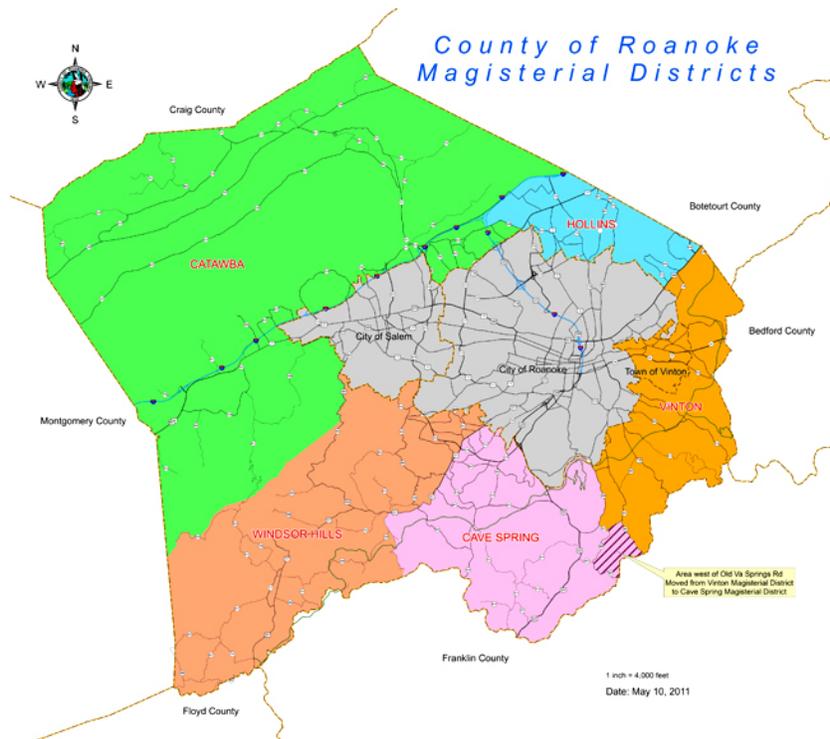




# Situation Analysis Report



## Roanoke County/Roanoke and Salem

# 2013

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## Introduction

The VCE-Roanoke Unit conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the calendar year 2013. The situation analysis process was led by the Roanoke Extension Leadership Council and a subcommittee of ELC members and staff. The Roanoke Unit Profile was used, as well as the summary from the Partnership for a Livable Roanoke Valley Regional Commission. The data from this commission included 64 public, private and non-profit entities throughout the Roanoke Valley and a phone survey conducted by Virginia Tech that reached over 1,000 Valley residents.

The committee developed a plan and led the process of collecting information. An initial survey was given to ELC members and groups that ELC members worked with or were members of. From this survey, a four page issues survey was developed and was given to targeted key citizens. Results were collected from 34 citizens. The ELC subcommittee discussed the results and made initial key findings.

During the months of September, October and November, the ELC subcommittee and the Roanoke Extension Agents identified and interviewed key informants. The committee developed a questionnaire with eight open- ended questions, designed to capture a broad scope of key issues facing the citizens and the community in the Roanoke Valley.

The Key Informants who were involved in this process were:

- Joy Sylvester-Johnson, CEO of the Rescue Mission of Roanoke
- Mark Powell-Roanoke Manager of Community Gardening
- Sharon Sharpe-Roanoke City DARE Officer
- Don Bradley-Former Director of the Virginia Baptist Children's Home
- Chris Morrill-Roanoke City Manager
- Braxton Naff-Owner of AFCO Investment and Naff Auto Sales; President of Greater Deyerle Neighborhood Association, Chairman of Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates, Roanoke/Allegheny Commission-Commissioner
- Carla Santos-COO, Bradley Free Clinic
- Estelle Avner-Executive Director, Bradley Free Clinic
- Frank Rogan-President and CEO, United Way of Roanoke Valley
- June House-DEO, Big Brother/Big Sisters
- James Zeisler-VWCC Faculty and Program head-Culinary School
- Donna Johnson-Norfolk and Southern, Synergy Engineer
- Court Rosen-Vice Mayor, Roanoke City

## Unit Profile

### Basic Demographics

The Roanoke Valley in Southwest Virginia is an area adjacent to and including the Roanoke River between the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east and the Appalachian Plateau to the west. This 2,325 square mile region is strategically accessible to both the East coast and Mid-West markets with Interstate 81 passing through the Valley, Interstate 64 directly north and Interstate 77 nearby to the south. The City of Roanoke is 189 miles west of Richmond, the state capital; 234 miles southwest of Washington, D.C; and 240 miles west of Norfolk. The valley includes Roanoke County, and two independent cities, Roanoke and Salem.

