

## City of Roanoke

# *Roanoke Opportunities in Action:* Economic Development Strategic Plan

*Prepared by*

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EY Economic Development Advisory Services

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# 1 Introduction

In April 2022, the City of Roanoke Department of Economic Development (the Department), in partnership with the Economic Development Authority of the City of Roanoke (EDA), engaged Ernst & Young LLP (EY US) to assist with creating a new five-year economic development strategic plan. The Plan is meant to build upon the past performance of the Department, as well as the strengths and assets of the community, while also addressing vulnerabilities and challenges. The Strategic Plan, entitled “**Roanoke Opportunities in Action (ROA)**,” lights a path towards amplified economic growth and community vitality, making it possible for residents in every area of the City, and businesses of all types, to flourish.

ROA was formulated against the backdrop of accelerated disruptive change, to guide economic development leaders and practitioners. Many employers in Roanoke and across the country are grappling with labor shortages due to employee turnover as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, an aging population, skills mismatches, and other factors. Residents are experiencing increases in cost of living related to limited housing supplies, inflation, and other factors. However, businesses in Roanoke’s emerging health and life sciences industry can benefit from extended life spans and increased demand for healthcare services. The appeal of Roanoke’s scenic environment and overall quality of life is an attractor to skilled workers seeking new places to call “home.”

In the midst of change, strategic planning is important for achieving sustained economic development. The City’s Strategic Plan updates and clarifies the Department’s priorities, goals and objectives while providing guiding principles to further inform and inspire the work ahead. ROA is intended to help Department team members navigate through competing expectations and optimize its value to the community.

## About this report

The ROA Strategic Plan report is the result of a three-part process, completed over a six-month period, that included (1) background review and stakeholder input, (2) vision development and organizational evaluation, and (3) strategy and implementation plan development. There was close collaboration and communication among project partners throughout the process, and enhanced stakeholder engagement beyond the initial phase.

A summary of findings from the background review of reports and other documents provided by the Department of Economic Development, as well as conversations with stakeholders, is included in this report. A new Department vision and strategic framework with priorities and goals is provided, along with actionable objectives and detailed activities and tactics. The Strategic Plan is supported by leading practices from public economic development organizations in other communities to provide working examples that can be modified for Roanoke's local context.

ROA provides considerations around organizational changes that the Department could enact to generate a departmental structure more aligned with priorities, goals and activities put forth. Those possible changes are paired with implementation guidance including a listing of key partners and timetables to move specific strategic items forward to help the Department with overall fulfillment of the plan.

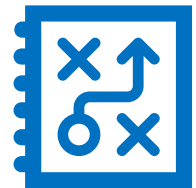
### CLIENT COLLABORATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



Background review and stakeholder input



Vision development and organizational evaluation



Strategy and implementation plan development



# Background review and stakeholder engagement

## Background review

EY US conducted a background review of several documents to better understand recent economic development priorities and achievements for the Department and the City of Roanoke. The following is a non-exhaustive list of materials that were reviewed:

- City of Roanoke Organizational Chart
- City of Roanoke 2022 Credit Presentation by Davenport Public Finance
- City of Roanoke FY22 Budget
- Roanoke Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau – Destination Vision 2030
- Western Virginia Workforce Development Board’s Regional Talent Strategy Implementation
- Various Department of Economic Development collateral materials
- Economic Development Authority (EDA) of the City of Roanoke FY23 Goals
- Roanoke, VA Strategic Plan – Star City Strong (2022-2023)
- City Plan 2040, City of Roanoke
- Thrive 2027, Roanoke Regional Partnership

Information and insights from the materials reviewed were summarized and contextualized through the lens of four traditional economic pillars: workforce development, asset development and promotion, city marketing and promotion, and business development.

## Background review highlights (cont.)

### Workforce development

As the largest Virginia city west of Richmond, a regional hub with access to 25 institutions of higher education within a one-hour drive, and a well-established community college system serving more than 100,000 students, Roanoke can provide talent for a variety of industries and sectors.

### Asset development and promotion

There are numerous fixed assets to support economic development activity in the City of Roanoke. Some prominent commercial and industrial sites include Wood Haven Technology Park, Roanoke Centre for Industry and Technology, Statesman Industrial Park, and the Roanoke Center for Industry which exemplify a strong, stable industrial base. The City of Roanoke Transit Transfer Center, Amtrak's route expansion, and the high-speed fiber network, established by the Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority (RVBA), have contributed to improved mobility and connectivity.

### City marketing and promotions

With ease of access to the Appalachian Trail and Blue Ridge Parkway, Roanoke is home to a growing number of marquee outdoor events and athletic competitions. Visitor attraction is also buoyed by strong regional marketing and tourism efforts, which yields a steady flow of professional conferences and business travelers within Roanoke annually.

### Business development

The Department of Economic Development offers resource referrals and incentives to encourage business expansions and capital investments that include an Enterprise Zone and a partnership with the City of Roanoke Economic Development Authority.



## Background review highlights (cont.)

### Economic Development Department - Business and Operations Plan

Of the Department's 16 goals highlighted in its Strategic Plan 2020, a subset was selected for further exploration during the strategic planning process, based on input from the Department and community stakeholders:

- Enhance the retention and growth of businesses in the City through relationship management
- Encourage, support and promote an entrepreneurial and innovative ecosystem
- Incentives for business retention and expansion (BR&E) efforts
- Support quality of life efforts for BR&E
- Identify property to be developed for commercial and industrial use
- Support continued redevelopment of downtown to serve as urban center of the region
- Support the redevelopment of underutilized commercial corridors
- Retain, expand and improve upon a globally competitive workforce
- Serve as project manager for economic development projects for the City
- Promote economic development opportunities to business community through professional property management and real estate services for city-owned property
- Provide staff support to Economic Development Authority of the City of Roanoke



## Stakeholder engagement summary (cont.)

Background review findings were complemented by interviewing a diverse group of stakeholders within the Department and the City Manager's Office, as well as the Mayor, City Council Members, and a variety of local private, public and nonprofit organizations with varying levels of involvement with local economic development.

Some of the topics covered in the conversation included:

- The Department's role in economic and community development and its working relationships with area partners
- Defining the City's commitment to innovation and entrepreneurship, especially as it relates to the Innovation Corridor and the broader innovation ecosystem
- Perceptions around the Department's role in traditional economic development, including business attraction, retention and expansion
- Opportunities to expand economic and community development activity more equitably

Twenty virtual interviews were conducted with one to two stakeholders at a time. Participants included elected officials, higher education and workforce development leaders, business owners, economic development leaders and others.

Six virtual focus groups, consisting of up to eight stakeholders each, were organized by subject matter and organizational type. These conversations focused on innovation, technology and entrepreneurship; business growth and job creation; community improvement; and workforce development and education. Meetings were also held with the City Manager's Economic Development Advisory Panel and Department staff.

Additionally, the vision development workshop provided an opportunity for stakeholders to review a draft strategic framework and provide input on the plan's vision statement.



## Stakeholder engagement summary (cont.)

Stakeholder conversations were valuable for understanding Roanoke’s competitive strengths, challenges and opportunities for growth. They also provided insight on the Department’s performance in terms of what they are doing well and areas where improvement and greater impact can be made.

Many stakeholders affirmed that Roanoke has an array of natural and developed assets and geographic advantages. There are also strong economic development partnerships, programs and activities. Organizationally, stakeholders generally considered the Department to be doing an exemplary job of promoting Roanoke’s strengths and assets and responding to the needs of local business and employers.

However, the Department’s roles and activities within the traditional economic and community development spaces were less familiar to many participants. When asked what priority areas the Department should consider in the development a five-year strategy, many pointed to business recruitment, retention and expansion; placemaking; and workforce education and training. Some believed more needed to be done in these areas, and others wanted to have a clearer understanding of how duties align with the overall departmental mission.

