

VINTON AREA CORRIDORS PLAN

A COMPONENT OF THE
ROANOKE COUNTY
AND THE
TOWN OF VINTON
COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

February 2010



IN COLLABORATION WITH:



Acknowledgments

This plan was prepared by the Roanoke County Department of Community Development in collaboration with staff from the Town of Vinton, the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC), the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Special thanks are given to the Vinton Chamber of Commerce, Roanoke County Department of Economic Development, the Vinton Public Works Department, the Roanoke County Fire and Rescue Department, the Vinton Volunteer EMS and Fire Departments, as well as all of the business owners, organizations and citizens who assisted in the preparation of this plan.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The **Town of Vinton** is a small, bustling community located in eastern Roanoke County between the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the City of Roanoke and the Roanoke River. With a population approaching 8,000 residents and a land mass slightly larger than 3 square miles, this diversifying urban area strives to sustain its distinctive small-town charm within the greater Roanoke Valley. Due to Vinton’s proximity to the railroad, the Town’s employment base expanded as a shift to agriculture occurred in the Roanoke Valley. In the early 1900’s, Vinton began to see the reemergence of industry and manufacturing with a knitting mill, enamel factory and a canning company established themselves in the Town’s limits.



Image 1.0 Aerial view of the Vinton study corridors including: Bypass Road, Washington Avenue and Hardy Road

1.1 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The major corridors serving the Town of Vinton and East Roanoke County serve as vital links for access to neighboring jurisdictions as well as amenities such as the Blue Ridge Parkway, Explore Park and Smith Mountain Lake. These corridors are primarily used by residents of adjacent localities to travel to work in the City of Roanoke, or perhaps by vacationers

taking a trip to Smith Mountain Lake. The current and projected traffic volumes along the Vinton study corridors, coupled with planned road improvement, lay the groundwork for future development and redevelopment along the study corridors.

The purpose of the Vinton Area Corridors Plan (hereinafter referred to as the “Plan”) is to provide data and information for Roanoke County, the Town of Vinton, and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to use in their land use and transportation planning. The research and analysis performed will be useful in identifying and guiding future development and redevelopment opportunities in Eastern Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton. In addition to examining land use and development opportunities, aesthetic issues will be addressed with recommendations for design guidelines and streetscape improvements. Traffic operations and safety will also be evaluated along the study corridors for use by the Vinton Public Works Department and VDOT.

1.2 STUDY AREA

The study area of the Plan is comprised of 7.5 miles of corridors that traverse through the Town of Vinton and East Roanoke County. The study area consists of six corridors: Bypass Road (partial Route 24), Hardy Road (Route 634), South Pollard Street, Virginia Avenue (partial Route 24), Walnut Avenue and Washington Avenue (partial Route 24). These corridors extend from the eastern limits of the City of Roanoke through the Town of Vinton and Eastern Roanoke County to the western border of Bedford County. The boundaries of the study area include lots and parcels of land contiguous to the study corridors from the edge of the right-of-way to the full depth of the lot or parcel, as the lot or parcel existed on the date of the commencement of this plan.

Washington Avenue and Hardy Road are the two major corridors that travel through Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton. These roadways run parallel to one another through the town and serve as the primary links for commuters into the City of

Roanoke from Vinton, neighboring Bedford County, and the Smith Mountain Lake Area. Washington Avenue is also an important access point to the Blue Ridge Parkway. South Pollard Street and Bypass Road serve as important connecting routes between Hardy Road, Virginia Avenue and Washington Avenue. A larger map of the study corridors can be found in Appendix A.

One of the fundamental pillars of the Roanoke County Community Plan is to promote regionalism through intergovernmental relations. The Community Plan specifically directs the County to take a lead in “finding new and innovative ways to look beyond its political boundaries for solutions to the challenges of the next century.” In striving to practice an aggressive and proactive approach to promoting regionalism, it is the County’s belief that this intergovernmental planning effort with the Town of Vinton and the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC) will advance this collaborative and cooperative vision for ensuring the prosperity and happiness of the citizens of the Vinton community.

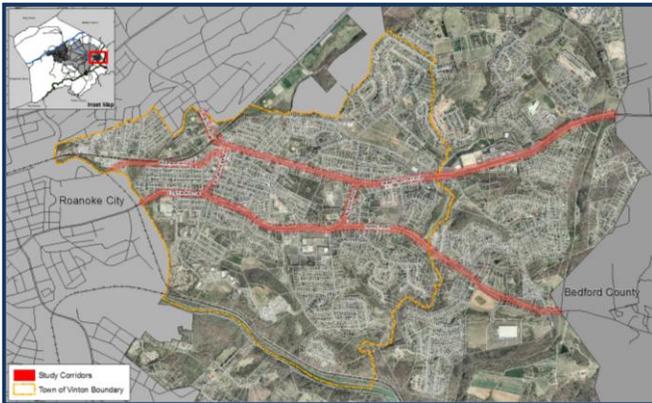


Image 1.2 Vinton Area Study Corridors

1.3.2 The Town of Vinton Comprehensive Plan

The purpose of the Town of Vinton’s 2004-2024 Comprehensive Plan is to “redefine the role of the Town of Vinton in the Roanoke Valley Region”. The mission statement for the Town of Vinton reads as follows:

The Vinton Town government will provide its citizens with high quality services that address their individual and collective needs. In partnerships with the community, the Vinton Town government pledges a civic stewardship that is fiscally accountable, socially responsible and worthy of citizen trust.

The Town’s Comprehensive Plan has a vision that incorporates the following central themes:

1. Gateway Entrance/ Corridor Improvements,
2. Housing and Neighborhood Preservation,
3. Greenways/Parks and Recreation/Youth Centers,
4. Economic Development, and
5. Downtown Redevelopment.

1.3 INTENT AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Pursuant to Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia, Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton are each required to “prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction.”

1.3.1 The Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan

The 2005 Roanoke County Community Plan states:

The Roanoke County Community Plan is a blueprint for the future growth and development of the County over the next 10-15 years. It provides direction and guidance, for both the public and private sectors, in making decisions about land development, public services and resource protection. The Plan allows decision makers to study the long-term consequences of current decisions and recognize that today’s actions will impact the County for many years to come.

This Corridor Plan, which is proposed to be adopted into the Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton Comprehensive Plans, will aid decision-making for future development in the Vinton Area. This document has been assembled to reflect the collective visioning of citizens in the Vinton

community. This document is intended to complement the unique characteristics of both Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton, while preserving the small-town atmosphere that is prevalent in Vinton.