The Roanoke Valley is part of the Valley and Ridge province of Virginia, and is about twenty miles long from east to west. The Valley contains the lowest point above the sea level in the mountains of Southwest Virginia. As a result, the Norfolk and Western Railway chose the valley as its primary route between the ports of Hampton Roads in Eastern Virginia and the coalfields of Southwest Virginia. The Norfolk and Western was headquartered in Roanoke for nearly a century before merging with the Southern Railway. Norfolk-Southern remains a major employer in the Roanoke Valley; however, Carillion, Veterans Affairs, Kroger and Roanoke County and City Schools are the top 5 employers in the Roanoke Valley.

As a place to live or to make a living, the Roanoke Valley is recognized as one of the best. Roanoke's central East Coast location provides excellent market access for business and a pleasant climate for residents. Located in a right-to-work state, it's recognized as an excellent place to find a job and for a low cost of living and low cost of doing business. Roanoke is the most economically diverse economy in Virginia and is the cultural and business hub for Western Virginia. Roanoke is home to several large regional banking offices, home to the headquarters of the Fortune 500 retailer Advance Auto, and home to several large advance manufacturing operations such as those owned by General Electric, ITT Exelis, Dynx America, and Optical Cable Corporation. In the early part of 2015, both Norfolk and Southern Railway and Advanced Auto announced changes. Norfolk and Southern has relocated 500 employees to Norfolk and Atlanta; Advanced Auto has moved corporate offices to Raleigh, North Carolina. Both of these large employers will affect the housing market and employment in the Roanoke Valley in 2015.

Roanoke's economy has areas of strength. The City is the healthcare and retail hub of a large area, driving the expansion of Carillion Health Care and Valley View Mall.

### Key Profile Issues

#### Population, Age, Gender

The U.S. Census Department has estimated that the population of the Roanoke Valley has grown from 214,210(actual) in 2010 to 219,288 (estimated) in 2014. In the 2010 census, Roanoke County had a population of 92,376; Roanoke City-97,032 and Salem-24,802. The

census has estimated these three locations to increase to 95,524 (Roanoke County); 98,465 (Roanoke) and 25,299 (Salem).

The largest age group is the 45-55 bracket, representing 51,144 of the population, in the valley. The racial makeup of the city is 69.38% White, 26.74% African-American, 0.20% Native-American and 1.15% Asian 0.02% Pacific Islander, 0.72% from other races, and 1.78% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race was 1.48% of the population.

According to the Virginia Community Profile, updated on March 28, 2015, females account for 51.7% of the Roanoke Valley population, while males account for 48%.

The community profile for the Roanoke Valley indicates that the median age for the labor market (2013 statistics) is 44 for Roanoke County, 38 for Roanoke, and 40 for Salem. The profile also shows that the unemployment rate for the Roanoke Valley was 6 percent in 2013 and has risen to 7.8 percent in 2014. Bureau of Labor statistics states that the 2015 unemployment for Roanoke is 7.9 percent.

New hires by Industry included Retail trade (45,527), Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (39,317), Administrative and Support and Waste Management (49,234) Health Care and Social assistance (40,555) and Accommodation and Food Services (61,867). The highest turnover by industry were: Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (16%), Administrative and Support and Waste Management (15%), Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (16%) and Accommodation and Food Services (16%). Additional Labor Resources state that high school graduates not continuing (2012-2013) was 587. Two year college graduates (Spring 2013) 2,973; two-year college enrollees (Fall 2013) 13,548 and other college and university graduates (Spring 2013) 12,107.

