will be the establishment of complementary land development regulations to guide future growth.

Strong support for Roanoke to continue as the central focus for office employment, air transportation, cultural events and convention/tourism activities provides new opportunities for cooperation among jurisdictions in the Roanoke Valley. Finding appropriate ways to share the benefits and costs of needed services and infrastructure on a regional basis is critical for the Roanoke Valley's continued growth and development.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Because the Comprehensive Development Plan is general in nature, it focuses on how proposed strategies and actions affect the entire city, defining broad areas of land use as opposed to particular proposals for specific sites.

Key land use action strategies identified in the Comprehensive Development Plan Strategy map include:

Special Action Areas

Areas of special focus include:

- *Downtown:* A continued emphasis on office/government/ cultural uses for downtown Roanoke should include tourism-related developments such as a potential new convention center, hotel and restaurants. Continued expansion of the City Market area and development of Henry Street should be accompanied by new traffic management/parking/street improvements and aggressive marketing for new and renovated office/commercial space. New or renovated housing units, to make downtown a true 24 hour center, are a major priority.
- *Airport:* New or improved airport terminal facilities should be supported to comple-

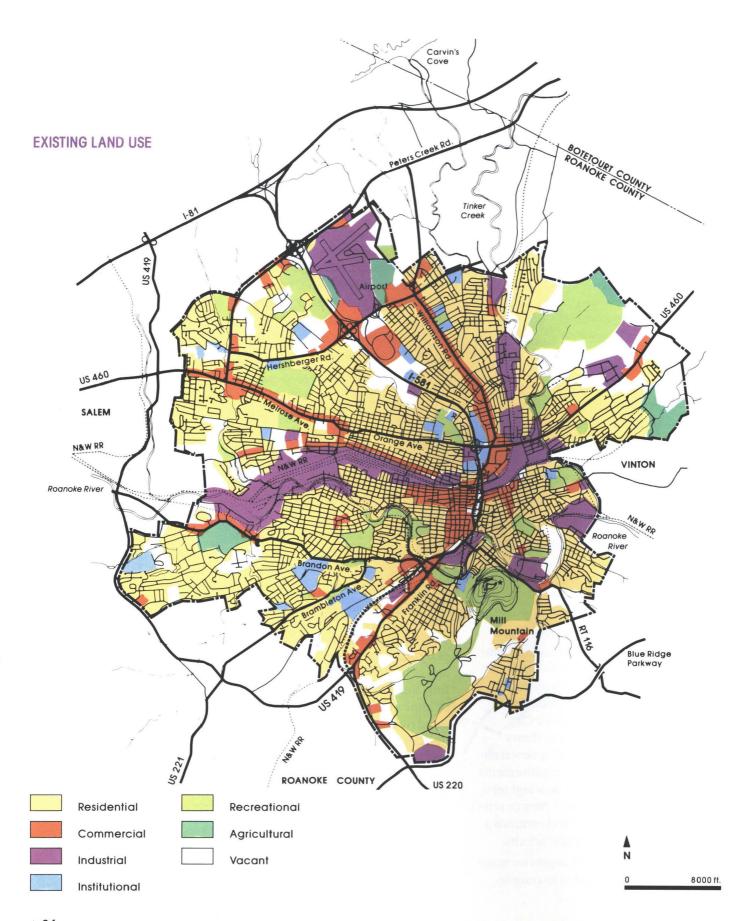
ment the lengthened runway. Development of industrial sites adjacent to the airport should be encouraged. Together, these actions will provide important economic development incentives to new and existing businesses. The entire area surrounding the airport, including Valley View Mall, Celebration Station and the hotel/retail development west of I-581, should be a specific planning focus to ensure a proper mix of existing and future uses as well as supporting traffic, transit and infrastructure services.