1.4 THE PLANNING PROCESS

1.4.1 Inventory of Existing Conditions

In order to gather an accurate and up-to-date representation of the built environment along the study corridors, staff spent several weeks performing an inventory of the existing conditions. This process included a photographic inventory of each parcel with frontage on the study corridors. In addition to these photographs, staff documented existing buildings, signs, parking lots, utilities and other aspects of the built environment along the study corridors. This inventory served as the foundation for analyzing the built environment, streetscape renderings and design guidelines for the study corridors.



Image 1.4.1 Staff from Roanoke County on a walking tour in Downtown Vinton to inventory existing conditions.

In order to fully comprehend the issues, challenges and opportunities present along the study corridors, staff collected information pertaining to environmental resources, land use, community facilities and transportation. The research results on existing conditions can be found in Chapters 2-6.

The existing conditions inventory was complemented with numerous maps. Each map serves as a graphical representation of the research performed. All maps were created using a Geographic Information System (GIS) manufactured by ESRI called ArcMap. These maps can be found at the end of the document in Appendix A.

1.4.2 Community Survey

A community survey was conducted from the middle of January 2009 through the end of February 2009. More details and results from the community survey can be found in Chapter 7. A copy of the survey is located in Appendix B.

1.4.3 Business Participation

The Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce represents businesses in the Town of Vinton and Eastern Roanoke County. The mission of the Chamber is to promote a healthy business environment for the Town of Vinton. The Chamber maintains a vibrant leadership role in the Vinton area, addressing critical issues impacting area business owners.

Since the commencement of this plan, staff encouraged the Chamber of Commerce to be an active participant in the process. Staff attended and made presentations at membership meetings, solicited their attendance at community meetings and consulted with the Chamber in identifying development and redevelopment opportunities along the study corridors.

In addition to taking a proactive approach with the Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce, staff sought input from the business owners along the study corridors. Staff conducted one-on-one business owner interviews from December 2008 through February 2009. More details and results of the business owner interviews can be found in Chapter 7.

1.4.4 Community Meetings

For the purpose of gathering input from the public on the progression of the plan, two community meetings were held at the Vinton War Memorial. For more information regarding these meetings, please see Chapter 7.

1.4.5 Stakeholder Meetings

Meetings were held with various stakeholders in the Vinton community, including the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Blue Ridge Parkway. For more information regarding these meetings, please see Chapter 7.

1.4.6 Planning Commission Work Sessions

In their role as an advisory to the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors and the Vinton Town Council, the Roanoke County and Town of Vinton Planning Commissions are tasked with reviewing and refining land use applications and documents, such as the Vinton Area Corridors Plan. Throughout the development of this Plan, staff has continually updated the Roanoke County and Vinton Planning Commissioners on its status at their work sessions.

The first set of work sessions were held on March 12th and 17th 2009. At these work sessions, the Planning Commissioners were presented the results of the public input received at the January community meeting and the community survey.



Image 1.4.6 Roanoke County and Town of Vinton elected and appointed officials on a tour of the study corridors.

On March 28, 2009, Roanoke County and Town of Vinton Planning Commissioners, along with members of the Vinton Town Council, attended a staff-led tour of the Vinton study corridors. The purpose of this special work session was to orient the Planning Commissioners with potential issues and opportunities identified during staff's inventory of the existing conditions.

From June through October 2009, four work sessions were held to present the Planning Commissioners with the results of the public input received at the second community meeting held on June 18, 2009, proposed future land use amendments, and draft goals and recommendations. During these work sessions, the Planning Commissioners developed a draft future land use scenario map to be presented at the Joint Planning Commission Public hearing held in December. These future land use amendments were based off of public input received at community meetings, the results of the community survey and staff recommendations.

1.5 PLAN ADOPTION

1.5.1 Planning Commissions

On December 7, 2009, the Roanoke County Planning Commission and the Town of Vinton Planning Commission held a joint public hearing at the Vinton War Memorial to present the draft Vinton Area Corridors Plan. Approximately 50 people attended the hearing with four citizens speaking during the public hearing. Citizen comments and concerns received during the public hearing included the following:

- Improving access to the Vinton Post Office and William Byrd High School;
- Installation of streetscape improvements



Image 1.5.1 Approximately 50 people attended the Joint Planning Commission Public hearing held on December 7, 2009.

along the study corridors;

- Expansion or renovation of the Vinton Library;
- Attracting more businesses to the Riverpark Shopping Center;
- Protection of natural resources;
- Improving pedestrian amenities along the corridors and connecting to existing greenways;
- Revise the future land use designations along Hardy Road in Roanoke County to a lesser intense land use until road improvements are made;
- Develop design guidelines as an implementation strategy;
- Maintain the appearance of properties along the corridors; and
- Notify property owners of possible zoning changes.

After discussion and careful consideration, the Planning Commissions unanimously voted to forward the Plan to the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors and the Vinton Town Council with a recommendation that the Plan be adopted as part of each respective jurisdiction's Comprehensive Plan.

1.5.2 Board of Supervisors

After receiving the Roanoke County Planning Commission's favorable recommendation, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors held a work session on January 26, 2010 to discuss the components of the draft Plan. Staff provided the Board of Supervisors with a brief overview of the planning process which included a community survey, one-on-one business owner and stakeholder interviews, community meetings, and work sessions and public hearings with the Roanoke County and Vinton Planning Commissioners. Staff focused discussions on draft recommendations and implementation strategies.

On February 23, 2010, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors held a public hearing at the Roanoke County Administration Center to receive comments

on the Plan. There was one citizen in attendance to speak in support of the plan. The Board voted unanimously (5-0) to approve incorporation of the Vinton Area Corridors Plan into the Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan.

1.5.3 Town Council

After receiving the Town of Vinton Planning Commission's favorable recommendation, the Town Council held a work session on February 2, 2010 to discuss the components of the draft plan. Similar to the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors work session, staff provided the Town Council with a brief overview of the planning process, focusing on draft recommendation and implementation strategies. The need for future collaboration between Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton was emphasized as a great deal of time and effort would be required for staff to focus on the implementation of the Plan.

On February 16, 2010, the Vinton Town Council held a public hearing in the Council Chambers of the Vinton Municipal Building to receive comments from the public on the Plan. There were no citizens in attendance to speak for or against the plan. The Town Council voted unanimously (5-0) to approve incorporation of the Vinton Area Corridors Plan into the Town of Vinton Comprehensive Plan.