A residential survey was also distributed to gather input on key economic and community development subjects. Top Community and Neighborhood improvement projects included commercial and residential properties; greenways, trails and parks; and grocery stores and restaurants. The airport, bus system and broadband internet were identified as leading Infrastructure concerns. In terms of Arts and Culture, there is a desire to see more adult and youth programs that are focused on career skills development (e.g. creativity, collaboration and problem-solving). Among respondents who are Business Owners and Entrepreneurs, information and resources deemed most valuable include access to capital; recruiting, training and HR services; and support for starting a business.

### **Top 5 Sectors that survey respondents would like to see grow in terms of jobs and employment:**

1. Engineering and Technology
2. Retail, Hospitality and Tourism
3. Health and Life Sciences
4. Manufacturing
5. Transportation, Warehousing and Logistics

*Source: City of Roanoke Economic and Community Development Resident Survey*

## Stakeholder engagement summary (cont.)

### Strengths

#### Assets and distinctions

- The region's proximity to the Appalachian Trail and Blue Ridge Parkway creates ample opportunity for the Department to market its outdoor assets to prospective employers and their talent.
- As a seven-time All-American City and the largest locality in southwest Virginia, Roanoke's position within the Shenandoah Valley makes it a natural hub for commerce and culture.
- Roanoke is within a 60-mile driving distance to 26 institutions of higher learning.
- Roanoke is home to a burgeoning health and life science's sector
- Roanoke's downtown redevelopment and residential growth contributes to the city's quality of life.

#### Economic development

- The Fralin Biomedical Research Institute and Virginia Tech Carilion (VTC) School of Medicine, the RAMP Regional Accelerator, and VERGE collaborative alliance are strategic assets to help advance the region's innovation economy, technology, and life sciences sectors.
- Regional collaboration between the City of Roanoke, Roanoke Regional Partnership, Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge, and the Roanoke Regional Chamber is strong.
- The Department of Economic Development is viewed as responsive to and supportive of businesses, as it boasts competitive incentives and is seen as the front door to commerce.



## Stakeholder engagement summary (cont.)

### Challenges

#### Economic and community growth

- A resistance to change and growth (a “NIMBY” or “not in my backyard” mindset) has surfaced around certain development projects.
- Health and life sciences, and related sectors, were often the only targets stakeholders referenced.
- Entrepreneurs and small businesses face limited access to capital.
- Economic inequity and lack of opportunity is a concern, especially in communities with primarily Black residents and people of color.

#### Infrastructure and quality of place

- The Department and development community face a shortage of developable land and available sites.
- Gaps in transportation access, options and connectivity to broader region make the movement of people, goods and opportunities difficult.
- Roanoke Regional Airport was perceived as underutilized and lacking sufficient flight options.
- A growing and diversifying population may require more recreational and entertainment amenities.

#### Workforce and education

- Competing cities and regions may offer more amenities to attract and retain talent.
- Roanoke County schools are perceived to be better than Roanoke City Public Schools.
- Some employers feel the need to import talent rather than source it locally, particularly for experienced employees.



## Stakeholder engagement summary (cont.)

### Potential Opportunities to Consider

#### Business development and economic growth

- Play a more proactive role in business recruitment and lead generation.
- Stronger business retention and expansion efforts have the potential to improve the economy, workforce development priorities, and the perception of Roanoke.
- Expand support for small business and entrepreneurship (especially MWBEs).
- Support the manufacturing base, cultivate the life sciences sector, and identify other industry and innovation opportunities.
- Be seen as the visionary and vehicle for moving the city's future economic growth forward.

#### Community development and infrastructure

- Foster more internal collaboration between economic development and community engagement/neighborhood services .
- Identify and support revitalization and investment opportunities across the community with an emphasis on under-funded neighborhoods.
- Better integrate economic development into transportation and infrastructure planning and development to strengthen capacity and accelerate business growth.

#### Workforce development, education, and talent attraction

- Establish the Department of Economic Development's role as a connector to bridge employers and educational partners.
- Elevate the City as a premiere destination for young talent in the Roanoke Region, the Commonwealth of Virginia and beyond.
- Support efforts raising awareness around industry-aligned career paths to support economic mobility.



# Vision and strategic framework

## Proposed vision statement

EY US was asked to assist with the crafting of a new vision statement to inspire the efforts of the Department and its partners and illuminate the future state that the Strategic Plan can help create. An in-person visioning workshop was held that included stakeholders who participated in the interviews, focus groups, and others who were engaged for the first-time. Key insights were shared from the background review and prior stakeholder conversations, as well as an overview of the draft strategic framework with pending priorities, goals and guiding principles.

With that context in mind, the stakeholders were able to provide descriptive words, via an electronic poll, to capture the kind of economy and community they wish to see within the next 10 to 20 years. Using a word cloud of suggested terms (see below), participants worked in small groups to formulate potential vision statements.



## Proposed vision statement (cont.)

Referencing the draft statements, EY US and the Department collaborated to arrive at the following vision statement:

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“The City of Roanoke is globally recognized as a **diverse**, **inclusive**, and **innovative** community that provides economic opportunity for residents and businesses, and **natural and cultural experiences** for all to enjoy.”

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Key terms from the vision statement have been expounded upon:

- **Diverse:** The City of Roanoke recognizes that a diverse population of educated and skilled individuals, as well as diversity of industries and sectors, is an essential ingredient for a prospering community. Throughout stakeholder engagement, interviewees expressed that there is an abundance of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity that can be celebrated.
- **Inclusive:** There is also a desire to see the full participation of community members of all backgrounds, and businesses of all sizes, in the economy. More inclusive and equitable growth is an aspiration shared by stakeholders and the Department.
- **Innovative:** Innovation is becoming a core element of Roanoke’s brand and identity. Biotechnology and other emerging sectors are spurring entrepreneurial and innovative activity with the potential to be a defining feature of the future economy.
- **Natural and cultural experiences:** Natural assets such as outdoor hiking, mountain biking and running trails are key attractors for residents and visitors alike. While continuing to generate interest around these quality-of-life assets, stakeholders discussed cultural and entertainment amenities or events as dynamic components to make Roanoke a preferred destination for individuals and businesses.

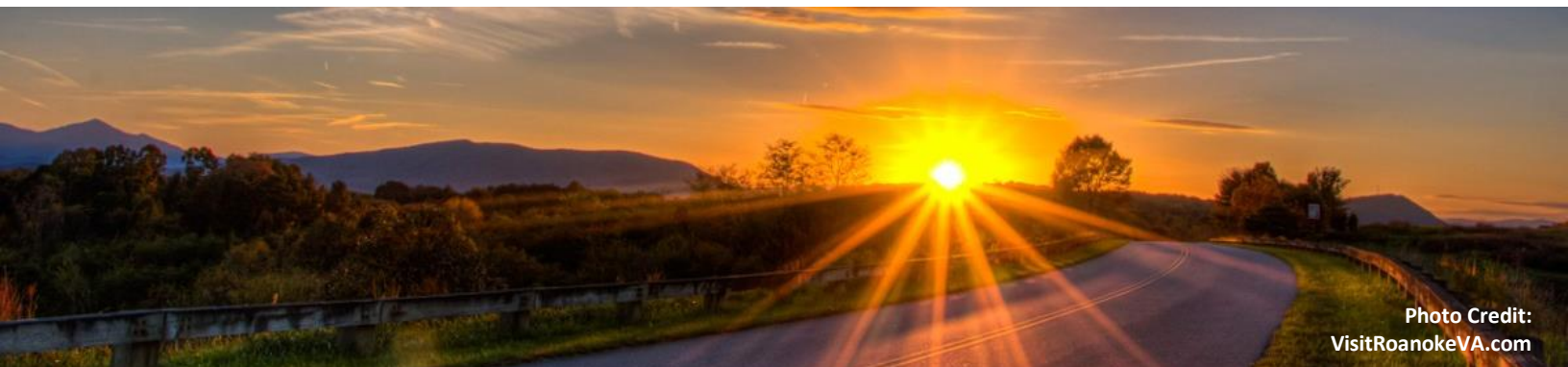


Photo Credit:  
VisitRoanokeVA.com

## Priorities and guiding principles to consider

With insights gathered through the background review, the stakeholder engagement process, and a renewed vision statement, the following framework has been developed as the foundation of Department’s new ROA Strategic Plan.



