and streetscaping improvements should occur on all major entrance routes. For city and regional commuters, daily impressions of downtown are shaped by the deteriorated conditions on the edges of downtown. Immediate attention to housing problems, unsightly commercial and industrial uses and improved landscape treatments could have a major effect on perceptions of downtown and the city as a whole. Similar design, signage and landscaping at major entry points to the city including the I-81 and I-581 exits should be considered.

Parking is a key element to downtown's continued growth. New parking facilities to reduce the current deficit of parking spaces and to accompany any major new downtown development, as well as efforts such as "Park and Shop" programs for reduced/subsidized parking rates, are needed to provide ease of access for workers, potential downtown residents and shoppers.

#### ***Henry Street Revitalization***

Revitalization of the Henry Street area as an activity and entertainment link between downtown and adjacent neighborhoods should be an important additional part of downtown planning.



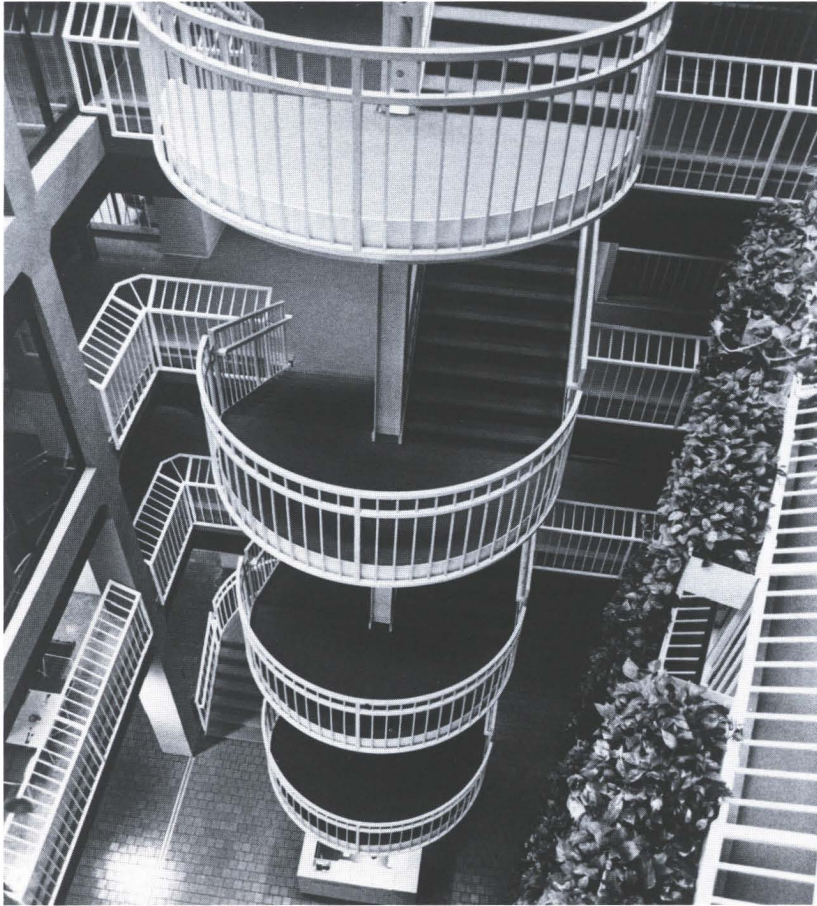
Important issues include coordinating improvements such as the First Street bridge reconstruction, connection of Henry Street (First Street, N.W.) and Gainsboro Road, linkage to the Hotel Roanoke and potential convention center plans, and the renovation of the Warehouse District adjacent to the First Street Bridge.

**Above: A new business center represents economic development for the region.**

#### ***Tourism and Convention Development***

Regional and local efforts to expand convention and tourist facilities and programs should be supported as key ways to expand the local economy and make Roanoke a more competitive regional center. The proposed Explore Project, including a zoological park and steam train should be supported through public and private efforts. Improvements to the Roanoke Civic Center, possibly linked to new exhibit center facilities, are the subject of a study to be completed in June 1986.

Other tourist-related projects should include information centers featuring Roanoke area attractions. These centers could be located near major entry points (such as the City Market, possibly in conjunction with Center in the Square, and at



Above: Atrium view in Center in the Square cultural center located in the downtown Market district.

Valley View Mall). Festival programs, already a success in establishing resident pride, could be expanded and marketed to increase Roanoke's visibility to regional, state or national visitors. Creative ideas for future use of Mill Mountain, such as a conference center/corporate retreat, are other important agenda items for future planning.

#### ***Neighborhood Commercial Centers***

The development of neighborhood commercial centers as a key element of area revitalization should be reinforced. Detailed neighborhood commercial strategies should be developed as a part of neighborhood action plans. Zoning controls over strip development should help limit curb cuts

and reduce further visual clutter and traffic problems. New commercial activity should be encouraged to focus in concentrated centers at major intersections for maximum access and convenience. Where neighborhood centers have already been absorbed in existing strips, efforts should be made by the local business community to maintain and promote neighborhood uses as well as to distinguish the center's visual image through landscaping and quality site planning and design. Selective expansion of zoning for commercial development may be needed to provide for these neighborhood centers. Efforts such as the recent Williamson Road urban design study should be supported in other commercial districts. Action projects identified for the Williamson Road area should be supported through both public and private investments and technical assistance.

