



CHAPTER  
ONE

THE PLANNING  
PROCESS



vision 2001  
2020

## 1.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF PLAN

The City's comprehensive plan is an official public document adopted by City Council. The plan is to be used as a long-term guide for land use decisions related to growth and development and to assist the City in determining when and where new public facilities and improvements are needed. Recommendations of the comprehensive plan are typically general and long-range to outline a vision of the City over a 20-year period.

### Legal Basis for the Plan

Vision 2001-2020 was developed in accordance with Title 15.2 of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended. The local planning commission is authorized to prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction. Every governing body is required to adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction. The plan is to be general in nature and designate the general location, character, and extent of public facilities.

### Updating the Plan

#### Annual Report

Vision 2001-2020 recommends conducting an annual review of the comprehensive plan in coordination with the City's operating budget, capital improvements program, departmental strategic plans, and other financial and regulatory tools. The annual report is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

#### Five-Year Updates

The Code of Virginia requires that the comprehensive plan be reviewed at least every five years. Detailed procedures for developing five-year updates are recommended for this plan in Chapter 6.

#### Amendments

As with any document, amendments may be needed over time depending on new initiatives, more detailed planning, or changes in government policy. Examples of possible future amendments include neighborhood plans, transportation improvement plans, housing plans, parks plans, or other master plans.

Conflicts may arise between previously adopted and newly proposed policies. The policies and actions within Vision 2001-2020 will supersede any conflicting policies, actions, guidelines, and/or principles contained in any of the area or neighborhood plans.

#### Plan Implementation

The plan can be implemented through a variety of regulatory and financial tools. Generally, comprehensive plans are implemented primarily through the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, Operating Budget and Capital Improvements Program, Neighborhood Plans, and Master Plans for specific areas.

#### Understanding and Using the Plan

Chapters 1 and 2 provide background material for understanding the primary purpose of the plan and the planning process used to develop Vision 2001-2020.

Chapter 3 contains the plan's elements and summarizes the main ideas and recommendations of the plan. Each element consists of four parts that build on one another:

- **Background.** Fact-based information that provides the basis for policy approaches.
- **Policy approach.** Community values used to develop policies.
- **Policies.** Guidelines to be used when evaluating development.
- **Actions.** Measurable steps to implement the plan.

Chapter 4 includes the city design principles to be used as guidelines for development. This chapter also provides design illustrations for selected model development opportunities.

Chapter 5 includes a strategic development plan that consolidates the main recommendations made in the elements of the plan.

Chapter 6 contains a matrix that consolidates the actions identified in the plan's elements into a single document. A general timeframe and participants responsible for implementing the plan are identified with each action.

## 1.2 AN INTERACTIVE PLANNING PROCESS: INVOLVEMENT AND DIRECTION

### Past Plans

The renowned John Nolen plans of 1907, *Remodeling Roanoke*, and 1928, *The Comprehensive City Plan*, established the framework for the City's growth. Initially sponsored by the Women's Civic Betterment Club, a local volunteer group, and later a City Planning Commission, these far-reaching visions were created while



Roanoke was still an emerging railroad town. The Nolen plans defined boulevard corridors, open space systems, and an interrelated network of residential neighborhoods, community facilities, and centrally-located businesses and services. Nolen's legacy can be seen in Roanoke through its attractive riverside drive, grid street pattern, trees, grouped civic buildings, neighborhood parks, and Mill Mountain.

The process and responsibility for city planning have grown and changed since Nolen. A comprehensive plan completed in 1964 responded to urban issues and resulted in policies for urban renewal in downtown and in the City's aging neighborhoods. The 1985 *Roanoke Vision* comprehensive plan used a visioning process that earned Roanoke national recognition for incorporating community participation into the way it does business. The plan engaged neighborhood energy and enthusiasm through a series of public forums, TV programs, citizen surveys, and outreach meetings. Results have included preservation of historic areas, revitalization of neighborhoods and commercial districts, beautification projects, new commercial/employment projects around the airport and Valley View Mall, and the development of the Roanoke Centre for Industry and Technology. In addition, the plan initiated a series of community-based neighborhood plans.