The strategic framework (illustrated above) comprises five priority areas, each with a specific goal to clarify the operational direction the Department could pursue within the given area. Actionable objectives and tactics for each goal are also provided to outline tangible steps to be taken towards realizing the priorities and goals.

Complementing the priorities are guiding principles, which can be considered core economic and community development values. These principles capture and synthesize ideas that were expressed during the stakeholder conversations. They can serve as ideas to be integrated throughout the ongoing work of the strategy and may be considered as the Strategic Plan is implemented and adjusted to meet changing economic and social conditions.

The ROA vision and strategic framework can be considered complementary to the City of Roanoke – Star City Strong (2022-2023) plan and its vision of the City as a “safe, caring and economically vibrant community in which all have equitable opportunities to live, learn, work, play and prosper.”

## Guiding principles for consideration



- **Economic Equity:** Fostering access to opportunity and economic mobility for City of Roanoke residents across the socioeconomic spectrum and for businesses of all sizes in all industries.



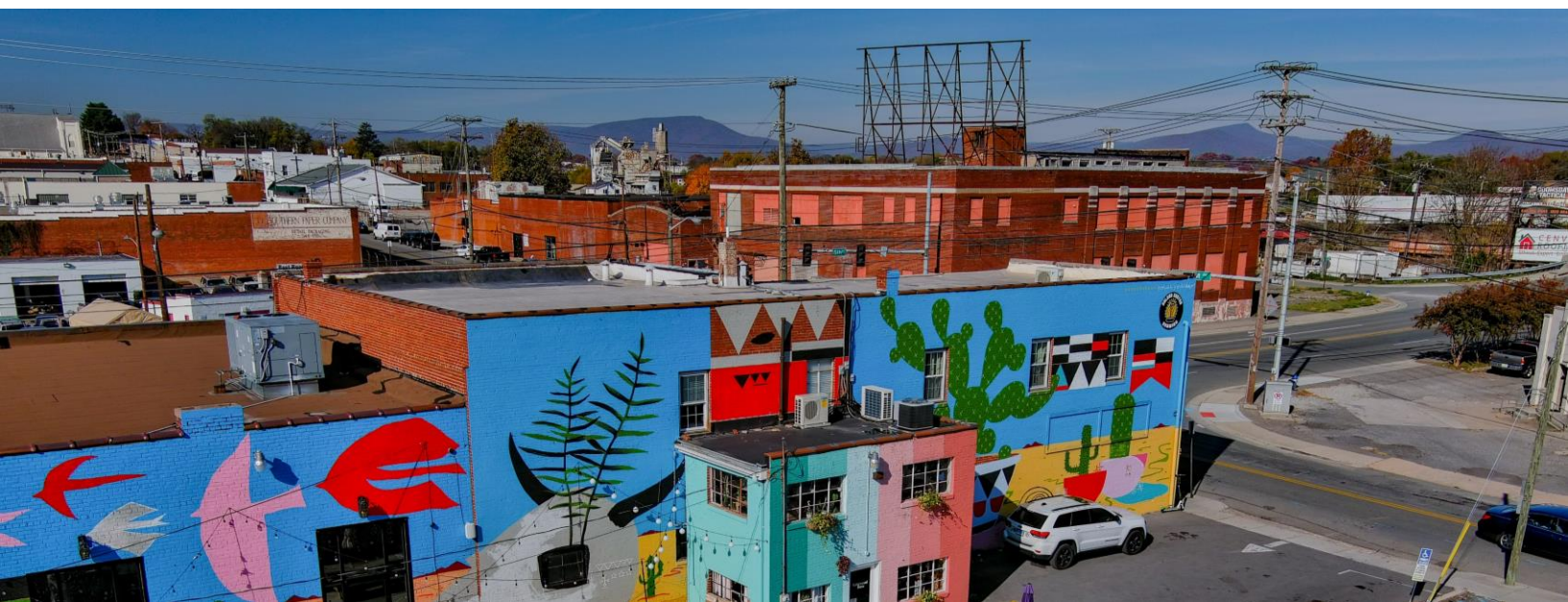
- **Diversity, Inclusion, & Belonging:** Affirming demographic differences to leverage the unique skills and backgrounds of workers, along with the continuous cultivation of a welcoming and supportive community.



- **Community Awareness & Empowerment:** Sharing vital information around the City's economic and community development priorities and progress, while facilitating opportunities for input from residents and other stakeholders.



- **Industry & Career Diversification:** Striving to develop an economy with an array of growing industries and viable career paths for the entire talent pool.





## Priorities, goals and objectives for consideration (cont.)

### BUSINESS GROWTH & MARKETING

#### Goal 1 example Metrics of Success

- Number of business relocations and expansions
- Increased capital investment
- Number of net new jobs created
- Increased website traffic and lead opportunities

#### Possible equity metric

- Relocations and expansions occurring in underutilized corridors and zip codes

**Goal 1:** Elevate business recruitment and marketing aimed at employers in the City of Roanoke’s established and emerging industries and complement regional attraction efforts.

#### Potential objectives and suggested tactics

**Objective 1.1** Create a business recruitment operation to attract new businesses and accelerates job creation and commercial development.

- Develop an incentive policy or program to expand job creation through rewards, as well as capital and community investments.
- Clearly define target industries and sectors with career paths to support economic mobility. Consider having a formal target industry analysis conducted to identify those industry sectors.

**Objective 1.2** Strengthen marketing and communications activities to increase lead generation for business relocations and capital investments.

- Collaborate on proactive outreach to site selection consultants and business decision-makers to increase deal activity for the City.
- Redesign the Department of Economic Development’s digital presence with an updated website, targeted social media advertisements, an email newsletter and additional forms of media for audience engagement.



## Priorities, goals and objectives for consideration (cont.)

### BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

#### Goal 2 example Metrics of Success

- Increased business engagement (e.g., surveys, in-person visits and virtual meetings)
- Increase in business licenses and permits, and improved response times
- Number of businesses expanded in terms of employees, site square footage, and other indicators

#### Possible equity metric

- Percentage of engagements with minority-and-women-owned businesses (MWBES)

**Goal 2:** Proactively engage with employers to understand and address workforce, available sites, and other needs, while connecting them to valuable information and resources.

#### Potential objectives and suggested tactics

**Objective 2.1** Enhance engagement with local employers through a targeted and standardized process for conducting on-site business visits.

- Develop a structured process for business visits and calls to keep an up-to-date pulse on current business needs and expansion opportunities.
- Electronically catalog touchpoints, insights and business requests to follow up on in a customer relationship management database.
- Coordinate with the Roanoke Regional Partnership's existing BR&E program as appropriate for an integrated approach.

**Objective 2.2** Elevate role as a connector between employers and education and workforce development organizations.

- Cultivate stronger employer engagement with education and training programs and curriculum.
- Convene talent and workforce partners, business and HR/talent leaders, to discuss and address employer workforce challenges.