In declining as well as successful commercial centers, the development of neighborhood business associations should be encouraged. A "business advisory committee" should be established to work with neighborhood business associations in their continuing economic development or revitalization efforts, particularly in bringing needed commercial services to underserved neighborhoods. Commercial areas on Melrose Avenue, 11th Street N.W. and 9th Street S.E. could all benefit from business association efforts.

New neighborhood centers should be encouraged, where appropriate and feasible, in areas where market support and local access and visibility are available. The Commercial Development Strategy map indicates the potential for a new center in Gainsboro to serve the neighborhoods of lower Northwest, as well as at the junction of Brandon Avenue and the proposed Peters Creek Road Extension, where the market

made possible by the new road should be focused into a concentrated center rather than strip development. In addition, commercial areas that show the potential for neighborhood centers should be promoted, such as in Riverdale, Garden City and Hurt Park.

### ***Commercial/Residential Conflicts***

Residential conflicts with existing commercial development should be identified in neighborhood action plans. The Franklin Road Corridor Study suggested a potential mixture of public and private actions to help ameliorate existing conflicts and prevent future development inappropriate to the area. These actions include implementing design guidelines for buffering residential areas, streetscape and parking lot improvements, and building quality and scale for new construction. Other proposed actions include promotion of historic preservation through public education, modification of zoning to protect existing residential quality, development of new parking areas, improvement of existing traffic patterns and examination of the potential for selected street closings. Similar actions should be examined for other areas with use conflicts. For example, landscape buffering and selected street closings could be used to reduce neighborhood conflicts in the Williamson Road area. Visual conflicts between residential and commercial uses common to many neighborhoods can be improved by landscaping and buffering.

### ***Shopping Centers and Malls***

Existing large scale retail centers and their surrounding land uses are important factors in the local and regional economy. Within Roanoke, these areas include Valley View Mall, Celebration Station and the hotel/retail complex west of I-581 at Hershberger Road; the Crossroads Mall and adjacent

commercial development to the east on Hershberger Road; the Roanoke/Salem Plaza area in northwest Roanoke; and the Tower Mall area in southwest Roanoke. Continued careful planning and development of these areas is critical to Roanoke's balanced growth. Issues which should be considered include providing an appropriate mix of uses and activities as well as ensuring accessibility through traffic and transit planning.

### **SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS**

1. Prepare commercial strategy as part of neighborhood action plans.
2. Prepare neighborhood commercial plan as part of the City of Roanoke's economic development strategy.
3. Enact zoning regulations to control commercial uses, location and residential impacts.
4. Support the creation of neighborhood business associations and establish a business advisory committee to assist their efforts.
5. Continue development of downtown as an office/government/supporting retail center.
6. Facilitate redevelopment or reuse of declining retail centers.
7. Ensure the stability of existing shopping centers and malls by reinforcing accessibility and supporting land uses.
8. Encourage the development of new and improved tourist destination attractions and supporting services within Roanoke and the larger Roanoke Valley region.



## Industrial Development

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

#### *Industrial Employment Trends*

**R**oanoke is the employment hub and major service center for the region. Although it contains only 10% of the metropolitan region's land area, it provides almost 60,000 jobs, over 50% of the employment of the Roanoke Valley. Employment data shows that Roanoke's economic base is changing from a predominantly manufacturing economy to a modern service economy.

Conflicts with flood plains or with adjacent neighborhoods often limit potential expansion of existing facilities.

The City of Roanoke's Office of Economic Development and Grants, with support from the Roanoke Valley Chamber of Commerce, has initiated a number of public/private economic development efforts, including coordination of public grants and leveraged investment for downtown development projects and city-wide industrial/manufacturing site development. The Office's two primary objectives are to create new jobs and to expand investment in the city.

For the last six years, the City of Roanoke has had a successful site assembly and marketing program which has been able to meet the challenge of stiff competition between cities for new industries.

### STRATEGY

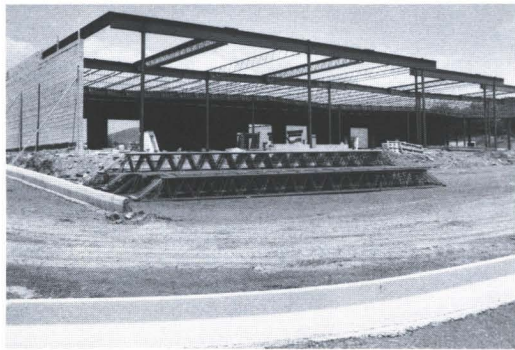
#### *Industrial Development Objectives*

- Encourage new industrial development on appropriate sites.
- Discourage other uses of valuable industrial land.