CHAPTER 2 – TRANSPORTATION

2.1 ROADWAY CLASSIFICATIONS

Functional classification is the process by which the nation's network of streets and highways are ranked according to the type of service they provide. It determines how travel is "channeled" within the roadway network by defining the part that any road or street should play in serving the flow of trips through a highway network. Functional classification is also used in transportation planning, roadway design, and for the allocation of federal roadway improvement funds.

The majority of the study corridors contained in the Plan are functionally classified as urban minor arterials, which interconnect with the urban principal arterial system and provide service to trips of moderate length at a lower level of travel mobility than principal arterials. As depicted in Image 2.1, urban minor arterials place more emphasis on land access, offering a lower level of traffic mobility.

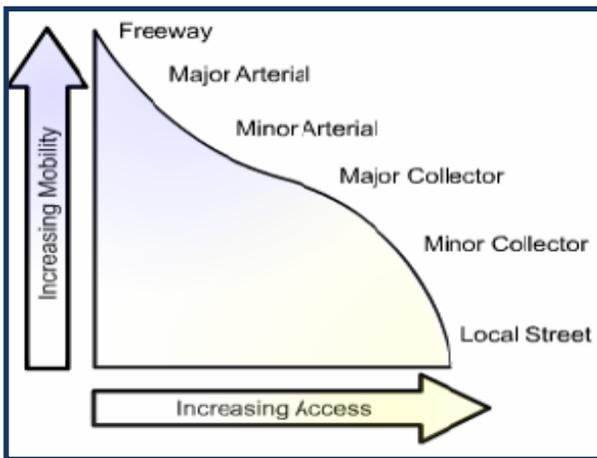


Image 2.1 Federal Functional Classification of Highways: The purpose of access management is to balance mobility versus access. Source: VDOT

Two of the study corridors, South Pollard Street and Walnut Avenue, are classified as urban collectors, which provide land access and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial, and industrial areas. Urban collectors function within the transportation network by collecting traffic from local streets and channeling it to the arterial system.

2.2 ROAD CHARACTERISTICS

2.2.1 Washington Avenue (Route 24)

Washington Avenue extends from South Pollard Street in Downtown Vinton, east to the limits of Bedford County. It is a four-lane urban minor arterial with a divided median over most of its area. A portion of Washington Avenue from South Pollard Street to North Mitchell Road is not divided with a median. From South Pollard Street to Marshall Avenue, Washington Avenue is bounded by sidewalks with curb and gutter. The remaining portion, mostly in Roanoke County, has an earthen shoulder with no sidewalks.



Image 2.2.1 View west of the earthen shoulder along Washington Avenue in front of William Byrd Middle and High Schools.

According to the VDOT, the 2008 Daily Traffic Volume Estimates indicated that the annual average daily traffic (AADT) on the segment of Washington Avenue from Bypass Road to the eastern Town of Vinton limits carries 25,000 vehicles per day. The 2008 AADT for the segment of Washington Avenue from the Town limits east to Bedford County is 22,000 vehicles per day, an increase of approximately 5% since 2007.

2.2.2 Hardy Road (Route 634)

The portion of Hardy Road included in the study area extends from Chestnut Street in the Town of Vinton, through Roanoke County, to the western border of Bedford County. For purposes of describing the roadway characteristics of Hardy Road, this study corridor is broken into three segments.



Image 2.2.2 The bicycle lanes along Hardy Road were the first in the Roanoke Valley.

The first segment of Hardy Road, from Chestnut Street to Bypass Road, is a four-lane urban minor arterial. This segment contains curb and gutter, with intermittent sidewalks on both sides.

The second segment of Hardy Road, from Bypass Road to the eastern town limits, is a four-lane collector with a continuous two-way, left-turn lane (TWLTL) located in the middle of the roadway. This segment contains curb and gutter, sidewalks on both sides, and designated bike lanes.

According to VDOT, the 2008 AADT count on

these two segments of roadway is 12,000 vehicles per day, an increase of 9% since 2007.

The third segment of Hardy Road, from the limits of Roanoke County to Bedford County, tapers to a two-lane urban minor arterial with earthen shoulders and no sidewalk or bike lanes. According to VDOT, the 2008 AADT count on this segment of roadway is 11,000 vehicles per day.

It is important to note that at the commencement of this Plan, the second segment of Hardy Road was listed on the Six-Year Secondary Road Improvement Plan. This project proposed to widen the existing two-lane section to four-lanes. Due to poor economic conditions and State budget deficits, this project has been removed from the Six-Year Road Improvement Plan. For more information regarding the Six-Year Secondary Road Improvement Plan, see Section 2.7 of this Chapter.

2.2.3 Virginia Avenue (Route 24)

Virginia Avenue (Route 24) extends from the eastern limits of the City of Roanoke, through the Town of Vinton to Chestnut Street. This segment of Route 24 is a divided, four-lane, urban minor arterial. Both sides of Virginia Avenue have

Table 2.2 Roadway Characteristics

Route	From	To	Lanes	Lane Width (ft.)	Shoulder Surface	Speed Limit (mph)	Sidewalks
Washington Avenue	South Pollard Street	Mitchell Street	4	12	Curb & Gutter	25	Both Sides
Washington Avenue	Mitchell Street	Bypass Road	4	12	Curb & Gutter	35	Both Sides
Washington Avenue	Bypass Road	Vinton CL	4	12	Earthen	35	Partial
Washington Avenue	Roanoke County CL	Bedford CL	4	12	Earthen	45	None
Hardy Road	Chestnut Street	Vinton CL	4	12	Curb & Gutter	35	Both Sides
Hardy Road	Roanoke County CL	Bedford CL	2	12	Earthen	45	None
Virginia Avenue	City of Roanoke CL	South Pollard Street	4	12	Curb & Gutter	35	Both Sides
Virginia Avenue	South Pollard Street	Clearview Drive	4	12	Curb & Gutter	35	Both Sides
Walnut Avenue	City of Roanoke CL	2 nd Street	2	12	Earthen	25	None
Walnut Avenue	2 nd Street	West Lee Avenue	2	12	Curb & Gutter	25	Partial
Gus Nicks Boulevard	City of Roanoke CL	South Pollard Street	4	12	Curb & Gutter	35	Both Sides
Bypass Road	Washington Avenue	Hardy Road	4	12	Curb & Gutter	35	None
South Pollard Street	Washington Avenue	Virginia Avenue	2	12	Curb & Gutter	25	Both Sides

Source: Statewide Planning System. Virginia Transportation and Mobility Planning Division. Richmond, 2007

intermittent sidewalks with curb and gutter. According to VDOT, the 2008 AADT count on the portion of Virginia Avenue from the western limits of the Town of Vinton to South Pollard Street is 27,000. The remaining portion of this roadway from South Pollard Street to Chestnut Street is 24,000, an increase in over 4% since 2007.