## Priorities, goals and objectives for consideration (cont.)

### ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION

#### Goal 3 example Metrics of Success

- Number of small businesses assisted
- Increase in businesses and partnerships located in and/or established via the Innovation Corridor
- Public and private funding raised by local entrepreneurial firms

#### Possible equity metric

- Increase in funding for minority-and- women-owned business enterprises (MWBs)

**Goal 3:** Cultivate a business climate that is conducive to starting and scaling businesses and raise Roanoke’s national profile as a leading market for innovation.

#### Potential objectives and suggested tactics

**Objective 3.1** Work with local business leaders, entrepreneurs and higher education leaders to continue the development, branding and marketing of the Innovation Corridor.

- Collaborate with stakeholders (RAMP, Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, Carilion Clinic, VERGE, and others) to attract more high-growth entrepreneurial firms, corporate partners and investors.
- Partner with a creative agency to develop branding, messaging and collateral to be integrated into marketing efforts.

**Objective 3.2** Promote and support local entrepreneurial programs and help make resources more accessible to the full spectrum of small businesses and MWBs, from microbusinesses to high-growth firms.

- Develop a small business resource directory or navigator to be integrated into the Department’s website.
- Highlight resources and programs via social media and the e-newsletter.



## Priorities, goals and objectives for consideration (cont.)

### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY & COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

#### Goal 4 example Metrics of Success

- Increased employment in target industries and sectors
- Number of target industry-aligned programs and enrollment numbers in those programs
- Number of arts & culture and placemaking projects funded and completed

#### Possible equity metric

- Percentage of underrepresented demographics participating in target industry-aligned career pathways (i.e., education, training and employment)

**Goal 4:** Foster connectivity between workers and career paths in thriving industries and continue to enhance Roanoke’s quality of life through placemaking and renewal efforts.

#### Potential objectives and suggested tactics

**Objective 4.1** Advance and raise awareness around programs to further career pathways in growth industries, while enhancing financial literacy and related initiatives to improve economic mobility for workers and students.

- Share workforce insights from business retention and expansion efforts with school leaders and CTE coordinators to help align programs with industry needs while educating students on successful careers in Roanoke.
- Maintain and grow the efforts of the Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) for residents, while integrating small business assistance initiatives.
- Explore opportunities to incorporate more career skills development into adult and youth arts and culture programs, and help create more alignment between these programs and workforce development and training initiatives.

**Objective 4.2** Amplify placemaking and revitalization across the community through an array of improvement and renewal projects.

- Collaborate with the City’s Neighborhood Services Department and Office of Arts & Culture to expand public art and cultural activities, improve and preserve natural environment, and restore public and private properties.



## Priorities, goals and objectives for consideration (cont.)

### ASSET & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

#### Goal 5 example Metrics of Success

- Decrease response and approval time for building permit approvals
- Increase developable square footage as a result of public investment
- Decrease commercial and industrial vacancy rates

#### Possible equity metric

- Increased public investment in sites and infrastructure projects within underutilized corridors and zip codes

**Goal 5:** Increase the availability of quality business locations and continue to strengthen infrastructure for current and future growth.

#### Potential objectives and suggested tactics

**Objective 5.1** Continue and expand collaboration with developers, business leaders, and other economic development partners to advance industrial and commercial real estate development, redevelopment and rehabilitation.

- Gather input from site selectors, real estate professionals, and other knowledgeable sources on current and future business relocation and expansion needs.
- Enhance internal coordination with complementary departments and local developers to advance a cohesive and efficient site and infrastructure development process.
- Identify commercial districts in need of investment and explore incentive tools available to promote further growth.

**Objective 5.2** Address critical infrastructure needs and support the advancement of projects to benefit businesses and residents.

- Continue work around evaluation and improvement of essential assets to include water, transportation and mobility, and broadband, and quality of place amenities including parks, greenways, trails and other outdoor amenities.





# Leading practices

The following leading practices across the Strategic Framework's goals serve as blueprints, elements from which the Department may consider, adopt and implement in its own practice, according to need and capacity.

## **Business growth and marketing**

### **City of Louisville business attraction and expansion**

Louisville's integrated approach to economic and community development combines business recruitment, expansion and retention activities, talent and workforce attraction, and other activities. The City's business recruitment and marketing efforts focus on health and aging innovation, advanced manufacturing, business services, logistics, and food and beverage. The City offers an array of inclusive growth tools including incentives, small business programs and resources, and a public-facing performance dashboard, including equity metrics.

Website: <https://louisvilleky.gov/government/louisville-forward>

### **City of Austin best practice analysis and review of peer cities**

Prior to adopting a comprehensive incentive strategy, the City of Austin's Economic Development Department conducted a best practice analysis and review of peer cities. It catalogued initiatives or models that could be implemented in a revised incentive program that rewards capital *and* community investments. Subject areas included: business recruitment, retention and expansion; workforce development; real estate; creative and artistic development; social enterprise; small businesses; and healthy outcomes.

Website:

[https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Best\\_Practices\\_Report.pdf](https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Best_Practices_Report.pdf)

## **Chattanooga Office of Economic Development**

The Chattanooga Office of Economic Development offers services and resources such as site selection assistance, small business grants and several financing tools (i.e., New Markets Tax Credits, revolving loan funds, and Opportunity Zones). It also excels in cross-promoting relevant programs and initiatives: It sponsors resources for entrepreneurial projects of various sizes and scope offered through its partners, and it operates the Office of Workforce Development — a division within the Economic Development Department that serves employment seekers and providers with career readiness training, job searches and educational attainment.

Website: <https://econ.chattanooga.gov/>

## **Business retention and expansion**

### **University of Florida and University of Minnesota**

The University of Florida and University of Minnesota archives contain case studies, stories and publications to examine the strong correlation between a robust business retention and expansion program and healthy local economies.

Websites:

[https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/series\\_bre](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/series_bre)

[https://extension.umn.edu/retaining-community-businesses/retaining\\_businesses-case-studies-and-stories](https://extension.umn.edu/retaining-community-businesses/retaining_businesses-case-studies-and-stories)

## **Entrepreneurship and innovation**

### **City of Raleigh’s Community and Small Business Development Department website**

The City of Raleigh’s Community and Economic Development Department maintains a user-friendly website with an abundance of resources. Subscribing to its newsletter is easy and encouraged, news and information on relevant projects and services is clearly displayed, and feedback on potential site improvements is reviewed monthly.

Website: <https://raleighnc.gov/community-and-economic-development>

### **The Oklahoma Biotech Innovation Cluster Initiative (OBIC)**

Led by the Oklahoma City Economic Development Foundation, the Greater OKC region was awarded \$35m in the Build Back Better Regional Challenge. Its 25-year effort to expand the bioscience industry was nationally recognized for its success in uniting government, academia, community and industry partners across Oklahoma City.

Website: <https://eda.gov/arpa/build-back-better/finalists/Oklahoma-City-Economic-Development-Foundation.htm>

## Economic opportunity and community vibrancy

### LISC | Far Eastside Economic Inclusion Agenda

The Far Eastside community in Indianapolis collaborated with the Local Initiative Support Coalition (LISC) to develop an Economic Inclusion Agenda, which empowered community-based organization to lead economic, workforce and business development with the support of city-wide economic and workforce development organizations.

Website: [https://www.lisc.org/media/filer\\_public/14/95/1495f52b-d9d1-4cef-a72b-88bc46daca49/lisc\\_eia\\_document\\_-\\_final\\_reduced.pdf](https://www.lisc.org/media/filer_public/14/95/1495f52b-d9d1-4cef-a72b-88bc46daca49/lisc_eia_document_-_final_reduced.pdf)

## Asset and infrastructure development

### New York Division of Local Government Services publications

One of the many publications by the agency, New York's Division of Local Government Services published Creating the Community You Want: Municipal Options for Land Use Control — a technical manual that contains suggestions for municipal development, growth management and land use tools that cities may use deal with community character change.