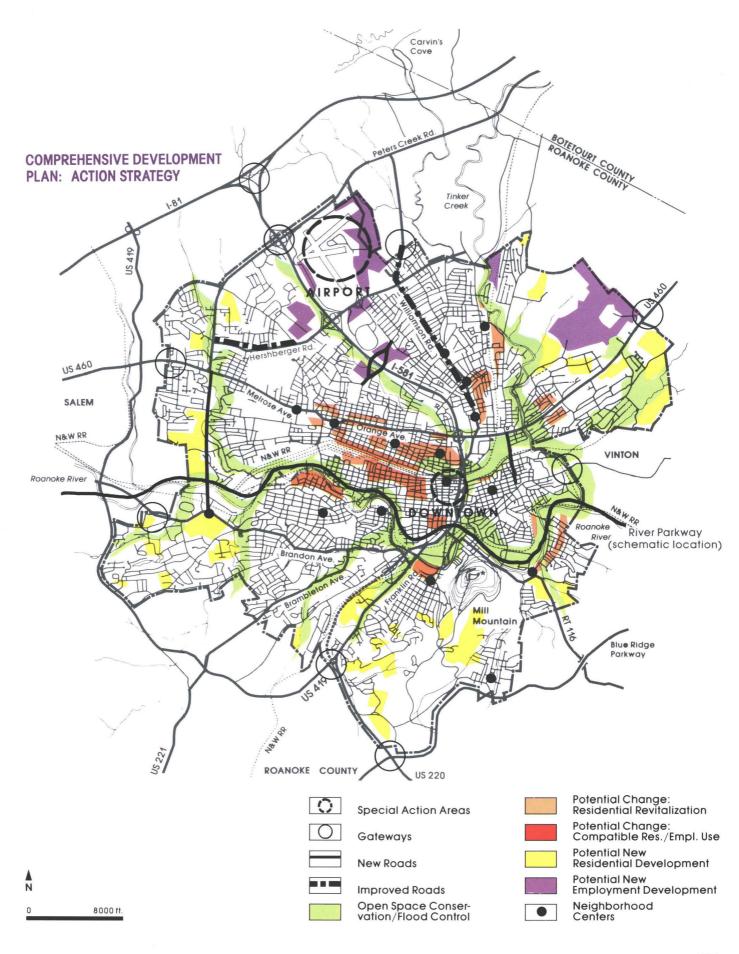
Transportation/Streetscaping Improvements

New improved roadway projects such as the extension of Peters Creek Road across the Roanoke River to Brandon Avenue or extension of 13th Street N.E./S.E. across the rail lines to Orange Avenue may open up areas for new development and revitalization. Careful design of these roadways to limit intersections and road cuts and maximize potential for open space preservation, land-scaping, trees, and controlled adjacent development are extremely important.

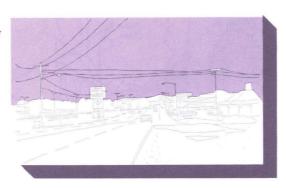
Traffic/capacity/streetscape improvements to existing streets such as Williamson Road, Hershberger Road, 10th Street N.W. or Franklin Road are equally important as incentives to adjacent redevelopment. In each of these cases, however, road engineering and neighborhood planning must be carefully linked: the impact of street widenings or improvements, if necessary, must be mitigated by other measures, such as park development or housing rehabilitation. A new I-581 intersection will open up additional prime employment sites; whether it is built as a full interchange or the way in which connections to adjacent roads are treated will affect other potential projects, such as 10th Street N.W. improvements.

A proposed scenic parkway, if designed in conjunction with proposed flood control





Right: Sketch of Williamson Road entrance to Roanoke. Far Right: Sketch of Williamson Road with suggested design improvements to signs, lighting, and utilities.



measures along the Roanoke River, could be a mutually-beneficial approach for both projects, minimizing parkway costs and providing a means to acquire, preserve, and landscape needed land.

Treating major entry roads and arterials as gateways and boulevards, with improved signage, landscape, lighting, or traffic improvement as appropriate is an important project to improve Roanoke's image to itself and the visitors.

Open Space Conservation Areas

The expansion and linkage, where possible, of land along the Roanoke River as well as tributary streams is an important environmental recommendation. Limitation of new development in the flood plain and acquisition of key areas for open space preservation and flood control measures can provide the framework for a linear park development, including the potential for bikeways and pedestrian paths.



Neighborhood Centers

The Comprehensive Development Plan Strategy map indicates possible sites for development of new or improved commercial service centers for neighborhoods. These centers can provide needed local retail or office space, such as small supermarkets or drug stores, space for clinics, job training centers, or other human services, or even sites for mixed use residential/commercial development.

Potential Neighborhood Change Areas

Neighborhood areas where deteriorated conditions or land use conflicts may require major corrective action are defined in the strategic plan as priority "change" areas. Detailed neighborhood planning should focus on these areas either for revitalization (intensive housing renovation, provision of human services, or new uses such as temporary or permanent open space) or for compatible residential/employment use (selective redevelopment for compatible industrial, office, or institutional uses, while preserving quality housing where possible and buffering adjacent residential uses with open space and landscaping).