2.2.4 Walnut Avenue

The portion of Walnut Avenue located in the Town of Vinton extends from the limits of the City of Roanoke east to West Lee Avenue. According to the 2008 AADT count, this segment of Walnut Avenue is a two-lane, urban collector that carries 7,300 vehicles per day, an increase in 2.8% since 2007. The eastern portion of the road near Downtown Vinton has sidewalks with curb and gutter, while the western portion near the City of Roanoke only has a paved or earthen shoulder.



Image 2.2.4 Intersection of Walnut Avenue and 8th Street

This roadway is listed on the Urban Road Systems Six-Year Improvement Program. Improvements are planned to widen the road, make intersection improvements at Walnut Avenue and 8th Street, and replace the low water bridge over Glade Creek. For more information regarding this project, please see Section 2.7 of this Chapter.

2.2.5 Gus Nicks Boulevard

The portion of Gus Nicks Boulevard extending from the limits of the City of Roanoke to South Pollard Street is a four-lane, urban minor arterial. According to VDOT, the 2008 AADT volume is

21,000 vehicles per day for this segment of road. Gus Nicks Boulevard has curb and gutter, as well as sidewalks on both sides.

2.2.6 Bypass Road

Bypass Road connects Washington Avenue to Hardy Road as part of the Route 24 corridor. This road is a four-lane, divided, urban minor arterial with curb and gutter, but no sidewalks. According to VDOT, the 2008 AADT volume is 15,000 vehicles per day.

2.2.7 South Pollard Street

South Pollard Street travels through the heart of Downtown connecting Washington Avenue to Virginia Avenue. This road is a two-lane, urban collector with curb and gutter, sidewalks and decorative crosswalks. According to VDOT, the 2008 AADT count on South Pollard Street between Washington Avenue and Jackson Avenue is 6,800. The AADT between Jackson Avenue and Virginia Avenue is 7,100.

A map depicting the AADT of the study corridors can be found in Appendix A.

2.3 TRAFFIC VOLUMES AND LEVELS OF SERVICE

2.3.1 Traffic Volumes

Each year VDOT updates daily traffic volumes estimates for interstate, arterial, and primary routes. The volumes are projected as an AADT, which is an estimate of typical daily traffic on a road segment for all days of the week, Sunday through Saturday, over the period of a year. The roadways and streets within the study area have current traffic volumes that range from 6,800 AADT to upwards of 27,000 AADT. Based on VDOT’s Statewide Planning System data (see Table 2.3.1, VDOT Current and Projected Traffic Volumes), traffic volumes are projected to increase annually by 0.66% to as high as 1.33%. Route 24 (Washington Avenue, Bypass Road, Hardy Road and Virginia Avenue) has the highest current AADT and the highest annual growth rate.

2.3.2 Levels of Service

Table 2.3.1 VDOT Current and Projected Traffic Volumes

Route	From	To	2007 AADT	Annual Growth Rate	Projected 2035 AADT
Washington Avenue	South Pollard Street	Mitchell Street	22,000	1.33%	31,941
Washington Avenue	Mitchell Street	Bypass Road	19,000	0.66%	20,808
Washington Avenue	Bypass Road	Vinton CL	25,000	1.29%	36,173
Washington Avenue	Roanoke County CL	Bedford CL	21,000	1.05%	29,615
Hardy Road	Chestnut Street	Vinton CL	11,000	1.03%	13,555
Hardy Road	Roanoke County CL	Bedford CL	11,000	0.82%	11,954
Virginia Avenue	City of Roanoke CL	South Pollard Street	26,000	1.03%	33,712
Virginia Avenue	South Pollard Street	Clearview Drive	23,000	1.00%	31,356
Walnut Avenue	City of Roanoke CL	2 nd Street	7,100	0.66%	8,257
Walnut Avenue	2 nd Street	West Lee Avenue	7,100	0.66%	8,257
Gus Nicks Boulevard	City of Roanoke CL	South Pollard Street	21,000	1.66%	29,869
Bypass Road	Washington Avenue	Hardy Road	15,000	1.18%	19,981
South Pollard Street	Washington Avenue	Virginia Avenue	6,750	n/a	n/a

Source: Statewide Planning System. Virginia Transportation and Mobility Planning Division. Richmond, 2007

Roadway level of service (LOS) is a measurement of the quality of service provided by a facility. Much like a student's report card, LOS is represented by the letters "A" through "F", with "A" generally representing the most favorable driving conditions and "F" representing the least favorable. LOS A is the best, described as conditions where traffic flows at or above the posted speed limit and all motorists have complete mobility between lanes. LOS F is the lowest measurement of efficiency for a road's performance. Flow is forced; every vehicle moves in lockstep with the vehicle in front of it, with frequent drops in speed to nearly zero mph.

The Highway Capacity Manual and AASHTO Geometric Design of Highways and Streets ("Green Book") list the following levels of service:

- A = Free flow
- B = Reasonably free flow
- C = Stable flow
- D = Approaching unstable flow
- E = Unstable flow
- F = Forced or breakdown flow

Based on the VDOT Statewide Planning System, in 2005 most of the roadways in the study area have a LOS of A, B, or C (see Appendix A). LOS C is the target for urban highways in many jurisdictions, because at this level of service, most experienced drivers are comfortable driving on roads with this classification, roads remain safely below but efficiently close to capacity, and posted speed is maintained. South Pollard Street, Virginia Avenue and the Roanoke County portion of Hardy Road all have a LOS of D, which means traffic is approaching unstable flow and most drivers are restricted in the freedom to select their own speeds.

Assuming annual traffic growth, continued land development, and little change to the roadways; level of service for the study area is expected to degrade over time (see Appendix A). By 2035, most of the roadways are projected to be a LOS C or lower. South Pollard Street, Washington Avenue (Bypass Road to Feather Road), and Hardy Road are all projected to have an LOS of F, which means that they will have unacceptable congestion and stop-and-go traffic.

2.4 TRAFFIC OPERATIONS AND SAFETY

2.4.1 Route 24 Travel Time

In 2003, updated in 2009, the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission completed a travel time study of the Route 24 corridor as it travels through the City of Roanoke, the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County. The western limit of this study is located at the intersection of Jefferson Street and Elm Street (Route 24) in the City of Roanoke. The study continued to evaluate travel times along Route 24 as it passes east through the City of Roanoke and the Town of Vinton. As it passes through the two localities, the road name changes several times: Bullitt Avenue, Jamison Avenue and Dale Avenue in the City of Roanoke; then Virginia Avenue, Hardy Road, Bypass Road and Washington Avenue in the Town of Vinton. The eastern limit of this study is located along Washington Avenue (Route 24) in Roanoke County just east of the East Vinton Plaza.