Website:

[https://dos.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/03/creating-the-community-you-want\\_2022.pdf](https://dos.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/03/creating-the-community-you-want_2022.pdf)

### City of Chicago's 2022-2026 Capital Improvement Program

Albeit a larger city with a larger budget, the City of Chicago's Office of Budget and Management released its 2022-2026 Capital Improvement Program book. Within are nine infrastructure programs, including Economic Development and Neighborhood Infrastructure. The programs within Economic Development expand on joint financing with other jurisdictions and goals to enhance industrial areas and consider ways to encourage new investments that create and retain jobs.

Website:

<https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/obm/general/CIP/CIPDocs/2022-2026%20CIP%20Book.pdf>



## Economic development authority leading practices

### Reorganization of economic development activities

Richmond, VA, at the recommendation of an external consultant, may consider a reorganization of the activities, structure and relationship between the Richmond Economic Development Department and the Richmond EDA. Considerations include consolidating all economic development functions under a newly created entity, consolidating all activities under the EDA, or restructuring functions between the Richmond Department of Economic Development and the Richmond EDA.

Website: <https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Richmond%20SPEED%20-%20051822%20-%20Clean%20Final%20For%20Introduction.pdf>

### Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority (VCEDA) — 2021 Annual Report

The VCEDA successfully promotes its activities by publishing an annual report that highlights projects and expansions, loan and grant approvals, and priority areas, among other topics. Elevating visibility in such a manner may help attract resources and attention to the region while promoting accountability.

Website: <https://www.vceda.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/VCEDA-Annual-Report-2021-Final.pdf>

### Winchester Economic Development Authority — strategic plan

In 2018, the City of Winchester commissioned a five-year strategic plan on behalf of the Winchester EDA. This effort isolated strategies, roles and performance metrics exclusively for the EDA. It also identified redevelopment projects and potential funding that the EDA could pursue to augment the City of Winchester's economic development activities.

Website: <https://www.winchesterva.gov/sites/default/files/documents/economic-development/winchester-economic-development-strategic-plan-final-3-19-18.pdf>



# Considerations for organizational change

An integral component of the strategic planning process was an evaluation of the Department of Economic Development's current organizational structure. EY US reviewed the Department's staffing model and reporting structure and gathered input from staff and other key stakeholders on organizational needs and opportunities. Additionally, a comparative assessment (p. 32) was conducted against four peer city departments to gain insight on how the City of Roanoke's economic development operations correlates with other high-performing and emerging communities.

Based on the Department's new strategic framework and direction, and the factors referenced above, organizational change considerations have been identified below to help provide alignment between the team's structure and the new plan.

## **Bolstering organizational capacity**

### ***Growing business, fostering innovation and supporting small businesses***

This priority and goal of the new ROA Strategic Plan include efforts related to business recruitment, retention and expansion, and entrepreneurship and innovation. The following suggestions are focused on strengthening capacity in the priority areas:

#### **Business growth and marketing**

Currently, the Department has staff that allot a portion of their time to business attraction and marketing but not a dedicated team member with full-time responsibility to pursue deals leading to job creation and capital investment. The creation of a *Business Recruitment and Marketing Manager* position, which reports to the Director of Economic Development, could provide enhanced focus and results for this newly defined priority.

## Bolstering organizational capacity (cont.)

The Business Recruitment & Marketing Manager could help accelerate the Department's ability to attract new business through proactive outreach to site selection consultants and business relocation decision-makers. The position could be filled by an individual with relevant experience and a willingness to stay abreast of leading practices for business attraction.

### **Business retention and expansion**

The Department has played a role in supporting the retention and expansion of businesses in Roanoke in the past. There is an opportunity for more consistency and strengthened processes around those efforts. What was previously titled the Economic Development Specialist for Industry and Marketing could be reestablished as a *Business Retention & Expansion Specialist*. This adjustment clarifies the intent of the position, which could continue to report to the Economic Development Manager.

### **Entrepreneurship and innovation**

As of the writing of this report, the City of Roanoke is in the process of hiring its first *Innovation Administrator* to lead efforts related to the cultivation of the local entrepreneurial ecosystem, collaborating with local partners in this space, developing the Innovation Corridor, and supporting high-growth start-ups, especially in the health and life sciences sector. The position reports to the Director of Economic Development and could work closely with the Business Recruitment & Marketing Manager.

In addition to an increasing focus on high-growth entrepreneurial firms and innovation, there is an opportunity to support small businesses as well. An *Entrepreneurship & Small Business Specialist* position could be created to serve as a coordinator for related programs, services and resources and help close the awareness gap that many business owners have when it comes to the support that the City and other organizations provide. The position could support innovation, as well as community development efforts, but could also have a reporting or other direct working relationship with the Innovation Administrator.

## Bolstering organizational capacity (cont.)

### ***Advancing economic opportunity and strengthening community and infrastructure development***

Beyond the business-oriented priorities that have been referenced, the Strategic Plan includes those priorities that are integral to the attraction and retention of employers and people. These priorities address the importance of growing an economy in which all residents can thrive and experience an exemplary quality of life and businesses benefit from a skilled workforce and modernized sites and infrastructure.

The roles below are suggested to enhance capacity in these areas:

#### **Economic opportunity and community vibrancy**

Previously an Economic Development Specialist for Community Development served as the Department's liaison to workforce development organizations and educational institutions, and other local, state and national partners. The position has also had a role in supporting the Department's diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) efforts by serving as resource for minority-owned businesses.

Given the increased significance of economic opportunity and inclusive growth, along with the improvement of neighborhoods through enhanced cultural placemaking, this position could potentially be reframed and elevated. The role could be renamed the *Economic Inclusion and Community Development Manager* and have two reporting positions. One of those positions may be the Entrepreneurship and Small Business Specialist referenced previously, which could include a focus on advancing minority entrepreneurship.

The recruitment of a new staff member to lead this work is underway as of the writing of this report. Ideally, they will have some experience in one or more of the focus areas within this priority and an interest in expanding their knowledge in other areas.

The Financial Stability Specialist currently manages the Financial Empowerment Center, which coordinates financial literacy services and resources for residents and families in need. This work is valued in the community and is expected to continue. However, this role could be reframed as an *Economic Inclusion and Community Vibrancy Specialist*. Expanded responsibilities could include a broader array of economic inclusion activities, particularly in terms of helping residents access employment, education and training programs. Additionally, the role could identify and support projects to enhance the visual appeal and experience of neighborhoods through an infusion of arts and culture, development, and reuse/redevelopment.