On-time high school graduation rate for the class of 2014 was 89.6% in the Roanoke Valley. High school graduates continuing their education was 83.4% in 2013.

The percentage of Roanoke Valley population age 25 and up who are high school graduates from 2009-2013 was 86%.

The Roanoke Valley per pupil expenditure for 2013 was \$10,570.65.

#### Employment by Sector for the Roanoke Valley:

Agriculture, Forestry, fishing and hunting	391
Mining Quarrying and Oil and Gas extraction	128
Utilities	354
Construction	7,889
Manufacturing	17,050
Wholesale Trade	6,828
Retail Trade	18,818
Transportation and Warehousing	6,828

Information	1,795
Finance and Insurance	6,076
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,886
Professional Scientific and Technical Services	7,218
Management of Companies and Enterprises	4,801
Administrative, Support, Waste Management	8,165
Educational Services	2,349
Health Care and Social Assistance	23,874
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	1,624
Accommodations and Food Services	13,360
Other Services	5,490
Total Government	23,764

## Community and Resident Perspectives

Over 1,000 residents were reached by a phone survey that collected data to gather information regarding the concerns and needs of the citizens of the Roanoke Valley. In addition, ELC members completed surveys, and shared the survey with groups in which they were members. From this survey, the ELC developed a issues survey and interviewed targeted key citizens. Thirty-four citizens were interviewed for this questionnaire.

In the fall of 2013, seven focus groups were conducted on the topic of local foods in Roanoke City and immediate surrounding areas (Salem, Vinton, Roanoke County, etc.). These sessions were aimed at identifying the central themes that underpin connections between health and the local foods movement, in order to better understand the opportunities and challenges faced by future efforts. This research was also aimed at identifying challenges and opportunities in local food activities, as a way of supporting the efforts to better connect Roanoke's citizens with healthy local foods.

## Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile and the community resident perspectives, the following top 4 priority issues were identified for Roanoke County, Roanoke and Salem.

### Issue 1: Water Quality

Citizens continue to rank the importance of clean water as a top concern for the Roanoke Valley. Many county residents rely on private wells and septic systems. Water for the Roanoke Valley comes from several sources – Carvins Cove Reservoir, Spring Hollow Reservoir, Crystal Spring, Falling Creek Reservoir, and Smith Mountain Lake. Having this diversity of surface and groundwater sources, rather than a sole source, provides greater operational flexibility and reliability in the event of a drought or other emergency. Using water from these sources, the Water Authority treats and delivers 23-million gallons of drinking water per day to more than 58,000 customer accounts (155,000 residents in the City of Roanoke and

Roanoke County, as well as customers in Franklin County, the Town of Vinton, the City of Salem and Botetourt County).

VCE's role in addressing this issue:

VCE agents, staff and Master Gardeners provide many programs targeting water quality. VCE and the Virginia Household Water Quality Program offers "Roanoke Valley Drinking Water Clinic" for citizens whose water supply comes from wells, springs or cisterns. This includes cost effective testing for 14 components and an educational interpretation session. (Had one in 2013 and another is scheduled for 2014.)

FCS Agent has completed the VA Master Well Owner Network training and answers consumer water questions.

Master Gardeners provide education on urban nutrient management defined as lawn, landscape and other turf activities in urban and suburban areas that have the potential to produce nutrient, especially nitrogen and phosphorus, runoff. Water Wise programming is an integral part of the Master Gardener educational efforts. Project Learning Tree is one of the many in-school programs offered by 4-H. Water quality is taught in this project. The 4-H soils project is another example of a 4-H project that teaches youth about water quality and environmental stewardship.

## **Issue 2: Obesity**

Obesity has reached epidemic proportions globally, with more than 1 billion adults overweight - at least 300 million of them clinically obese - and it is a major contributor to the global burden of chronic disease and disability. Obesity is a complex condition with serious social and psychological dimensions, affecting virtually all ages and socioeconomic groups. Roanoke Valley adult obesity rate has increased in the last 3 years, and is 2% higher than the national percentage of 25%. Virginia's child obesity rate is 29.8%, ranking Virginia 23rd.