Travel Time is defined as the time it takes to move

the distance between two points of interest. Travel time is made up of two basic components, running time and stopped delay time. Running Time is the time period when the vehicle or person is in motion. Stopped Delay Time is the time period when the object or person has stopped moving or has almost stopped moving (typically less than 5 mph according to federal guidelines).

An example of Stopped Delay Time is the time period when a vehicle is stopped at a stoplight. Select portions of the study results have been provided in Tables 2.4.1.

2.5 BRIDGE AND CULVERT CONDITIONS

As a result of bridge incidents such as the devastating I-35 bridge collapse in Minnesota, vigilant efforts to increase bridge safety nationwide have been on the rise. Within 24 hours of the I-35 incident, VDOT had completed a detailed review of the Commonwealth’s 20,842 structures. In addition to the review, VDOT amended the Commonwealth’s

Table 2.4.1 Route Travel Time Comparison

2009				2003			
Date	Period	Average Speed (mph)	Elapsed Time (h:mm:ss)	Date	Period	Average Speed (mph)	Elapsed Time (h:m:s)
3/10/2009	Eastbound Non-Peak	25.66	0:10:41	2/3/2003	East Peak	13.0	0:20:48
3/10/2009	Westbound Non-Peak	20.61	0:13:14	6/6/2003	East Peak	17.0	0:15:56
3/19/2009	Eastbound Peak	25.19	0:10:50	6/6/2003	West Peak	22.2	0:12:11
3/19/2009	Westbound Peak	22.49	0:12:09	2/14/2003	West Non-Peak	23.5	0:11:32
4/7/2009	Eastbound Non-Peak	19.98	0:13:42	2/14/2003	East Non-Peak	23.7	0:11:24
4/7/2009	Westbound Non-Peak	22.11	0:12:25	2/4/2003	West Peak	19.8	0:13:39
4/9/2009	Eastbound Peak	18.78	0:14:35	2/4/2003	East Peak	20.5	0:13:12
4/9/2009	Westbound Peak	20.83	0:13:12	2/3/2003	West Peak	14.6	0:18:36
	Average	21.96	0:12:36	2/3/2003	West Non-Peak	19.6	0:13:47
				2/3/2003	East Non-Peak	26.1	0:10:20
				1/24/2003	West Non-Peak	25.3	0:10:42
				1/24/2003	East Non-Peak	26.3	0:10:17
				Average		21.0	0:13:32



Table 2.5 Vinton Area Corridors Plan - Bridge & Culvert Conditions

Crossing	Type	Year Built	Deck Cond.	Super Cond.	Sub Cond.	Culvert Cond.	Sufficiency Rating	Functionally Obsolete	Structurally Deficient	Last Inspected	Responsibility
Wolf Creek	Bridge	1937	6	7	6	N	58.8	Yes	No	3/4/2009	VDOT
Wolf Creek	Culvert	1966	N	N	N	8	80	No	No	2/6/2007	VDOT
NS Railway	Bridge	1983	7	7	7	N	70.7	Yes	No	7/23/2007	Town
Glade Creek	Bridge	1932	6	6	7	N	72.8	No	No	6/12/2008	Town

Source: "Bridge and Culvert Conditions: Salem District." Virginia Department of Transportation, 2008.

* Condition ratings range from 0 (failed condition) to 9 (excellent)

bridge inspection standards to address the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) technical advisories and recommendations which stemmed from information following the Minnesota bridge collapse. VDOT has an aggressive bridge inspection and safety program which goes beyond federal requirements. Bridges in Virginia are inspected in accordance with National Bridge Inspection Standards. According to VDOT, between 11,000 and 12,000 bridge inspections are conducted each year. Two terms used to summarize bridge deficiencies are "structurally deficient" and "functionally obsolete". As of July 19, 2008, VDOT reported that 755 bridges are listed as structurally deficient and 3,133 are listed as functionally obsolete.

According to the FHWA website, "structural deficiencies are characterized by deteriorated conditions of significant bridge elements and reduced load-carrying capacity". This term does not imply that a bridge is likely to collapse or unsafe, but it does mean that the bridge must be monitored, inspected and maintained on a more frequent basis.

The FHWA states that "functional obsolescence is a function of the geometrics of the bridge not meeting current design standards". As with the term "structural deficiency", this term does not indicate that a bridge is unsafe or likely to collapse. Typically, a functionally obsolete bridge was built to standards that are not used today. A bridge with this classification may have inadequate lane widths,

shoulder widths, or vertical clearance to serve the current traffic demand. A functionally obsolete bridge may also be prone to flooding. The low-water bridge on Walnut Avenue is an example of a functionally obsolete bridge.

The FHWA states that bridges in rural areas often have a higher percentage of structural deficiencies, while bridges in urban areas have a higher incidence of functional obsolescence due to rising traffic volumes. Three bridges and one culvert are located along the study corridors. According to VDOT, two of the three bridges are classified as functionally obsolete; however, none of the structures are identified as being structurally deficient. Basic information regarding these structures is provided in Table 2.5.



Image 2.5 The culverts under Washington Avenue serve as a pedestrian crossing for the Wolf Creek Greenway.

2.6 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION

In order to be eligible for federal funding, all transportation improvement projects in the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County must be included in the Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

The 2025 LRTP list three projects for the Town of Vinton for which funding will likely be available to complete during the 20 year timeframe:

- **Walnut Avenue, Phase I:** Improve the intersection of Walnut Avenue and 8th Street and replace the bridge over Glade Creek near 5th Street
- **Walnut Avenue, Phase II:** Improve Walnut Avenue to an urban two-lane with curb and gutter, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks; from 5th Street to Lee Avenue (funding reductions will likely result in this being moved to the “Vision List”)
- **Mountain View Road, Phase I:** Improve Mountain View Road to an urban two-lane with curb and gutter, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks; from Washington Avenue to Ruddell Road (funding reductions will likely result in this being moved to the “Vision List”)

Additional “Vision List” projects identified in the LRTP, which may be completed if additional funds become available, include:

- **Mountain View Road, Phase II:** Improve Mountain View Road to an urban two-lane with curb and gutter, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks; from Ruddell Road to Bush Farm Drive
- **Mountain View Road, Phase III:** Improve Mountain View Road to an urban two-lane with curb and gutter, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks; from Bush Farm Drive to Town corporate limits.