#### *New Industrial Development*

Regional cooperation is extremely important for industrial development. Until recently, the Roanoke Valley lacked a unified effort to attract industry. The formation of the Regional Partnership in 1984 was an important step in this direction. Creative new regional approaches will be critical for dynamic economic growth. Joint efforts between Roanoke and adjacent jurisdictions could result in advantageous new industrial development for the Roanoke Valley. For example, Roanoke could provide utilities and another could provide the land. Each could share costs and the benefits including the tax revenues.

Right: New industrial development in Roanoke.



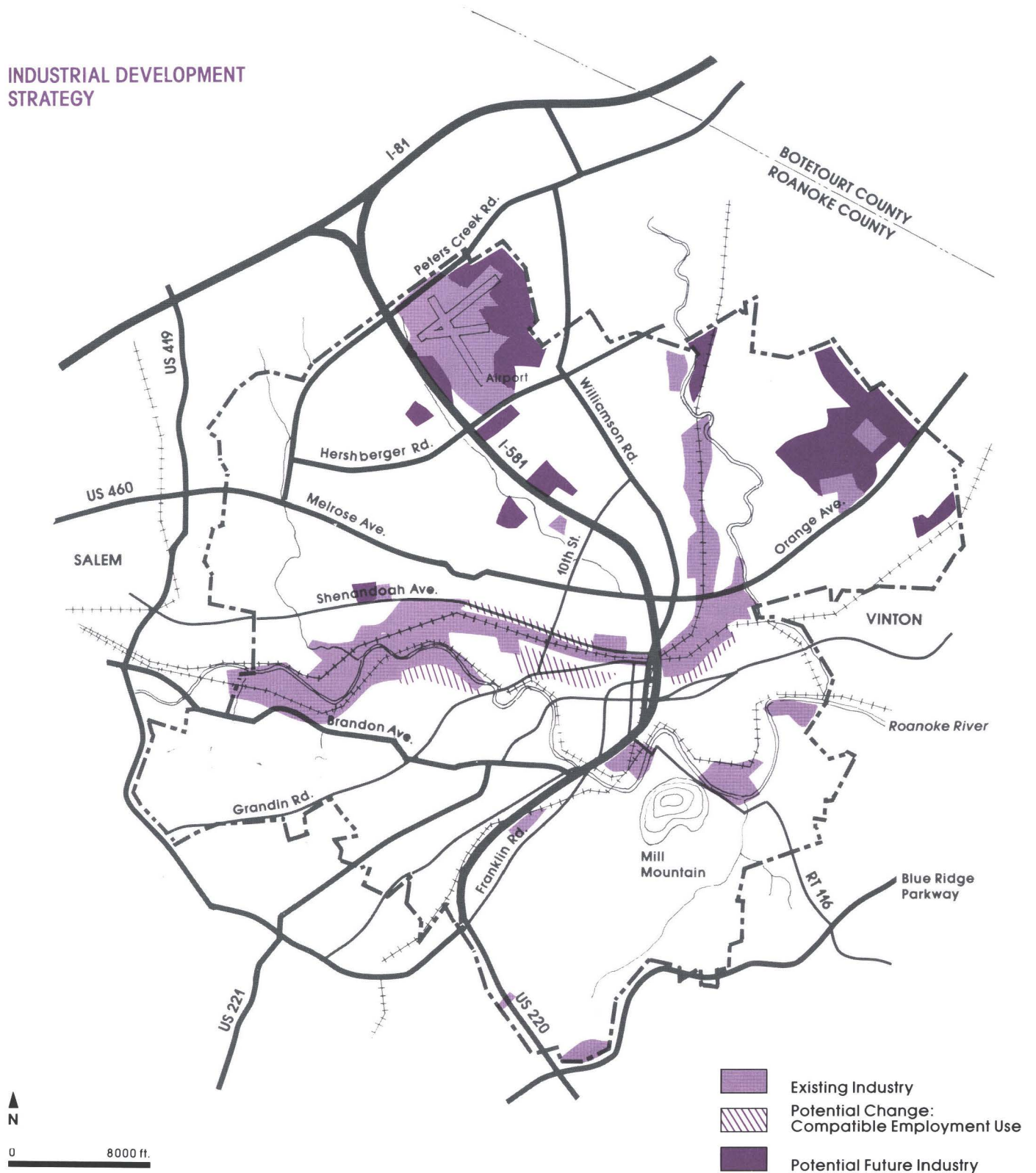
Non-manufacturing jobs now outnumber manufacturing by five to one. Only two of the Roanoke Valley's ten largest employers, Norfolk Southern and General Electric, are members of the traditional industrial sector. There is a good balance between jobs and skills in Roanoke. Over the past ten years, the economy has been operating at or near full employment (an unemployment rate of 5% or less).

#### *Industrial Site Development*

Roanoke's industry is closely associated with the transportation system; the majority of the industrial land focuses around the railroad, major roads or the airport. Many of the older industrial locations are located adjacent to the Roanoke River.

The key issue facing industrial development in Roanoke today is the limited availability of new sites suitable for industrial

# INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY





Above: New manufacturing development bringing jobs and revenue to the city's economy.