### **Vision 2001-2020: A Participatory Process**

Vision 2001-2020 is a product of an intensive citizen participation process involving more than 2,000 citizens through public forums, surveys, interviews, and public meetings. The community participation process was launched in the fall of 2000 with a citywide forum attended by more than 200 residents who were asked to share their ideas for the future. In addition, a citizen-opinion survey was mailed to all City households in the premier issue of *Roanoke Citizen*. The forum and the survey provided the direction for the 44-member Vision 2001-2020 Advisory Committee appointed by City Council in October 2000.

A series of public meetings and neighborhood workshops were held between the fall of 2000 and the spring of 2001, inviting the community to discuss the plan concepts as they were being developed by the Committee and City staff. The overall strategy of Vision 2001-2020 and its many specific approaches are based on the goals and values expressed by the community.

### **City Council Direction**

In 1997, City Council adopted a strategic vision to guide City policy:

#### **City Council Vision.**

Roanoke, "The Star City," appreciating its past and planning for a shining future, will be a community of excellence, providing an outstanding quality of life through educational, economic, and cultural opportunities for all people who live, work, and visit here.

#### **Effective Government.**

Roanoke City government will be a leading force in shaping and achieving the future of our community. We will be participatory, responsive, and efficient, valuing diverse community involvement, public/private partnerships, and regional cooperation. Citizens will be involved in the establishment of community priorities. Our facilitative government will bring together all available resources to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

#### **Economy.**

Roanoke, with its vibrant downtown, will be a dynamic, diversified regional center of commerce and tourism, competing effectively in the global economy. To enhance economic opportunities, we will promote regional cooperation, nurture growth in existing business, and recruit attractive new business and industry. Roanoke will be a destination for people seeking a unique combination of scenic, cultural, and recreational attractions.



**Education.**

Roanoke will be a "learning" community providing the necessary educational resources and opportunities for all persons to develop to their maximum potential. Through community involvement and the latest technology, we will provide quality public education. We will strengthen our cooperation with area colleges and universities and expand continuing education to promote an environment of lifelong learning.

**Quality of Life.**

Roanoke will be a community where every person and every family is important and respected. We will be a community of stable, safe, healthy, caring, and friendly neighborhoods. We will protect our natural environment and promote cultural, social, economic, and recreational opportunities that encourage present and future generations to choose Roanoke as their home.



In adopting and reaffirming this strategic vision, City Council confirms its commitment to protecting, enhancing, and strengthening these qualities to ensure that Roanoke continues to maintain its place as the economic, cultural, financial, and medical center for the region and throughout Southwest Virginia.

Vision 2001-2020 is an opportunity to implement City Council's vision for Roanoke's future. The City's comprehensive plan is one of many tools that are vital to the successful implementation of Council's vision. The plan establishes the goals and direction that will guide annual decision-making processes such as the capital improvements program, consolidated plan update, and transportation improvement plan, as well as ongoing detailed plans and strategies such as neighborhood plans, a housing plan, and a downtown plan.





**ROANOKE'S FIRST PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION, 1929**

Roanoke's 1928 *Comprehensive City Plan* authored by John Nolen is also recognized as a national Historic Planning Landmark document. The City's Planning Commission was one of the first in the nation. The plan recommended a parkway along the Roanoke River, neighborhood schools and parks, and street improvements and beautification. The plan incorporated the cutting edge principles of city planning for the time and set the stage for one of the nation's first zoning ordinances in 1932.

Members of the first Commission:  
Edward L. Stone, Chairman; Mrs. Lucian H. Cocke; B. N. Eubank; D. D. Hull, Jr.; and C. Shelburne Spindle.