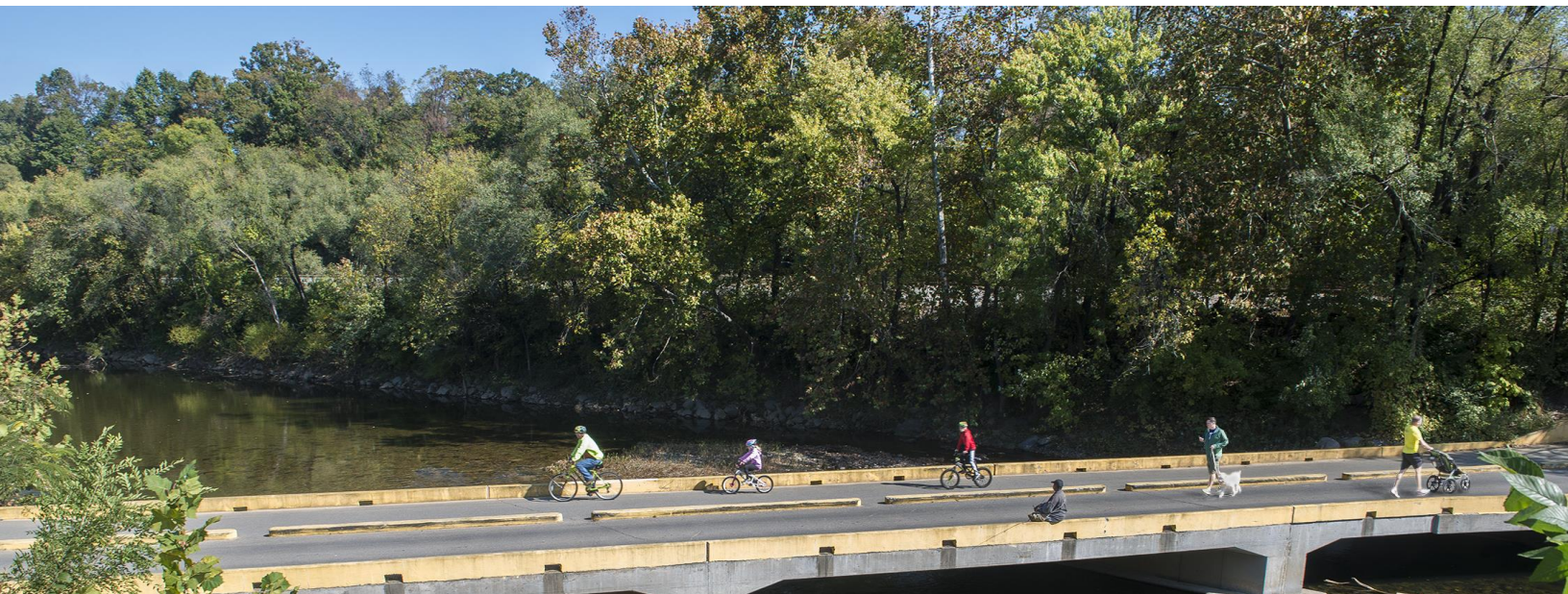
## Bolstering organizational capacity (cont.)

### Asset and infrastructure development

Management and support of asset and infrastructure projects are valuable services the City has provided, but increasing activity around real estate, transportation and other initiatives can create growing pressure to respond to the needs of businesses and development partners in a timely and effective manner. There are currently two staff members who are assigned to this priority area as Economic Development Specialists (one focused on manufacturing and industrial sites, and the other focused on retail, professional offices, and marketing responsibilities for the Department).

To enhance efficacy around these positions, it is suggested that there be a clearer delineation of responsibilities. One position could be redefined as an *Infrastructure Specialist* that focuses on projects and matters related to transportation, water and sewer, utilities, broad band and other related community needs. The other role could be established as a *Commercial Real Estate Specialist*, with a purview covering business sites for employers in target industries and retail to support resident needs. This role could continue to report to the Economic Development Manager and work collaboratively with each other, as well as with the Economic Inclusion & Community Vibrancy team members, given the complementary issues around commercial real estate, infrastructure and neighborhood development.

These positions could be filled by individuals with relevant experience or those with a willingness to learn and grow within their respective roles.



## Internal collaboration and other considerations

### Collaboration with other City departments

In evaluating the structure of the Department of Economic Development specifically, alignment with other departments and teams within the City was also taken into consideration, particularly those reporting to the City Manager of Community Development. In addition to economic development, this individual has oversight of Community Engagement, Neighborhood Support and Communications. The Department of Economic Development is encouraged to collaborate more closely with these other teams as a way to reduce organizational silos and duplicative efforts while optimizing City resources and impact.

Some key areas of synergy include new and enhanced coordination between the Department's Economic Inclusion & Community Development team members and Community Engagement and Neighborhood Support personnel. The Business Recruitment & Marketing Manager could benefit from synchronizing certain activities with the Office of Communications. The Planning and Permitting position could help with better coordination around planning and zoning inquiries between the Department of Economic Development and the Department of Planning, Building & Development. It could also be valuable for other economic development team members (the real estate and infrastructure specialists in particular) to work with their City counterparts more collaboratively.

Educating the other departments and teams on ROA and gathering their ideas on how all parties can work together more seamlessly may be an essential step towards this enhanced coordination.

### Other organizational considerations

Input from staff highlighted a need for more professional training and development opportunities. There was an expressed interest in attending state and national economic development conferences to learn from experts in the field and fellow practitioners. Redesigning the Department's website to be more visually appealing and user-friendly and updating technological resources, such as customer relationship management (CRM) software and laptops, can improve effectiveness. A department vehicle or expanded travel and mileage budget could be helpful for greater engagement with businesses, residents and partners across the city and region.

Salary increases may be considered for organizational changes involving promotions or expanded responsibilities to drive talent attraction and retention for the Department.

## Internal collaboration and other considerations (cont.)

### Possible department name change

Given the expanded and more integrated approach to economic development reflected in the Strategic Plan, consideration could be given to updating the Department's name to ***"Economic and Community Development"*** or ***"Economic Development and Opportunity."*** Asheville, NC, one of the peer cities included in the comparative assessment uses the banner of "Community and Economic Development," and Birmingham, AL, another peer that is referenced, uses the title of "Innovation and Economic Opportunity."

A name change can be a clear indicator that the plan represents new possibilities, and expanded opportunities, to be advanced for the betterment of people and businesses in the City of Roanoke.



## Peer organizational comparison

	Richmond, VA	Asheville, NC	Danville, VA	Birmingham, AL	Roanoke, VA
<b>Approximate city population</b>	229,000	92,000	40,000	211,000	99,000
<b>Economic development staff</b>	18	20	9.5	12	9.5
<b>Scope of services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community development</li> <li>• Broadband</li> <li>• Workforce training</li> <li>• Minority business development</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Business retention and expansion</li> <li>• Incentives</li> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Target industry attraction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community development</li> <li>• Affordable housing</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• CDBG program</li> <li>• HOME program</li> <li>• Inclusive city procurement</li> <li>• Youth leadership</li> <li>• Real estate</li> <li>• Business resource library</li> <li>• Strategic funding for nonprofits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business support</li> <li>• Financing resources</li> <li>• Workforce development</li> <li>• Permitting support</li> <li>• Business attraction</li> <li>• Incentives</li> <li>• Available site inventories</li> <li>• Tourism support</li> <li>• Placemaking (River District)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small business growth</li> <li>• Business recruitment</li> <li>• Business retention and expansion</li> <li>• Real estate management</li> <li>• Sports and entertainment focus</li> <li>• Workforce development</li> <li>• Data and special projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business retention and expansion</li> <li>• Entrepreneurship and small business support</li> <li>• Commercial real estate management</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Incentives</li> <li>• Workforce development support</li> <li>• Roanoke Financial Empowerment Center</li> <li>• Bank On Roanoke</li> </ul>
<b>Total department budget (2022)</b>	\$6,040,067	\$3,903,273	\$1,018,970	\$9,644,109	\$3,240,459
<b>Department budget per capita</b>	\$26.38	\$42.43	\$25.47	\$45.71	\$32.73

### Key takeaways

- There is an average of 15 employees among the peer economic development departments, which is 4.5 employees more than in the City of Roanoke Department of Economic Development.
- City of Roanoke Department of Economic Development has a more active role in real estate and infrastructure development than most peers, but does not have the business recruitment/attraction focus others have.
- The Department of Economic Development’s per capita budget is about 6% below the peer average of \$35, which could demonstrate an opportunity for enhanced departmental resources.





# Implementation guidance

## Implementation overview

The ROA Strategic Plan will build upon previous work and performance, while providing direction toward a more inclusive and equitable economy and community. In this section, tools are provided to assist with the implementation of the plan over the next five years.

Pre-implementation considerations, including suggestions for launching and sharing communications about the plan, are included. Notes on the continual review of the plan have been provided as well.

While the City of Roanoke's Department of Economic Development will play a leading role to advance the priorities and goals outlined, it will do so in a collaborative manner with numerous internal and external partners. Many of those partners are listed on the implementation partners chart.