Strategies for industrial development within Roanoke should initially focus on completing existing developments, such as the Roanoke Centre for Industry and Technology; developing sites within the Urban Enterprise Zone similar to the Wometco project; and marketing new priority sites identified by the City's Office of Economic Development such as those near the proposed I-581 interchanges south of Valley View Mall. As noted in the housing section of this plan, areas identified in neighborhood plans as suitable for industrial redevelopment should also be considered for

new or expanded uses. Evaluation of potential sites should be coordinated with local neighborhood plans to identify compatible job locations.

Any other uses for the limited amount of undeveloped industrial land should be discouraged. Efforts should be made by the City to assure that potential sites have the needed access and infrastructure.

#### ***Improving Industrial Land Use Conflicts***

Many existing industries are located in the Roanoke River flood plains. Future development in these areas, or expansion of existing facilities, should be discouraged.

Alternative sites within the city should be identified when the most feasible option is relocation.

Conflicts between industrial sites and neighboring residential areas are a common concern. In addition to the noise and visual problems, truck traffic affects neighborhood access, circulation, and housing market appeal. The City should reevaluate the existing truck route plan to provide easy access to industries while further minimizing traffic impacts on neighborhoods.

#### **SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS**

1. Coordinate neighborhood plans with industrial development planning to identify compatible job locations and to minimize conflicts.
2. Develop strategies for regional industrial development.
3. Facilitate relocation of existing industrial uses, if desired, and limit new industrial uses in flood plain.
4. Promote appropriate development in Urban Enterprise Zone and other priority locations.
5. Complete access and infrastructure improvements to potential employment sites.

## Historic and Cultural Resources



### EXISTING CONDITIONS

#### Historic Preservation

Roanoke is a city rich in historic character. Its history of rapid development as a major rail and manufacturing center in the 1880s is evident today in the legacy of its varied residential, commercial, industrial and civic buildings.

The value of this legacy has been rediscovered by citizens, the business community and City government within the last decade. Recent efforts to document and preserve historic structures include the designation of three Virginia and National Register Historic Districts: the Warehouse and City Market Districts in downtown Roanoke and the Southwest Historic District in the neighborhoods of Old Southwest, Hurt Park and Mountain View. In addition to helping preserve important structures, this growing interest in Roanoke's history has had an important impact on downtown and neighborhood revitalization. The Historical and Cultural Resource Strategy map illustrates these districts, additional National Register structures and other significant buildings noted in the recent historic survey, *Historic Structures in Roanoke: A Preliminary Survey 1985*. Potentially significant archaeological sites are also indicated on the map.

Neighborhood conservation efforts, both within the designated Southwest Historic District and the many other older neighborhoods of the city, are critical to preserving the historic character and architectural heritage of Roanoke. Current land use regulations, including the existing zoning ordinance and demolition procedures, often have negative impacts on these efforts. When the existing zoning ordinance was enacted in 1966, new office, commercial or industrial uses were proposed for many of the city's older, intact neighborhoods. It also

significantly increased the allowed residential densities in these older, architecturally rich neighborhoods and made the small lot sizes prevalent there nonconforming. These zoning revisions contributed to patterns of neighborhood change and disinvestment. In some older neighborhoods, residential structures were replaced by office, commercial or multi-family housing in conflict with the scale and architectural character of the area. Other neighborhoods suffered from new industrial uses inadequately separated from residences. Serious deterioration, abandonment and eventual demolition of some of the city's oldest homes occurred. Recent revitalization efforts have identified several other regulatory problems for neighborhood conservation. These include: a lack of flexible provisions for developing new "infill" housing on vacant lots; a need for more innovative preservation techniques such as allowing additional uses including "bed and breakfast" accommodations, art studios and professional or home occupations in historic structures; and the need for improved design guidelines and site plan controls as well as improved procedures to limit demolition of significant structures.