The 2025 LRTP lists one project for Roanoke County for which funding will likely be available to complete a reconstruction of Hardy Road, from

Vinton Town Limits to Bedford County Line, including bicycle lanes.

2.7 THE SIX-YEAR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Six-Year Improvement Program allocates funds for transportation projects proposed for construction, development or study in the next six fiscal years. The program is updated annually and is categorized into urban, primary and secondary systems projects.

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) held a special meeting on Friday, Feb. 13, 2009 to approve a rare mid-year revision of the Six-Year Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2009-2014. The revision reduced funding for public transportation, rail and highway projects. Shrinking transportation revenues, the increasing cost of maintenance and construction projects, and the uncertainty surrounding long-term federal funding sources all contributed to the need for this revision.

2.7.1 Primary Roads System

The CTB is responsible for making decisions regarding the primary system. The localities are responsible for decisions regarding secondary and urban highway system projects. VDOT provides assistance to the CTB and the localities. There are no primary road projects pertaining to the study corridors.

2.7.2 Urban Roads System

The FY 2009-2014 Six-Year Improvement Program indicates that Walnut Avenue is in the urban roads system. This project proposes to upgrade Walnut Avenue with curb, gutter, bike lanes and sidewalks from the East City of Roanoke line to Lee Avenue in the Town of Vinton.

This project has multiple components, but the key priorities are to replace the low-water bridge and make improvements to the 8th Street and Walnut Avenue intersection. The estimated cost of this project is \$7,474,000. The funding for this project was reduced to \$1,570,812 (FY 2010-2015). This

overall project is not fully funded; however, preliminary engineering is fully funded. Right-of-way acquisition is not scheduled to begin until FY2015 with construction beginning in FY2016.



Image 2.7.2 A flood in 2003 left the bridge on Walnut Avenue completed submerged.

2.7.3 Secondary Roads System

The Code of Virginia requires the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors to approve the allocation of funds for projects identified within the Secondary Roads System Six-Year Plan. In order for a project to remain on the Six-Year Plan, the project must receive sufficient funding to begin the preliminary engineering process within the six-year time frame. As all of the requests cannot be funded due to budget constraints, the requests are prioritized based upon traffic counts, existing and future development, pavement conditions, drainage, safety, and the economic benefit of the project.

The County of Roanoke and VDOT are continuously reviewing and updating the Secondary Roads System Six-Year Improvement Plan. Each fiscal year, staff receives requests concerning secondary roads in Roanoke County. Secondary roads are defined as any route number 600 or greater. The requests are reviewed and classified as maintenance or construction projects. Requests receive maintenance status when the activities involve preserving or restoring the roadway, facility or structure to its original condition; construction improvements generally change or add characteristics to a roadway, facility or structure. Maintenance projects are

normally referred to VDOT's Resident Administrator for immediate correction, but some of the projects are added to the Revenue Sharing Program list.

Construction projects usually take more than one (1) fiscal year to complete, because these requests require right-of-way acquisition, additional funding, and/or preliminary engineering. Due to the complex nature of construction projects, these requests are put on file to be reviewed during the Six-Year or Revenue Sharing yearly updates.

There are two funding categories in the Six-Year Plan: *County-Wide Incidental Construction Items* and *Numbered Projects*. VDOT defines incidental improvements as any operation, usually constructed within one year, which changes the type, width, length, location, or gradient of a road, facility or structure. Incidental improvements could also include features not originally provided for such road, facility, or structure. The categories of Incidental Construction Services are: traffic services, pipe installation/private entrances, preliminary engineering and surveys, fertilization and seeding, subdivision plan review, right-of-way engineering, traffic calming and rural addition.

The majority of Roanoke County's allocated funds are for Numbered Projects. The Secondary Roads System Six-Year Improvement Plan for FY 2008-2014 indicates that Hardy Road (Route 634) is Priority Project Number 11. The proposed improvements include the reconstruction of 0.90 mile of existing roadway. The project boundaries will extend from the east corporate limits of the Town of Vinton to 0.01 mile east of Feather Road (Route 654).

Hardy Road has an average annual daily traffic count of 11,000 vehicles (2007 AADT). This secondary road has seen increased development activity and increasing traffic to and from Bedford County. The project was added to the Six-Year Plan in 2004. The FY 2010-2015 Six-Year Improvement Program indicates the total estimated cost of the project to be \$11,304,000.



Image 2.7.3 Hardy Road tapers from four lanes to two lanes in Roanoke County near the Town of Vinton.

As of the time of this corridor study, this project has been removed from the Secondary Roads System Six-Year Improvement Plan due to state budget cuts. Preliminary engineering has not been conducted, as no phase of this project is fully funded. Preliminary engineering is not scheduled to begin until FY2012.

2.8 THE REVENUE SHARING PROGRAM

The VDOT Revenue Sharing Program provides Roanoke County with an annual opportunity to receive State matching funds for the construction, maintenance, and improvements to primary and secondary roads in the State’s highway system. VDOT and County staff review and evaluate each request received for inclusion in the Revenue Sharing Program. An application for Revenue Sharing Program funding must be made by resolution of the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors. Project funding is allocated by resolution of the Commonwealth Transportation Board. Construction may be performed by VDOT, or where appropriate, by Roanoke County under an agreement with VDOT. The maximum state participation amount is \$1 million per locality. The Revenue Sharing Projects in Roanoke County receive \$500,000 in County funds and \$500,000 in State Matching funds.

2.8.1 William Byrd Traffic Impact Analysis

In 2007, Roanoke County consulted Ramey, Kemp and Associates, Inc. to evaluate the traffic operations at the entrance of William Byrd High and Middle Schools located on Washington Avenue (Route 24), as well as the internal circulation on campus. Since there is one access point for both schools on Route 24, the traffic problems are compounded with excessive queues in both directions even with a crossing guard positioned at the intersection to guide traffic flow. The traffic engineering services included a 12-hour traffic count, field operations, development of a Synchro/SimTraffic Model of the existing conditions, identification of problems and potential solutions and recommended improvements.

The extension of the existing east bound turning lane in front of William Byrd High School on Washington Avenue (Route 24) was added to the FY2009/2010 Revenue Sharing Project list. The Project is being administered by VDOT.