As shown on the Comprehensive Development Plan Strategy map, priority revitalization or employment use areas include portions of the neighborhoods of Gainsboro, Gilmer/Northwest, Harrison





Far Left: Sketch of Williamson Road commercial area today. Left: Sketch of Williamson Road with design improvements such as sidewalks, lighting, banners, signs, and new commercial development.

Avenue, Loudon Avenue, Shenandoah West, Norwich, Mountain View, Hurt Park, Old Southwest, Belmont, Riverdale, Morningside, Eastgate, Thrasher Park, and Williamson Road. Other areas may emerge in detailed neighborhood planning.

New Development

The eventual uses of currently-vacant land for residential or employment development have also been identified. These uses were identified based on evaluation of access. market, adjacent use or potential impact. New industrial/commercial employment areas include land on either side of Orange Avenue adjacent to the Roanoke Centre for Industry and Technology, land around the airport, and land adjacent to the potential new I-581 interchange. New residential land includes land with new access resulting from the extension of Peters Creek Road, as well as a variety of larger, scattered infill sites throughout the city adjacent to other residential development.

DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY

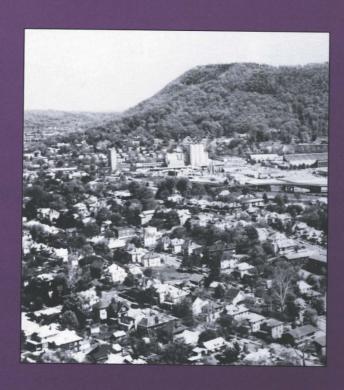
Successful implementation of the planning and development actions proposed in this Comprehensive Development Plan will result in the continuing evolution of Roanoke as the major center of the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area and western Virginia.

Further downtown revitalization, airport development, and cultural/entertainment growth should be complemented by a new emphasis on developing tourist destination attraction events and facilities. Development of a river parkway, tied to flood control and landscaping improvements, will provide a new regional boulevard, tying together the western county with the Blue Ridge Parkway, the proposed Blue Ridge Zoological Park and Smith Mountain Lake. The impact of these projects on the image Roanoke projects to the rest of Virginia as well as to adjacent states will be felt in the city's continuing economic development and resulting improvements in its real estate market, retail economy, cultural life, and neighborhood stability. Equally important to the City's future are key human resource planning efforts, improved educational programs and facilities and other human service programs to enhance the quality of life for all of Roanoke's citizens.



5 ACHIEVING THE VISION

Right: The Roanoke Valley.



Actions for the Next Five Years



For Roanoke to achieve the goals and values set forth in this Comprehensive Development Plan, active implementation of the proposed development projects and revitalization approaches through public, private and civic efforts is critical. Four priority areas of effort have been identified for action within the next five years to establish new development directions and momentum as well as to refine plans, procedures and regulations. These four areas of effort include:

Revised land development regulations: Zoning, site plan and subdivision ordinances are being created as a part of the current Roanoke Vision planning process. Their implementation is critical in order to refine standards, promote preservation and establish new incentive mechanisms for quality development and revitalization. However, as controls for development, these ordinances have the greatest impact within a strong and active real estate market.

Improved administrative procedures: Revised administrative approaches and lines of responsibility for both planning reviews and zoning approvals are also key recommendations. Improved coordination and efficiency will lead to greater effectiveness in both protecting the public interest and simplifying the approvals process for private development.

A partnership approach: The public, private, and civic participation so important to the planning process must be continued in the implementation of action projects. The framework for the partnership efforts is now

in place in the many existing organizations which can be enlisted to help on projects of interest. New organizations, such as a non-profit housing corporation or a neighborhood business advisory committee, may also be needed.

Planning and development actions: A set of positive public/private programs must be initiated immediately to provide critical coordination and development momentum. Neighborhood action plans for priority areas must be coordinated with the preparation of detailed component plans for various items such as housing, parks, human services, or flood control. These plans should identify, where possible, recommended development actions to be accomplished within the five-year target period.

Below: New housing under construction.