#### Cultural Resources

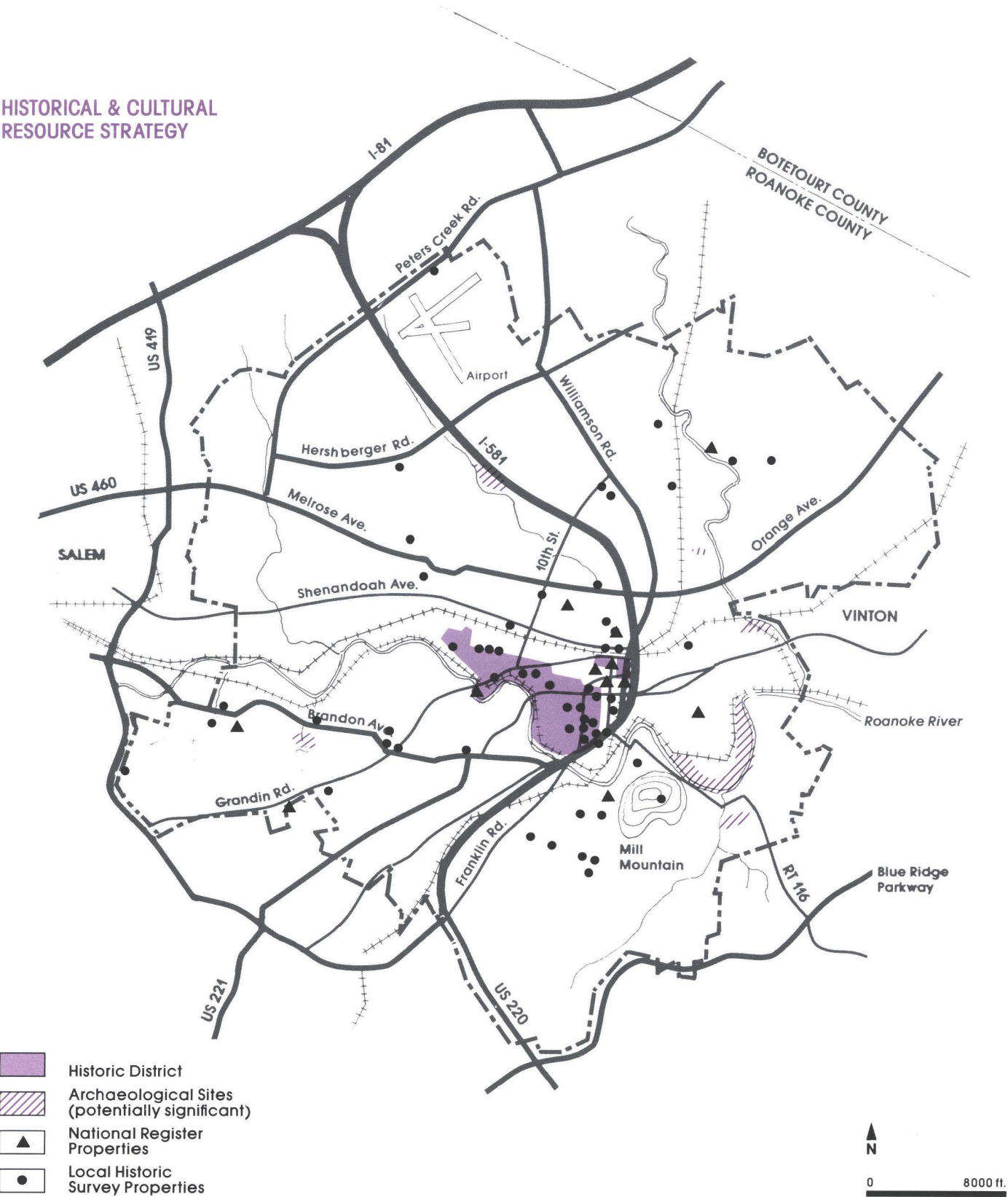
Roanoke is the cultural center for the Roanoke Valley and most of western Virginia. For a city of its size, Roanoke has excellent cultural facilities. Careful planning helped cluster these facilities so that each activity not only reinforces other cultural and preservation activities, but facility locations contribute to the economic prosperity of the city as a whole.

Five major cultural institutions are located at Center in the Square in downtown Roanoke, including three museums, the arts council, and a theater. The Harrison Heritage and Cultural Center, located adja-



Above: Architectural detail of the traditional front porches in Roanoke's neighborhoods.

**HISTORICAL & CULTURAL  
RESOURCE STRATEGY**



cent to downtown in the Gainsboro area, is Roanoke's newest cultural attraction. The Roanoke Civic Center and Victory Stadium serve special events. The Virginia Museum of Transportation is also a tourist draw.

## **STRATEGY**

### ***Cultural/Historical Objectives***

- Encourage preservation of historic buildings or areas.
- Encourage development and expansion of cultural facilities.
- Discourage demolition or inappropriate use of valuable cultural and historic resources.

### ***Historic Preservation and Neighborhood Conservation***

The growing awareness of the importance of historic structures to the overall character of Roanoke should be nurtured. City programs supporting restoration and renovation of structures should be continued and reinforced. Neighborhood action plans should include a preservation component.

Changes in existing land use regulations are essential to preservation in Roanoke. Zoning designations in the city's older neighborhoods should be evaluated to resolve conflicts between the existing uses and the underlying zoning classifications. For example, appropriate changes should be considered for neighborhood areas with predominately single family or duplex residential uses but commercial or much higher density residential zoning classifications. In addition, a new residential zoning category should be considered to allow development on the small vacant lots in many neighborhoods. Protective overlay zoning along with better site plan and design review procedures should be used to discourage demolition of historic buildings and help preserve neighborhood character. Expanded residential uses, increased densities and

appropriate non-residential uses should be considered for significant historic properties to help make their preservation economically feasible.

Roanoke's historic character should be promoted as an important aspect of its city identity in economic and tourist development efforts. In addition, the preliminary historic survey should be developed into a historic inventory plan and updated as new information is available.

### ***Expanded Cultural Opportunities***

Roanoke's cultural resources should continue to be reinforced, promoted and expanded. The City Market District is becoming the central focus of arts activities and should continue to be supported. Regional developments such as the proposed Blue Ridge Zoological Park should be supported as new tourist and cultural centers. In addition, programs which use the arts to expand opportunities for Roanoke's youth should be developed. The coordination of these activities, the expansion of arts programs, facilities, and an enlarged public art strategy are also important. The Roanoke Valley Arts Council, as well as other arts organizations, can be important resources in these efforts.