2.9 ACCIDENT DATA

Accident reports were collected from Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton for a three year period from 2006 to 2008. An accident spot map (Appendix A) was developed which shows a point where each of the accidents occurred during the period of time, as well as the type of accident (accident type was not available for the Town of Vinton). This map is used to get a picture of where accidents cluster in smaller areas.

Based on the reports and mapping, locations were ranked by the number of accidents from 2006-2008 (Table 2.9). A majority of the top intersections are signalized, which is not surprising since they are often the most heavily traveled intersection types and generally make up more than 50% of all accidents in urban areas (FHWA 2007).

The vicinity of the Washington Avenue and Feather Road intersection was the highest ranked accident location along the study corridors, with 40 accidents

during the three year period. A majority (57%) of the accidents at this intersection were rear-ending collisions where the driver was following too closely or not paying attention. Twenty percent (20%) of the accidents were angle collisions with other vehicles. Most of the drivers involved in these accidents were cited with disregarding a traffic signal or failure to maintain control. The remaining 23% were made up of accidents involving deer, fixed objects, or sideswiping another vehicle.

Ranking	Route	Intersection	Number of Accidents
1	Washington Avenue	Feather Road	40
2	Hardy Road	Spruce Street	8
3	Walnut Avenue	8 th Street	8
4	Washington Avenue	Maplewood Drive	7
5	Hardy Road	Feather Road	7
6	Virginia Avenue	4 th Street	7
7	Hardy Road	McGeorge Drive	6
8	Hardy Road	Finney Drive	6
9	Washington Avenue	Spring Grove Drive	6
10	Hardy Road	Beechwood Drive	5

Source: Roanoke County and Town of Vinton Police Departments

2.10 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

2.10.1 Valley Metro

Valley Metro is the public transportation provider in the Roanoke Valley. The services provided by Valley Metro include fixed bus routes, specialized transportation for the disabled and special event shuttles. There are twenty-four (24) fixed bus

routes in the Roanoke Valley, two of which serve the Town of Vinton. The routes serving the Town of Vinton operate Monday through Saturday from approximately 5:45 a.m. until 8:45 p.m. on Washington Avenue, Virginia Avenue, Bypass Road, and South Pollard Street. At the time of this study, there are no bus routes serving eastern Roanoke County. A map of the Valley Metro Routes is available in Appendix A.



Image 2.10.1 Two Valley Metro routes serve the Town of Vinton.

2.10.2 S.T.A.R.

In accordance with the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA), Valley Metro also offers S.T.A.R. (Specialized Transit Arranged Rides) for individuals who are functionally unable to ride a regular bus due to a disability. S.T.A.R. is operated by RADAR, a non-profit corporation that has provided rural public transit services and paratransit in the Roanoke Valley for over 33 years. RADAR drivers are trained in passenger assistance, defensive driving, CPR, and wheelchair securement procedures. Limited driver assistance is available for boarding and unboarding of patrons. A driver may not enter a building to provide assistance.

The S.T.A.R. service area includes the City of Roanoke, City of Salem and Town of Vinton. To be eligible for the S.T.A.R. service, individuals who have special transportation needs must first complete an application through Valley Metro. After an applicant is qualified, they may call to reserve a bus to pick them up anywhere within ¾ of a mile on

either side of one of the current bus routes. The cost per trip is \$3.00 and reservations must be made at least one day in advance of the desired transportation time. The service is offered 5:45 a.m. until 8:45 p.m., Monday through Saturday. S.T.A.R. services are not operated on New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas, or any day when Valley Metro is operating on snow routes.

2.10.3 CORTRAN

The County of Roanoke Transportation service (CORTRAN), also operated by RADAR, is available to qualified Roanoke County residents who may be transported to and from destinations in the County of Roanoke, City of Salem, City of Roanoke and Town of Vinton. To qualify for CORTRAN service, a patron must be a Roanoke County resident and certified through Roanoke County's application process as a senior citizen (60 years or older) or as ADA Paratransit Eligible. The cost per trip is \$3.50. The CORTRAN service hours are 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The CORTRAN service is not operated on the same holidays as the S.T.A.R. service or when Roanoke County Schools are closed.

CHAPTER 3 – BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ACCOMMODATIONS

The purpose of this section of the Vinton Area Corridors Plan is to examine existing conditions related to bicycle and pedestrian improvements along the thoroughfares and corridors in the study area.

3.1 PREVIOUS STUDIES & PLANS

A number of relevant studies and plans have been developed in recent years that have included bicycle accommodations in the Vinton area. The information relevant to the study corridors, including specific recommendations, has been summarized in the following sections.

3.1.1 The Bicycle Compatibility Index: A Level of Service Concept

While there is no widely accepted methodology for determining how compatible a roadway is for allowing the efficient operation of bicycle and motor vehicles, the Bicycle Compatibility Index (BCI) and Bicycle Level of Service (BLOS) are emerging national standards.

The United States Department of Transportation produced a document titled, *The Bicycle Compatibility Index: A Level of Service Concept, Implementation Manual*, to demonstrate the application of the BCI to evaluate the capability of specific urban and suburban roadways to accommodate both motorists and bicyclists. The BCI is a methodology allowing practitioners, such as transportation engineers and planners, to evaluate existing facilities and identify areas for improvements.

The BCI can assist in operational evaluation, design, planning, and route selection. Factors that influence the BCI include: number of travel lanes, curb lane travel width, bike lane or shoulder width, land uses, speed limits, traffic volumes, and on-street parking information.

Once the BCI was developed, BLOS criteria were established to evaluate bicyclist perceived safety and comfort with respect to motor vehicle traffic while

traveling in a roadway corridor. A BLOS of A indicates that a roadway is comfortable to an average adult bicyclist, while a BLOS of F indicates that a roadway is uncomfortable to the average adult bicyclist.

Applications of the BLOS model include:

- Conducting a benefits comparison among proposed bikeway/roadway cross sections,
- Identifying roadway restriping or reconfiguration opportunities,
- Prioritizing and programming roadway corridors for bicycle improvements, and
- Creating bicycle suitability maps.

Similar to the BCI, factors that influence the BLOS include: number of travel lanes, lane width, traffic volumes, speed limits, bike lane width, shoulder width, on-street parking information, and pavement conditions.

For more information regarding the BCI, please see the FHWA implementation manual in Appendix B.