FIVE YEAR ACTION SCHEDULE

PROPOSED SCHEDULE (YEAR) ACTION BY WHOM 4 5 1. Revised Land Development Regulations Complete draft regulations OCP PC/CC Planning Commission/Council review & approval OCP/PC/CC Revise zoning map/review & approval Detailed design guidelines where applicable OCP/PC Implementation of new regulations PC Continuing review of regulations OCP/PC 2. Administering the Plan PC/City Revise plan administrative structure Initiate continuing planning activities PC/OCP OCP/PC Establish comprehensive data system Revise zoning administrative structure PC/BZA/ARB Establish improved review/reporting procedures OCP Implement continuing planning/zoning reviews OCP 3. Partnership Approach Enlist participation of private advisory groups PC/OCP/RNP City/PC/RNP Create new public/private vehicles: Housing Corp., etc. PC/OCP/RNP Continue coordination of partnership activities 4. Planning and Development Actions Prepare neighborhood data inventory OCP/RNP Prepare detailed component plans City/OCP/RNP Select priority neighborhoods for initial efforts PC/OCP/RNP Initiate neighborhood action planning PC/OCP/RNP Technical assistance for defined action projects City/OCP/RNP

CC: City Council • City: City Administration • PC: Planning Commission • BZA: Board of Zoning Appeals • ARB: Architectural Review Board • OCP: Office of Community Planning • RNP: Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership

Revised Land Development Regulations



ne of the major implementation tools for recommendations contained in the Comprehensive Development Plan are the revised land development regulations developed as a part of the Roanoke Vision planning process. These revised regulations have been drafted, not only to resolve specific problems found in the existing ordinances, but also to address issues identified by citizens, neighborhood organizations and the development community. A zoning handbook will supplement the text of the official ordinances to help ensure that both citizens and professionals will have a clear understanding of the revised regulations.

A central focus of these new zoning, site plan and subdivision regulations are neighborhood and historic preservation strategies. This element of the Roanoke Vision planning process was supported by a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Critical Issues Fund, in recognition of the importance of developing new regulatory tools for preservation through a public participation approach.

The proposed text revisions to the current zoning ordinance take into account new mechanisms for achieving the Plan. These include:

Residential zoning changes: One of the intentions of the revised zoning regulations is to resolve conflicts between the existing built fabric of neighborhoods and the underlying zoning classifications. Many neighborhoods are now zoned for much higher densities than the existing buildings provide. This situation invites the development of new, obtrusive buildings out of scale with the surrounding neighborhood character. Revised ordinances recommend new zoning classifications to adjust densities to levels which will maintain existing conditions and allow appropriate infill development. New

classifications also recommend restoration of the smaller single family lot sizes found in many of the city's older neighborhoods. These lots were judged to be too small in the previous ordinance, a situation which has contributed to disinvestment and the proliferation of vacant lots. The new classification will help encourage infill housing development.

An overlay zone for neighborhood conservation: Certain areas of the city are experiencing land use conflicts between residential and commercial uses. The Franklin Road area of Old Southwest, for example, has been analyzed in detail, focusing on how office/institutional uses and parking needs can be accommodated while still maintaining the residential character of the area. A recommended approach is to create a special zoning district, to be applied as an overlay to the primary zoning classification. This district should contain special procedures to discourage demolition of usable structures, encourage landscaping of parking lots, and provide standards for quality infill development to maintain neighborhood character and scale.

New approaches for large-scale development: For larger tracts of land, recommendations should encourage better site planning and combination of uses on the site. A "cluster development" provision would allow units on large tracts to be more tightly grouped in order to preserve large areas of open space for recreation, flood control, or preservation. New residential and industrial "planned unit development" procedures would allow flexibility in density in return for providing desirable mixes of residential, commercial or employment-related uses and building types. Special provisions would make these approaches



Above: The neighborhood commercial center on Grandin Road is a community asset.

applicable to older center-city neighborhoods as well, to help shape new infill development and rehabilitation of existing buildings.

Improved standards for commercial and industrial development: The existing zoning regulations set very few standards for commercial and industrial site design. The Plan's objective of improving the image of the city should be implemented, in part, through appropriate new commercial and industrial site development standards. These standards should improve the visual quality of development, preserve and enhance the character of adjacent neighborhood land uses, encourage the efficient use of land, and ensure a desirable business environment.