## **SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS**

1. Prepare a more detailed historical/cultural inventory plan.
2. Coordinate neighborhood action plans with preservation objectives.
3. Enact zoning and related land development regulations to preserve landmarks and neighborhood character.
4. Promote Roanoke as cultural/tourism center for region.
5. Establish programs to improve markets for historic and other existing houses and buildings.



## *Human Development and Public Safety*

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

**H**uman development and public safety include education, social services, libraries, police, fire, and emergency services.

#### **Education**

The Roanoke Public School System consists of 2 high schools, 6 junior high schools and 21 elementary schools. Enrollment in 1985 totaled 14,510 students, reflecting the current enrollment decline of about 2% annually. Existing school facilities can accommodate up to about 17,800 students.

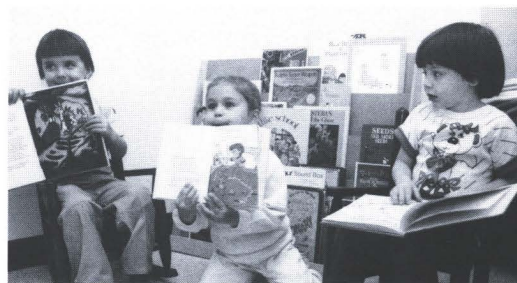
Despite the enrollment decline, the school administration and School Board have set a strong policy to maintain neighborhood elementary schools. As student population declines, school administration pairing techniques have been used to improve efficiency in order to maintain a greater number of neighborhood schools. In addition, although 17 of the 21 elementary schools serve more than one neighborhood, an attempt is made to minimize busing by linking entire neighborhoods to individual schools.

One of the primary problems facing the school system is its image. The recent improvements in test scores, reduction in drop out rates and innovative instructional programs show significant gains within the school system. Many children are returning to the public schools from private facilities, which is a positive indicator of families' perceptions of the school system. However, many citizens in the Roanoke Valley have not yet acknowledged this growth. One of the major manifestations of this perceived problem with the image of City schools is in the relationships of schools to the housing market. One of the primary reasons that young families continue to be drawn to suburban residential areas in other jurisdictions

is the perceived difference in educational quality between school districts. As improvements in the quality of education within the school system continue, concerted efforts should be made to translate these improvements into a positive image for City schools, housing and neighborhoods.

The major physical problem facing the school system is the aging of some of its facilities. Seven pre-1930 schools are now being renovated to extend their use. Modernizing all of Roanoke's schools has also included developing programs and facilities to keep abreast of today's technological advances. Improving the school system's physical image will also have a positive effect on neighborhood real estate market conditions.

For older students and adults, there is a need for expanded and convenient local public undergraduate opportunities, a centralized graduate level education program and technical/vocational training, each of which help to stimulate economic development. Current post-secondary education



within Roanoke includes a two-year public college, business and secretarial schools and courses in computer education. However, within the immediate Roanoke Valley, private institutions such as Hollins College and Roanoke College expand educational opportunities, as does Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University at Blacksburg.

Right: Early childhood education, a key element of human development programs in the city.

### ***Human Services***

Caring for the human service needs of Roanoke's citizens is important to the Comprehensive Development Plan in several respects. Providing quality cost-effective human services helps insure that the basic needs of all citizens are met, improving the quality of life in the city as a whole.

Within the City government, the Department of Social Services coordinates and administers aid programs including child welfare, food stamps, income maintenance, fuel assistance and employment services. This department also delivers social services required to assist individuals or families in achieving or maintaining self-sufficiency and functioning at their maximum level of independence. Additional services for employment and training are provided on a regional basis through the Fifth District Employment and Training Consortium.

Six major areas of human service concerns in Roanoke identified by key service providers and citizens include:

***Teenage Pregnancy:*** Teenage pregnancy is one of the most serious social issues facing Roanoke. In 1983, approximately one in every nine young women (ages 15-19) became pregnant.

***Residential Care Facilities:*** There is an increased need for group homes for the mentally ill and other special groups. Zoning and community objections often restrict the location of residential facilities. At this time, the City is moving away from using larger group care facilities to smaller "family care" homes.

***Alcohol-Related Problems:*** Facilities for problem alcoholics and street people (about 150-200 individuals) are needed.