The other guidance resource provided is an Implementation Roadmap that includes estimated timeframes for initiating key activities and tactics described in the plan. The roadmap could be considered a working draft to be revised as needed based on continuous changes the Department will inevitably encounter in the upcoming months and years.

## Pre-implementation considerations

### Plan announcement and roll out

The City of Roanoke's Department of Economic Development could consider a community wide event to celebrate the launch of ROA upon its acceptance and enactment. Attendees for the event could include business leaders, community organization leaders, residents and students, government representatives, regional leaders, and others.

### Communications

The Department may want to utilize existing social media channels (or establish them), email distribution lists, and partner networks to distribute vital information about the plan during the launch and to provide ongoing updates on key milestones and successes. Communicating with economic, community and workforce development partners through in-person meetings, calls and email communications can help with implementation coordination for the plan.

### Continual review of the plan

The success of any strategic planning effort relies upon the continual consultation and adaptation of plan elements. The Department is encouraged to track progress and impact of ROA on a quarterly and annual basis to determine which priorities and goals have the most traction and which are more difficult to move forward. Certain objectives and activities may need to be updated based on performance reviews. Continuing to gather input from internal and external stakeholders could be helpful in making those determinations.



Photo Credit:  
BlueRidgeMarathon.com

## Implementation partners

Priority	Goal	Objectives	Implementation partners
<b>Business growth and marketing</b>	<b>Goal 1:</b> Elevate business recruitment and marketing aimed at employers in the City of Roanoke’s established and emerging industries and complements regional attraction efforts.	<b>Objective 1.1</b> Create a business recruitment operation to attract new businesses and accelerate job creation and commercial development.  <b>Objective 1.2</b> Strengthen marketing and communications activities to increase lead generation for business relocations and capital investments.	<b>External partners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roanoke Regional Partnership</li> <li>• Roanoke County Economic Development Department</li> <li>• Virginia Economic Development Partnership</li> <li>• Area higher education institutions</li> <li>• Roanoke City Public Schools</li> </ul> <b>Internal partners (City of Roanoke)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of Communications</li> </ul>
<b>Business retention and expansion</b>	<b>Goal 2:</b> Proactively engage with employers to understand and address workforce, sites and other needs and connect them to valuable information and resources.	<b>Objective 2.1</b> Enhance engagement with local employers with a targeted and standardized process for conducting on-site business visits.  <b>Objective 2.2</b> Elevate role as a connector between employers and education and workforce development organizations.	<b>External partners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virginia Career Works - Roanoke Center</li> <li>• Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Roanoke Regional Partnership</li> <li>• VERGE</li> <li>• Local business network and associations</li> <li>• Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority</li> <li>• Roanoke Valley- Alleghany Regional Commission</li> <li>• Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority</li> <li>• Western Virginia Water Authority</li> <li>• Roanoke County and other local governments</li> </ul> <b>Internal partners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Roanoke Planning, Building, and Development Department</li> </ul>

## Implementation partners

Priority	Goal	Objectives	Implementation partners
Entrepreneurship and innovation	<p><b>Goal 3:</b> Cultivate a business climate conducive to starting and scaling businesses and raise Roanoke’s national profile as a leading market for innovation.</p>	<p><b>Objective 3.1</b> Work with local business leaders, entrepreneurs and higher education leaders to continue the development, branding and marketing of the Innovation Corridor.</p> <p><b>Objective 3.2</b> Promote and support local entrepreneurial programs and help make resources more accessible to the full spectrum of small businesses and MWBEs, from microbusinesses to high-growth firms.</p>	<p><b>External partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council</li> <li>• RAMP</li> <li>• Carillion Clinic</li> <li>• Roanoke Regional Partnership</li> <li>• US Small Business Administration</li> <li>• SBDC Virginia - Roanoke Region</li> <li>• Area banks and financial services firms</li> <li>• Urban professional league</li> </ul> <p><b>Internal partners (City of Roanoke)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Empowerment Center</li> </ul>
Economic opportunity and community vibrancy	<p><b>Goal 4:</b> Foster connectivity between workers and career paths in thriving industries and continue to enhance Roanoke’s quality of life through placemaking and renewal efforts.</p>	<p><b>Objective 4.1</b> Advance and support programs to raise awareness around and further career pathways in growth industries, enhance financial literacy and other efforts to improve economic mobility for workers and students.</p> <p><b>Objective 4.2</b> Amplify placemaking and revitalization across the community through an array of improvement and renewal projects.</p>	<p><b>External partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virginia CareerWorks - Roanoke Center</li> <li>• Area higher education institutions</li> <li>• Roanoke City Public Schools</li> <li>• Roanoke Regional Chamber</li> <li>• Roanoke Regional Partnership</li> <li>• Arts, culture and entertainment partners</li> <li>• Area banks and financial services firms</li> <li>• Real estate and construction companies</li> <li>• Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional Commission</li> <li>• Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority</li> </ul> <p><b>Internal partners (City of Roanoke)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Development</li> <li>• Community Engagement</li> <li>• Neighborhood Services</li> <li>• Arts &amp; Culture</li> <li>• Planning, Building, and Development</li> </ul>



## Implementation partners

Priority	Goal	Objectives	Implementation partners
<b>Asset and infrastructure development</b>	<b>Goal 5:</b> Increase the availability of quality business locations and continue to strengthen infrastructure for current and future growth.	<p><b>Objective 5.1</b> Continue and expand collaboration with developers, business leaders, and other economic development partners to advance industrial and commercial real estate development, redevelopment, and reuse.</p> <p><b>Objective 5.2</b> Address critical infrastructure needs and support the advancement of projects that benefit businesses and residents.</p>	<p><b>External partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial and industrial development firms and construction companies</li> <li>• Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority</li> <li>• Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional Commission</li> <li>• Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority</li> <li>• Western Virginia Water Authority</li> <li>• Area banks and financial services firms</li> </ul> <p><b>Internal partners (City of Roanoke)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Works</li> <li>• Community Development</li> <li>• Planning, Building, and Development</li> <li>• Parks &amp; Recreation</li> <li>• Libraries</li> </ul>

# Implementation roadmap

## Business growth and marketing

**Goal 1:** Elevate business recruitment and marketing aimed at employers in the City of Roanoke's established and emerging industries and complement regional attraction efforts.

### 1.1 Create a business recruitment operation to attract new businesses and accelerate job creation and commercial development

- Develop an incentive policy or program which rewards job creation, as well as capital and community investments. [Q1-Q4 2023](#)
- Clearly define target industries and sectors with career paths that support economic mobility. [Q2 2023](#)

### 1.2 Strengthen marketing and communications activities to increase lead generation for business relocations and capital investments

- Collaborate on proactive outreach to site selection consultants and business decision-makers to increase deal activity for the City. [Q1 2023 \(Continual\)](#).
- Redesign the Department of Economic Development's digital presence with an updated website, targeting social media advertisements through digital marketing, email newsletter and other audience engagement initiatives. [Q1 2023 \(Continual\)](#)

## Business retention and expansion

**Goal 2:** Proactively engage with employers to understand and address workforce, sites, and other needs, and connect them to valuable information and resources.

### 2.1 Enhance engagement with local employers with a targeted and standardized process for conducting on-site business visits.

- Develop a structured process for business visits and calls to keep an up-to-date pulse on current business needs and expansion opportunities. [Q1 2023 \(Continual\)](#)
- Electronically catalog touchpoints, insights and business requests to follow up on in a customer relationship management database. [Q3 2023 \(Continual\)](#)

### 2.2 Elevate role as a connector between employers and education and workforce development organizations

- Cultivate stronger employer engagement with education and training programs and curriculum. [Q4 2023](#)
- Convene talent and workforce partners, business and HR/talent leaders, to discuss and address employer workforce challenges. [Q2 2023](#)

# Implementation roadmap

## Entrepreneurship and innovation

**Goal 3:** Cultivate a business climate conducive to starting and scaling businesses and raising Roanoke's national profile as a leading market for innovation.