New Commercial District Zoning: A new "neighborhood commercial" zone would allow creation of small pockets of commercial/ mixed-use developments as neighborhood service centers. These areas, similar in scale to the Grandin Road commercial district in Raleigh Court, could also contain second-level residential space as well as the potential for community service facilities such as day care, job training or other human service centers.

Downtown Development: Supplementing the positive development actions planned in the Design '85 study, new zoning approaches for downtown include provisions to encourage downtown housing, a "contextual zoning" approach which mandates height restriction adjacent to the City Market area, and new approaches for calculating building density and creating additional open space.

Review and approval of these new preservation and development ordinances are critically important to implementing the desires expressed by Roanoke residents through the planning process. These desires include: improved quality and appearance of new development, provision of convenient services and facilities, encouragement of downtown housing and development, minimization of land use conflicts, and most importantly, preservation of Roanoke's neighborhood character and scale.

The subsequent approval of a revised zoning map incorporating locations for these new provisions and reflecting the land use objectives of the Comprehensive Development Plan is an equally important second step.

Improved Administrative Procedures



Clarifying the ongoing responsibility and procedures for planning and zoning activities within the City of Roanoke's governmental structure is a critical part of implementing the objectives of the Comprehensive Development Plan. Changes in two major areas of organization are proposed:

- the administration of comprehensive planning activities
- the administration of land development regulations

Administration of Comprehensive Planning Activities

This Comprehensive Development Plan has been designed as a strategic framework for the ongoing planning and development actions carried out within the City of Roanoke's legislatively-appointed and administrative structures. As shown in the following chart, entitled Administration of the Comprehensive Plan, the City's planning responsibilities are carried out on many levels. City Council delegates central responsibility for ongoing comprehensive planning to the Council-appointed Roanoke City Planning Commission. The Office of Community Planning serves as staff to the Planning Commission to assist it in carrying out this role. City Council also delegates authority for planning responsibilities such as capital budgeting, project planning and implementation of departmental functions to the City Administration through the City Manager and the Directorates of Public Works, Utilities and Operations, Administration and Public Safety, and Human Resources.

In addition to these lines of authority, City Council also delegates planning responsibility for special functions such as education or housing redevelopment to the appropriate Council-appointed bodies — the Roanoke City School Board and the

Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority, respectively. These bodies, in turn, delegate planning responsibilities to their staffs.

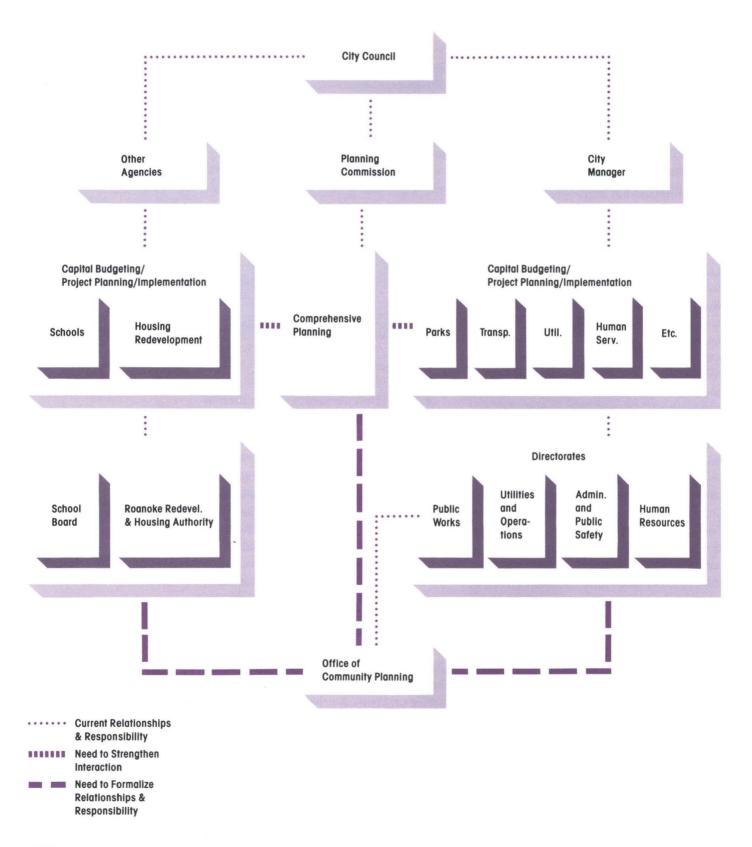
Coordination of the various planning functions needs to be strengthened. Currently, there is no single point of responsibility or coordination for all of the City's planning activities. The City needs:

- a unified repository of planning data and information;
- better coordination of both neighborhood and detailed component planning efforts which can be linked to the capital budget process;
- a single focus for technical planning assistance for proposed public and private implementation actions; and
- an advocate and primary staff resource for ongoing implementation of Comprehensive Development Plan recommendations and for future comprehensive planning efforts.