***Elderly Care:*** Improved services for the elderly indigent are needed. The United



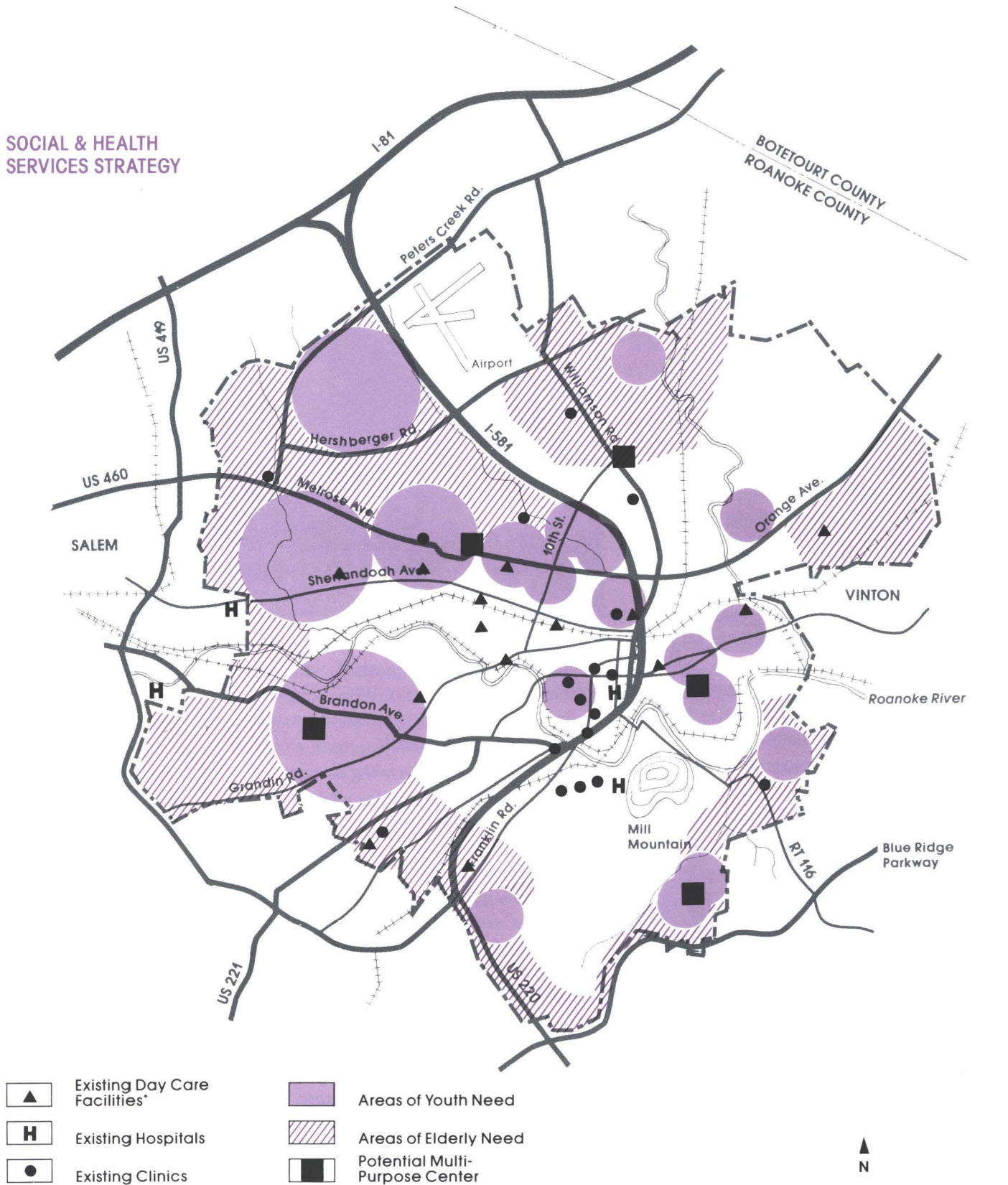
Way is currently initiating a needs assessment for the Roanoke area which will be completed in the spring of 1986. Programs for services to the elderly are anticipated to be a main topic in this plan.

***Child Care:*** There is a growing demand for quality day care services for working families. The needs for convenient before- and after-school care are also high. One of the issues for child care businesses is whether current zoning regulations, particularly for home-based child care, are overly restrictive. For larger centers, Virginia state building code regulations which require day care providers to meet commercial building standards rather than standards specifically for child care are also a problem.

***Employment Services:*** Roanoke needs more intensive job/skill training programs. Current college and adult education classes are geared to students or working clientele with different schedule needs than those of the unemployed.

**Above: Day care centers provide essential community services.**

## SOCIAL & HEALTH SERVICES STRATEGY



\*Licensed by State Department of Health

### ***Libraries***

The downtown main library, five branches and a bookmobile serve the City of Roanoke. Recent expansion of the main library and two branches, plus reciprocal borrowing agreements with the county and Vinton, has ensured sufficient service for the city's needs. The main issue concerning service is the availability of parking for the main library.

### ***Police***

The Police Department works out of centralized offices in the Municipal Building Annex in downtown Roanoke. Operations in the city include thirteen patrol districts that are covered by fourteen to eighteen police cars. A new Police Building and Municipal Annex, scheduled for construction in 1988-89, will relieve the present overcrowding. Improved radio emergency dispatch coordination is also needed.

### ***Fire***

The Fire Department has ten fire districts and thirteen stations. The central headquarters are located in downtown Roanoke. However, more administrative space is currently needed. The department is now conducting a computerized location search for a site for a proposed station needed in the vicinity of Route 460 East. Other current plans include a prioritized fire hydrant installation program for those isolated sections of the city lacking hydrants. Closer Fire Department involvement in land use discussions for new development is also needed.