VCE's role in addressing this issue:

Nutrition education to reduce the risk of chronic diseases and the prevalence of overweight and obesity is currently being addressed through a variety of educational programs using VCE resources. Staff in the FNP programs, FCS and 4-H Youth Development conduct programs with youth and adults in the school system, housing communities, retirement centers, churches, other community groups and 4-H Camp.

Specific programs offered to Roanoke Valley Citizens through VCE's Family and Consumer Sciences include: "Cooking Matters" for adults, parents of preschoolers, teen, families: Real Food for Real Life, community programs focusing on healthy food choices, nutrition, healthy cooking, eating better on a budget; Lighten-Up, Strategies for a healthy lifestyle: community program specific to weight loss; FIT Extension – 8-week team-based exercise and healthy eating program; Food for Thought – Garden Food classes– series of 4 classes teaching

eating/cooking; FNP programs – Eat Smart, Move More reaching limited income adults – healthy lifestyles.

4-H programs have a commitment to teach healthy lifestyles-as one of the 4 H's is Health. Many of the projects target health and movement. In Roanoke, over 1,000 youth are enrolled in health related projects.

### **Issue 3: Decline in Values and Ethics in Youth**

More than 75% of the Roanoke Valley residents responded that the moral and ethical values are worsening, blaming a decline in ethical standards, poor parenting, and dishonesty by government and business leaders.

Other reasons citizens mentioned were a rise in crime, alcohol and drug use, a breakdown of the two-parent family (Roanoke has 23% of their children in single-parent households) and a moving away from religion or God.

VCE's role in addressing this issue:

Roanoke Valley 4-H partnered with local school divisions to bring Character Counts! to our community in 1990. VCE continues to do in-school character education programming. In 2014, Roanoke Valley 4-H delivered character education programs to more than 2,000 youth in the Roanoke Valley. Youth in the Roanoke Valley are involved in many life and decision making skills programs including 4-H Camp, 4-H clubs and project work, civic and community service programs, leadership development opportunities and officer training. Programming efforts will continue to emphasize these life skills and will seek new opportunities to provide youth with more meaningful and substantive experiences that comprehensively targets many of these important life skills.

The situational analysis for Roanoke Indicates a need for more family oriented programs and programming that increases parent involvement.

### **Issue 4: Economic Development and Job Creation**

The desire for economic growth and the creation of diverse employment opportunities was the key issue identified by the Livable Roanoke Valley Regional commission. It was also a common theme in VCE's key informant interviews. Roanoke County and the Cities of Roanoke and Salem all desire economic growth and the opportunity to provide improvements to the quality of life for every individual and family. Informants expressed the need to implement innovative workforce, retain current business and industry, and to recruit new businesses.

VCE's role in addressing this issue:

This issue is outside the scope of VCE to address. However, VCE Community Viability specialists have offered Innovative Leadership Programs to our locality.

# Appendices

## Focus Groups

Concurrently, five focus groups were held as a part of the Civic Agriculture Pilot Project, led by Kimberly Marie Shrader, graduate student working towards her Master's in Public Health at Virginia Tech.

## Civic Agriculture Pilot Project: Roanoke Markets & Gardens

The Civic Agriculture Pilot Project is a collaborative effort of Virginia Tech's Masters in Public Health Program, Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP), and the Roanoke Community Garden Association. The project is aimed at identifying the needs, challenges, and successes of our community gardens, farmer's markets, and related educational outreach programs so that we may better work together to improve the health of the community.

## Overview: Civic Agriculture Pilot Project

There can be little doubt about the explosive growing interest and awareness around local foods in the United States, particularly in recent years. According to the Roanoke Times, the number of farmers' markets in Virginia has grown from 88 markets in 2006 to 230 in 2013, a 160 percent increase. In 2013, five farmer's markets were operating within the Roanoke City limits alone, closely neighbored by three additional markets in Salem, Vinton, and Catawba. With similar enthusiasm, the Roanoke Community Garden Association spent much of 2013 focused on establishing its fourth community garden within the City, with the first only being established in 2007. Several other unaffiliated community gardens also exist, along with increased interest in home and container gardening.