The City's existing planning structures must be enhanced to meet the above needs. The Office of Community Planning was created in 1979 to bring a community focus to the City's planning and development efforts. In addition to providing technical assistance for short term action planning efforts and technical staff assistance to both the Roanoke City Planning Commission and the Architectural Review Board, the Office initiated and staffs the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership. The Office also supervises the human services planning efforts of the City's Office on Youth. A primary emphasis of all of the Office of Community Planning's work has been to stimulate and assist neighborhood and city-wide revitalization efforts.

The Office of Community Planning should now add a new focus to improve the organization and provision of basic planning

PROPOSED ADMINISTRATION OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



needs within the City's administrative structure. This should be accomplished by establishing more formal relationships and lines of responsibility between the Office of Community Planning and the many commissions, departments and agencies with planning roles. In addition, the interaction between the capital budgeting, project planning and program responsibilities of the City Directorates and related agencies (such as the Roanoke City Schools or the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority) and the ongoing comprehensive planning process, directed by the Roanoke City Planning Commission and carried out by the Office of Community Planning, should be strengthened. These proposed changes are also illustrated on the Administration of Comprehensive Plan chart.

The active implementation of these proposed administrative recommendations would provide enhanced strategic and comprehensive planning services for the City.

Administration of Land Development Regulations

A second function of the larger Roanoke Vision planning process has been to revise and update Roanoke's land development regulations: its zoning, subdivision and site plan ordinances.

The following chart, entitled Administration of Land Development Regulations, illustrates proposed changes in the administration of Roanoke's land development regulation process. The chart delineates the responsibilities which City Council has given to its three appointed land development regulatory bodies including:

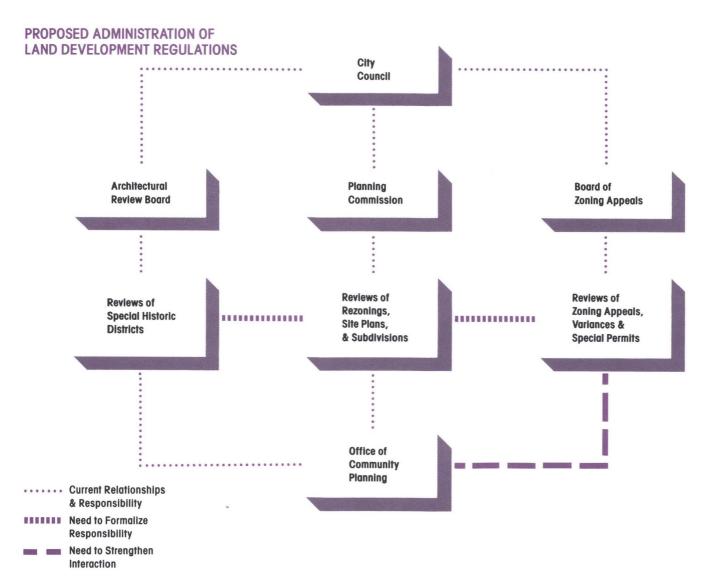
 the Planning Commission's responsibility for reviewing subdivisions, zoning changes, and site plan and zoning issues;

- the Board of Zoning Appeals' responsibility for reviewing zoning variances, special permits, and appeals; and
- the Architectural Review Board's responsibility for review and approval of development plans in special historic districts.

The objective of these proposed administrative recommendations is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory review and appeals processes. This would facilitate the implementation of improved preservation and development-oriented regulations. The result would better protect both the public interest by effectively carrying out the new Comprehensive Development Plan and the private interest by improving the thoroughness and speed of reviewing, analyzing and approving development proposals.

To achieve this objective, improved staff support to and coordination among the Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals and Architectural Review Board are needed. The Office of Community Planning should be directed to supplement its current responsibilities as staff to the Planning Commission and Architectural Review Board by providing similar staff support to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Currently, this function for the Board of Zoning Appeals is handled by the City Building Department and Zoning Administrator.