### ***Health Care and Emergency Services***

Roanoke is a regional center of health care facilities for a tri-county region; these medical services are a major element in the city's economy. In addition to Roanoke Memorial Hospital and Community Hospital, the two

major hospitals within the city, there are two equally large hospitals adjacent to Roanoke, the Veteran's Administration Medical Center and Lewis-Gale Hospital. Together these hospitals have over 2,200 acute care beds supported by more than 5,000 hospital employees, and 2,500 physicians and support staff. Roanoke also has a total of about 30 out-patient clinics and a smaller specialty facility, the Gill Memorial Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital.

In addition to private mental health practitioners, mental health care is provided on a regional basis through Mental Health Services of the Roanoke Valley. Mental Health Services offers programs in four categories: mental health, mental retardation, mental illness, and substance abuse. Each decentralized program includes group homes and special care facilities as well as outreach programs. In addition, for mental retardation there are five sheltered workshops, adult education, and special recreation programs. The special recreation program is operated by the Roanoke County Department of Parks and Recreation. In services for the mentally retarded, more programs for school age children during the summer, day and after school care, and more specialized workshop facilities are needed. Better accommodation in zoning regulations is needed for group homes for all population groups with special needs.

Three rescue squads and one satellite station presently provide Roanoke with emergency medical services. Professional medical personnel have joined the previously all volunteer service to improve response times and expand services.

Right: School age visitors to Center in the Square.

## STRATEGY

### ***Human Development/Public Safety Objectives***

- Encourage educational, human service and safety facilities convenient to all neighborhoods and residents.
- Encourage public-private, self-sufficiency programs for individuals with special needs.
- Encourage regional cooperation in service facilities and programs.

### ***Public Service Facilities***

The results of the Roanoke Vision Survey indicated that, overall, Roanokers are satisfied with many of their public and institutional facilities and services. Many existing problems have been identified. Recent changes or proposed plans have already begun to address critical issues. The Comprehensive Development Plan endorses two of these proposed plans including the construction of a new fire station on Route 460 East and the School Board's policy of maintaining neighborhood schools through a program of renovating older facilities and paired school administrations.

### ***Human Resources Plan***

A comprehensive human resources plan for Roanoke should be developed with the cooperation of the public and private service providers and citizen groups including clients and neighborhood representatives. In addition, neighborhood plans should have a human resources element.

### ***Neighborhood Human Service Center***

Participants in the Roanoke Vision Process identified the need for neighborhood multi-purpose human service centers to help tailor a variety of mental health, family, youth development, elderly care, job training and other services to the needs of



specific areas, making them an integral part of each community. In some cases, programs at existing schools, park and recreation or other community facilities could be expanded. In other areas, new sites would need to be located. The Northwest Human Development Center in the Northwest/Gilmer neighborhood was cited as a successful example.

### ***Coordinated Youth Services***

Youth recreation and activity needs can be addressed by schools, the Parks and Recreation Department, private organizations, neighborhood groups, and the Department of Social Services. A centralized means to coordinate programs and facility use, to inform youth of available activities, and deal with special interest groups would increase the effectiveness of existing youth services. The City's Office on Youth can be an important part of this effort.

### ***Higher Education***

Graduate study and job training programs are also needed in the city. Efforts to use Jefferson High School as a graduate education center should be supported. In addition, development of intensive job training programs should be encouraged at Virginia Western Community College, other local schools and at employment sites in cooperation with private industry.

### ***Expanded Human Services and Health Care Facilities***

Provision of group homes and neighborhood child care facilities can be helped by potential revision to land development regulations or building codes. The expanded use of public school facilities should be considered. For mentally retarded youths, summer programs are needed as well as expanded day and after school care. The City should also consider developing a special recreation program similar to the one currently provided by Roanoke County. More specialized sheltered workshops should also be planned.

One of the major problems identified in elderly service delivery is accessibility for elderly people living in the outlying areas of the city. Creative programs relying on neighborhood volunteer resources could be used to help address this problem.

In addition, housing and services for special groups such as homeless individuals, mentally ill or alcohol-or drug-dependent persons are a problem which should be a major agenda item for future human services planning.

Some areas requiring youth recreation activities, pre-school and after-school care, elderly services including transportation, and neighborhood multi-purpose human service and job training centers have been identified and are shown in the Social and Health Services Strategy map.

### ***Crime Watch Programs***

Public safety is assisted by the neighborhood crime watch program. The City should continue its coordinated effort in identifying problem areas and developing crime watch efforts. City policies on street lighting should be examined and increased lighting should be provided in problem areas.

### **SUMMARY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTION**

1. Prepare detailed component human resources plan for facilities and services.
2. Develop human resources strategy as part of neighborhood action plans.
3. Coordinate efficient use of educational facilities.
4. Establish facilities for graduate study/job training.
5. Establish land use regulations to facilitate essential community-based human services.

**Below: Activity and recreation programs provide opportunities for Roanoke's youth.**