## Focus Group Sessions:

In the fall of 2013, seven focus groups are being conducted on the topic of local foods in Roanoke City and immediate surrounding areas (Salem, Vinton, Roanoke County, etc.). These sessions are aimed at identifying the central themes that underpin connections between health and the local foods movement, in order to better understand the opportunities and challenges faced by future efforts. This research is also aimed at identifying challenges and opportunities in local food activities, as a way of supporting the efforts to better connect Roanoke's citizens with healthy, local foods.

The seven questions asked during the focus sessions are as follows:

1. What is impact/benefit local food in their community?
2. What is the impact/benefit of community gardens?
3. What are the barriers to local food consumption?
4. What would be needed to overcome these barriers?
5. What is VCE's role in addressing these identified gaps/barriers?

6. Before you received an invitation to this session, what did you know about Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)?
7. What else would you like to tell us? What have we not asked that you would like to share?

## **Emerging Themes**

What has thus far emerged from these focus groups, first and foremost, is a palpable sense of excitement and energy surrounding the local foods movement in the Roanoke area. Community members are excited and aware of markets, gardens, and related resources and they are eager to engage with others to continue their growth. While a formal analysis of themes has not yet been fully conducted, many emerging themes are closely aligned with Virginia Cooperative Extension's central areas of concern.

## **Community & Business Issues**

In every discussion of the Roanoke region's community gardens and farmer's markets, one of the first responses given is consistently the important role that these resources play in increasing community involvement, enhancing perceptions of public safety and engagement, and strengthening the social fabric. Focus group participants have regularly cited a community garden's ability to transform an otherwise abandon space, repurposing land for productive use. They have also noted the way gardens begin to create more green space, often in neighborhoods where such space often feels limited. Gardens have been particularly noted for their ability to act as hubs of diversity, particularly in relation to Roanoke's immigrant population. Both gardens and markets have brought a sense of community pride to the neighborhoods that host them, and neighborhoods without these resources are interested in expansion. Agriculture is seen as an important part of this region's heritage, creating a strong desire to uplift this tradition.

## **Family Issues**

Markets and gardens are seen as an integral part of the community's response to obesity, as well as tools for chronic disease prevention and management. Both offer the community greater access to fresh, whole foods with the added benefit of physical activity, whether by participating in gardening activities or by walking to and from neighborhood markets. Produce provided by local farmers is often cited as being safer and more removed from foodborne contamination, while also offering a higher nutrient value than food transported over long distances. Local market and garden initiatives often incorporate family-friendly activities and have intergenerational appeal, with efforts to engage children, seniors, and entire family units. Finally, participants often refer to the economic benefit and possible opportunities for families to increase consumption of local food, citing programs that match SNAP benefits and education classes and materials meant to help maximize their food dollars. Purchases from local farmers were also credited with putting money into the local economy, creating a positive multiplier effect.

## **Youth & Teen Issues**

Like the broader issue of obesity in the community, youth and teen obesity was identified as being particularly problematic in the Roanoke area. Participants often cited a lack of knowledge in youth and teens about where food comes from and how to prepare foods and create healthy meal options. Market managers, teachers, and other participants noted the link between children who help grow food or taste food at a farmer's market, and their subsequent desire to eat those fresher food options at home. Linking opportunities to incorporate more gardens and basic culinary education into elementary and secondary schools and afterschool programs is viewed as critical to overcoming long-term health problems.

## **Agriculture & Natural Resources Issues**

While many conversations focused on the strengths of markets and gardens, perhaps the most emphatic themes are emerging around the barriers that local food systems face in terms of adequate support. Farmers were viewed as indispensable resources, both needing support in the present and requiring opportunities to gain knowledge and resources so that young producers will be able to continue local agricultural production in the future. Participants have highlighted the need to protect natural resources, advocate for regulations that encourage local and often small-scale production to be able to sell their items, and ensure that farming remains a profitable and viable economic option in our region. Opportunities were also cited to expand agricultural tourism, increase awareness of Roanoke as a local food hub, and increase home and container gardening. Concerns were raised, however, about the increasingly limited staffing resources, particularly the loss of an agriculture agent in VCE's Roanoke Office and the impact this has on the community in the present and for years to come.