This organizational change would provide a "one-stop" source for land development information, response, and program assistance within the Office of Community Planning. It would also provide a single staff



to coordinate review procedures among the three regulatory bodies. Alexandria, Virginia, as well as many other cities around the country, has rationalized its planning review procedures around a similar model. Their review and reporting procedures for analysis of land development proposals include preparation of consistently-formatted reports to each board on a professional and timely basis.

As part of this effort, the ability to rapidly file and retrieve land use informa-

tion so that it may be easily analyzed and clearly presented to the board, the applicant, and the public is extremely important. To this end the implementation of a computerized land use indexing and mapping procedure would be extremely valuable. As a first step in this process, the continuing land use information collection recommended as an ongoing planning activity should be organized so that data can be collated and incorporated in an eventual computer system.

A Partnership Approach





Left: Citizens working in partnership with government, business, and volunteers are Roanoke's most valuable resource.

Successful implementation of the plan-ning and development actions proposed in the Comprehensive Development Plan requires efforts by more than the City and public sector alone. Roanoke has a strong tradition of civic and business involvement in planning issues. Several recent examples of public/private partnerships have shown that successful development is a direct result of the combined efforts of citizens. the business and financial communities and appropriate public departments or officials. The kind of partnership approach needed for both the planning and implementation of proposed development actions is one which has characterized projects such as the Design '79 downtown development program, the Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership neighborhood planning and assistance programs, the Williamson Road Urban Design Study and subsequent improvement projects, and the Roanoke Vision planning process itself.

A major implementation strategy of the Comprehensive Development Plan is to foster and expand these successful partnership approaches primarily through existing private sector organizations, City Councilappointed advisory committees and City administration task forces. New public/private organizations may also be needed. The non-profit housing development corporation proposed as part of the Plan's housing strategy or the business advisory committee to assist neighborhood business development efforts, as proposed in the commercial development section of the Plan, are examples of possible new organizations.



Planning and Development Actions

Positive, active programs and projects, needed both to spur the private market and to supplement zoning controls, must take place within the context of a five-year planning and development framework. In order to meet this ambitious agenda, a series of immediate next steps must be designed.

As discussed in the initial description of the Roanoke Vision planning process, the Comprehensive Development Plan is only the important first step. The following diagram, entitled Detailed Planning and Implementation, illustrates the relationship between the comprehensive land use planning process and two finer-grained, action-oriented processes: neighborhood action plans for priority sub-areas of the city, and detailed component plans for certain city-wide issues, such as housing or human services.

Right: Shopping at the City Market.



Neighborhood Action Plans

One of the major roles the Comprehensive Development Plan will play in the next five years is as a framework for detailed planning and development actions at the neighborhood level. The city-wide values and objectives that have been defined must be investigated at the local scale.

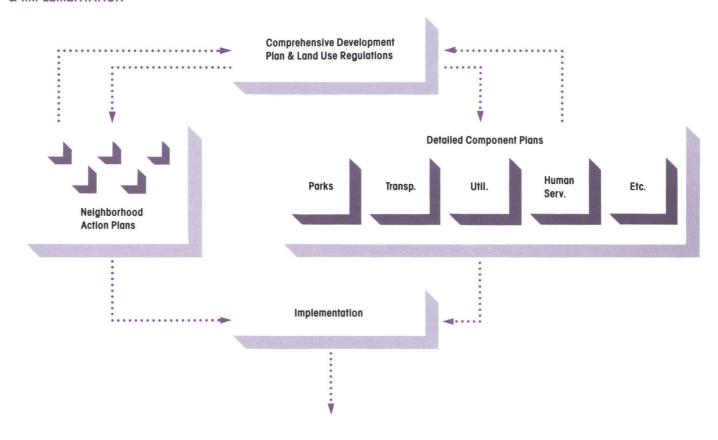
The first step in this process is to use the Comprehensive Development Plan's neighborhood analysis as the basis for more detailed information gathering. On a block-by-block basis, City staff and neighborhood residents can help gather up-to-date information on such items as residential, commercial, and industrial building conditions, adequacy of utilities, traffic issues and human service needs. This data base, prepared so that it may be eventually computerized for easy reference and updating, can also be used to set priorities among neighborhoods and establish a rational sequence of detailed planning efforts.