**3.1** Work with local business leaders, entrepreneurs and higher education leaders to continue the development, branding and marketing of the Innovation Corridor.

- Collaborate with stakeholders (RAMP, Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council, Carilion Clinic, RRP and others) to attract more high-growth entrepreneurial firms, corporate partners and investors. [Q2 2023 \(Continual\)](#)
- Partner with a marketing and advertising agency to develop branding, digital marketing, messaging and collateral to be integrated into marketing efforts. [Q3 2023](#)

**3.2** Promote and support local entrepreneurial programs and help make resources more accessible to the full spectrum of small businesses and MWBEs, from microbusinesses to high-growth firms.

- Develop a small business resource directory or navigator to be integrated into the Department's website. [Q1 2023](#)
- Highlight resources and programs via social media and the e-newsletter. [Q1 2023 \(Continual\)](#)

## Economic opportunity and community vibrancy

**Goal 4:** Foster connectivity between workers and career paths in thriving industries, and continue to enhance Roanoke's quality of life through placemaking and renewal efforts.

**4.1** Advance and support programs to raise awareness around and further career pathways in growth industries, while enhancing financial literacy and related initiatives to improve economic mobility for workers and students.

- Share workforce insights from BR&E conversations with school leaders and CTE coordinators to help align programs with industry needs and educate students on promising careers in Roanoke. [Q2 2023 \(Continual\)](#)
- Continue the efforts of the Financial Empowerment Center for residents, while integrating small business assistance. [Continue](#)
- Explore opportunities to incorporate more career skills development into adult and youth arts and culture programs, and help create more alignment between these programs and workforce development and training initiatives. [Q3 2023 \(Continual\)](#)

**4.2** Amplify placemaking and revitalization across the community through an array of improvement and renewal projects

- Collaborate with the City's Neighborhood Services and Arts & Culture departments to expand public art and cultural activities, improve and preserve natural environment, and restore public and private properties. [Q2 2023 \(Continual\)](#)

# Implementation roadmap

## Asset and infrastructure development

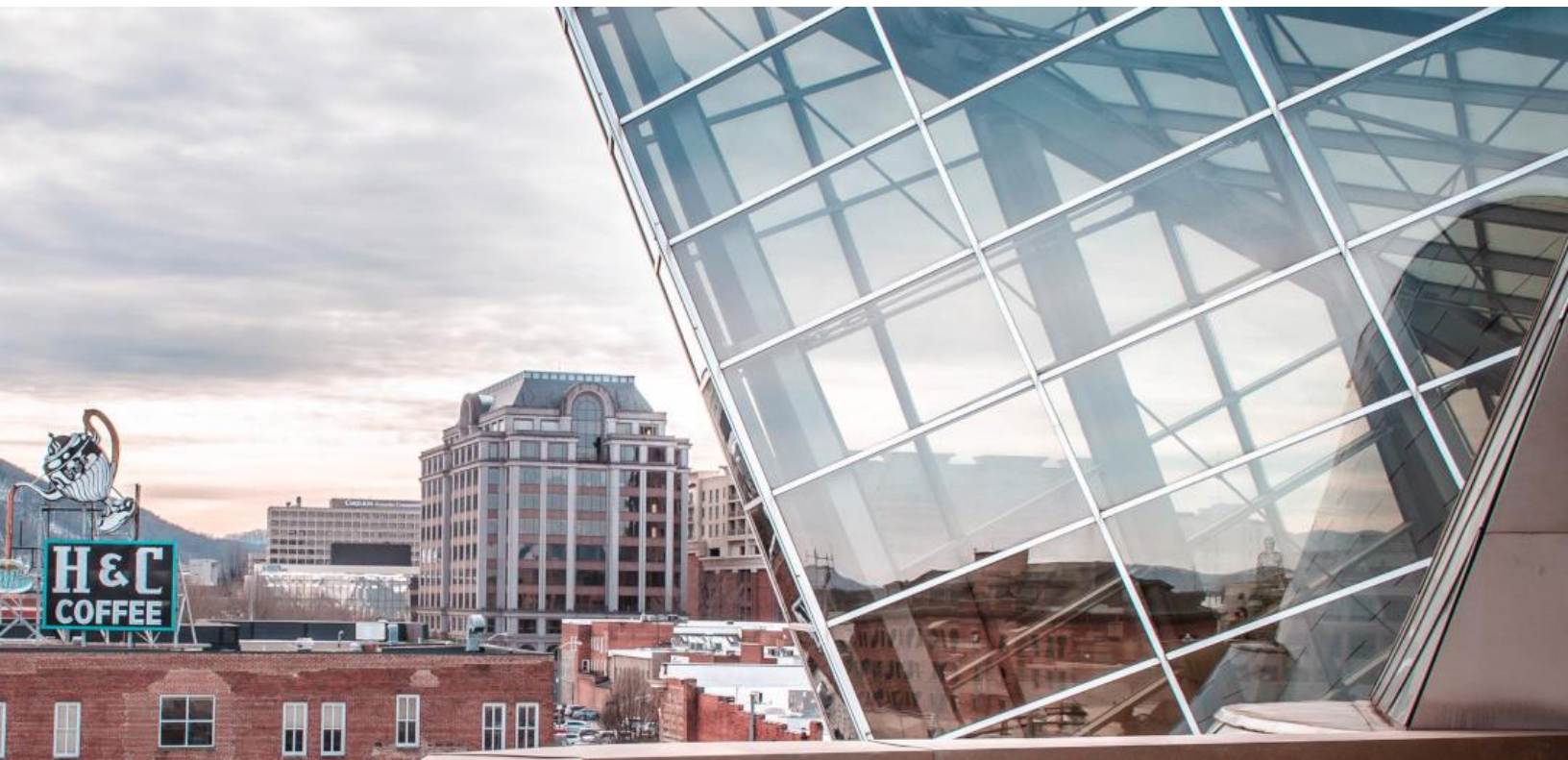
**Goal 5:** Increase the availability of quality business locations and continue to strengthen infrastructure for current and future growth.

**5.1** Continue and expand collaboration with developers, business leaders, and other economic development partners to advance industrial and commercial real estate development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation.

- Gather input from site selectors and other knowledgeable sources on current and future business relocation and expansion needs. [Q2 2023](#)
- Enhance coordination with complementary internal departments and local developers to advance a cohesive and efficient site and infrastructure development process. [Q1 2023 \(Continual\)](#)
- Identify commercial districts in need of investment and explore incentive tools available to promote further growth. [Q2 2023-Q1 2024](#)

**5.2** Address critical infrastructure needs and support the advancement of projects that benefit business and residents.

- Continue work around evaluation and improvement of essential assets to include water, transportation and mobility, and broadband, and quality of place amenities such as parks, greenways, trails and other outdoor elements. [Continual](#)







# Conclusion

Photo Credit:  
NewsAdvance.com

The **Roanoke Opportunities in Action** Strategic Plan, including the renewed vision for economic and community development, positions the City of Roanoke to be more competitive on a national and global level. It also paves a path towards inclusive opportunities for residents and workers of all backgrounds, and an array of businesses, from small-sized enterprises to large international firms. The Department is leading the charge on many fronts outlined in the plan, but strong relationships and collaboration within the City, and in the broader community, will be an important factor in realizing the aspirational priorities and goals, and following through on a robust assortment of initiatives, programs and activities. The City of Roanoke has a solid economic and community foundation to build upon and is well on its way to becoming one of the nation's leading destinations for businesses and people.



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