Finally, based both on the planning data and the concurrently- prepared detailed component plans (for topics such as housing or human services), neighborhood action plans should be sequentially prepared, defining items to be maintained, improved, or changed and balancing necessary land use changes in deteriorated areas with housing, services, or amenity improvements in adjacent areas.

Detailed Component Plans

The continuing preparation or updating of strategic plans for a variety of special components, such as housing, human services, or transportation, should proceed in conjunction with the neighborhood action plans. These plans should be prepared by individual City departments or other designated task forces, and can use the Comprehensive Development Plan's framework and

DETAILED PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION



neighborhood planning data base as background information.

Some plans should be prepared on a regional basis rather than for Roanoke alone. Flood control, for instance, is a function of how water is dealt with at its source as well as in its downstream impact: a regional approach is needed which will coordinate retention standards, runoff controls, floodway channelization where required, and land use regulations.

Implementation and Continuing Comprehensive Planning

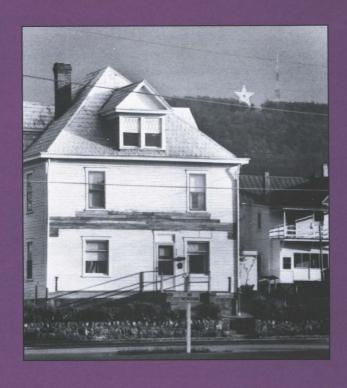
Individual action projects should be undertaken, based on detailed planning at both the neighborhood and city-wide levels. At

the same time, new information and ideas generated in the detailed planning/development process should become an ongoing part of the continuing evolution of the Comprehensive Development Plan. This ongoing development should be reflected, not only in each subsequent five-year update, but also in the continuing roles of the Roanoke City Planning Commission and Office of Community Planning as coordinators of planning actions and data for the city as a whole.



6 CONCLUSION

Right: The Mill Mountain star over Southeast Roanoke.



A Strategy to Avoid Missed Opportunities



n 1930, John Nolen, the Boston-based landscape architect who had prepared the 1907 plan for Roanoke and had just completed the City's 1928 plan, looked back at his original work from the perspective of his most recent experience. In an article for a national planning magazine, he discussed "missed opportunities": in 1907 his plan had recommended a variety of development activities; many of these were carried out, including the building of various bridges and the creation of Elmwood Park. However, a number of other actions were not acted upon, including the widening of downtown streets, such as Jefferson or Campbell, into boulevards. By 1928, these actions, due to other investments and construction, were no longer feasible. The 1907 plan suggested setting aside river and stream flood plain areas for permanent open space; by 1928, "existing industrial use" descriptions had already appeared on the plan in many riverfront tracts. Subsequent plans have repeated this call for an environmentally-based open space system, but the potential for its accomplishment has been steadily eroded.

If in the year 2005 we look back at the 1985 plan, what actions will we regret not having taken? What ideas will have been rejected as politically or economically impractical, that twenty years of hindsight will suggest could have been accomplished with more detailed design or planning?

The Roanoke Vision planning process has been designed as a strategy for attempting to avoid these later regrets. The importance of first *defining what can be done* and then *taking appropriate actions* are the central objectives of the Plan and its recommended implementation mechanisms.

The definition of priorities is part of the City's ongoing capital budgeting and administration process; the allocation of responsibility between the City and adjacent jurisdictions is part of the emerging regional political process. The Comprehensive Development Plan itself addresses neither of these issues, but rather, as its name implies, attempts to establish a long-term vision for the City of Roanoke, coupled with short-term actions which can begin to accomplish its objectives.

The participation of a wide cross-section of Roanoke citizens in the Plan's preparation gives a solid base of support to both its recommendations and to the public and private partnership approaches needed for Roanoke's continued revitalization and growth.

Credits



The Roanoke Vision Comprehensive Development Plan was a project of the Roanoke City Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is staffed by the Office of Community Planning which was responsible for directing this project.

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Roanoke Vision Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee

The following 15 member Advisory Committee was appointed by City Council to assist the City Planning Commission and to insure broad public representation in the preparation of the Comprehensive Development Plan.

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Mr. John P. Bradshaw, Jr., Roanoke City Planning Commission

Mrs. Jane B. Bulbin, *Roanoke City Economic Development Commission*

Mr. William F. Clark, *City of Roanoke Administration*

Mrs. Anne P. Glenn, Roanoke Neighborhood Partnership, Steering, Committee and Southwest Resident

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