Table 3.1.1 Bicycle Compatibility Index (BCI)

Level of Service (LOS)	BCI Range	Compatibility Level
A	≤ 1.50	Extremely High
B	1.51 - 2.30	Very High
C	2.31 - 3.40	Moderately High
D	3.41 - 4.40	Moderately Low
E	4.41 - 5.30	Very Low
F	> 5.30	Extremely Low

Source: <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/tools/docs/bci.pdf>

3.1.2 Regional Bicycle Suitability Study

The *Regional Bicycle Suitability Study*, completed by the Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (RVAMPO) in 2003, focused on describing existing conditions in regards to the suitability for bicycle ridership on several regional

corridors. Several of the corridors from the Vinton Area Corridors Plan were included in this study including Virginia Avenue, Hardy Road (Route 634), Walnut Avenue, and Washington Avenue. A map found in Appendix A shows the Bicycle Level of Service Grades for the study corridors in the Vinton Area Corridors Plan, as measured through the regional study.

Hardy Road demonstrated the highest BLOS Grade of C, moderately high, due largely to the presence of bicycle lane facilities on the portion of this road stretching from its intersection with Bypass Road to the vicinity of the eastern Town limits. Walnut Avenue from the western Town limits to 1st Street was measured and found to have a BLOS Grade of D, moderately low, due to lower speeds and wide shoulders. The remaining Vinton area study corridors evaluated in the study were given the BLOS grade of E or F, including Washington Avenue from South Pollard Street to the eastern Town limits and Virginia Avenue from the western Town limits to Bypass Road.

The methodology developed through the *Regional Bicycle Suitability Study* has been employed to measure the bicycle suitability grade for the remaining corridors in the study area that were not included in the initial study effort. The summary of the methodology and the results have been included in the section describing current conditions for bicycle and pedestrian travel.

3.1.3 Bikeway Plan for the Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

The 2005 Regional Bikeway Plan for RVAMPO was prepared “to facilitate development of a regional transportation network that accommodates and encourages bicycling as an alternative mode of travel and as a popular form of recreation in the MPO study area” (Bikeway Plan for the Roanoke Valley Area MPO, pg. 1). The intent of this plan is to provide greater connectivity between activity centers and cultural resources in and around the MPO study area, including greenways, commercial centers, downtown areas, employment

concentrations, educational institutions and transit facilities. This plan also encourages inter-jurisdictional connectivity between localities.

The 2005 Regional Bikeway Plan recommended the following areas within the Vinton Area Corridors Plan as priority corridors for bicycle accommodations:

- Hardy Road (Route 634) in Roanoke County,
- Mountain View Road from Washington Avenue to the northern Town limits,
- South Pollard Street from Gus Nicks Boulevard to Virginia Avenue,
- Virginia Avenue from South Pollard Street to the western Town line/City of Roanoke, and
- Walnut Avenue from Lee Avenue to Wise Avenue in the City of Roanoke.

The following areas within the Vinton Area Corridors Plan were listed in the vision list of corridors for bicycle accommodations:

- Feather Road from Washington Avenue (Route 24) to Hardy Road,
- Washington Avenue (Route 24) from the Vinton Town Line to the Blue Ridge Parkway,
- Gus Nicks Boulevard/Washington Avenue, in its entirety, within the Town limits, and
- Third Street from Virginia Avenue to Hardy Road by way of Wyndham Drive and Niagara Road.

Since the completion of the 2005 Bikeway Plan, dedicated bicycle lanes have been added to sections of Hardy and Mountain View Roads which connect to the northern and southern termini of the Wolf Creek Greenway. The bicycle lane along a 0.5 mile segment of Hardy Road in the Town of Vinton was the first bicycle lane in the Roanoke Valley.

Roadway geometry and traffic volumes along Washington Avenue contributed greatly to the lower compatibility score along that corridor. The lack of a paved shoulder, curb lanes of only average width,

high traffic volumes, and higher speed limits (particularly east of Feather Road) make the suitability for bicycle traffic very low along Washington Avenue.

Interesting contrasts can be drawn along certain roadways where segments had higher levels of compatibility. For instance, the northern portion of South Pollard Street from Gus Nicks Boulevard to Cleveland Avenue received a score of ‘D’ while the southern portion of South Pollard Street between Cleveland and Virginia Avenues had the higher score of ‘C.’ The main reason for the lower score along the northern segment is the presence and heavier utilization of on street parking along those portions of the street leaving little room for a bicyclist to maneuver.

Hardy Road (Route 634) provides another interesting contrast in bicycle accommodations. The presence of a striped bike lane, roughly four (4) feet in width, between Bypass Road and the eastern limits of the Town of Vinton, is the greatest differential factor between the remaining segment of Hardy Road located in Roanoke County. The presence of the bike lane is mostly responsible for the western segment’s higher score of ‘C’ while the eastern segment in Roanoke County received a score of ‘E.’ The bike lane alone raised the western segment’s score two entire letters.

The lowest scores for bicycle accommodations can be found along Washington Avenue, Gus Nicks Boulevard, and Virginia Avenue where traffic speeds and volumes are the highest. Restriping these roads to accommodate bike lane facilities could raise scores, but the roadways should be evaluated for feasibility (i.e. sufficient pavement width). Lowering speed limits and increasing speed enforcement may also contribute significantly to the bicycle-friendliness of these corridors. Additionally, staff noted that Washington Avenue has been identified as a priority corridor for bike path installation; however, the bridge over Wolf Creek is too narrow to accommodate a bicycle lane.

The map in Appendix A shows the proposed ‘Priority’ bike lanes for the study area including Bypass Road, Gus Nicks Boulevard and Washington

Avenue (Route 24). Restriping to provide bike lanes on these facilities will likely increase the Bicycle Compatibility Index Score greatly.



Image 3.1.3 The bridge over Wolf Creek along Washington Avenue is too narrow to accommodate pedestrian or bicycle traffic.

3.1.4 Pedestrian Access to Commercial Centers: Connecting Residential and Commercial Land Uses

In 2006, RVAMPO prepared a report, *Pedestrian Access to Commercial Centers*, which examined a specific portion of the Vinton Corridors Project study area for potential pedestrian improvements. The study included Virginia Avenue from Niagara Road to the Route 24 Bypass Road intersection. The study noted the lack of crosswalks at the intersections of Hardy Road and Niagara Road, Hardy Road and Vinyard Road, Hardy Road at Lake Drive Plaza, Hardy Road and Bedford Road, Hardy Road and Clearview Drive, and finally at Hardy Road and Route 24 Bypass Road. The study recommended that crosswalks be installed at these intersections.

The study recommends implementation through a number of means including the incorporation of needed pedestrian facilities into construction, reconstruction, and road improvement projects; by developers as a part of the approval process; minor highway improvement projects; restriping existing facilities for bike lanes; and construction of stand-alone walkway and bikeway projects in the public right-of-ways.

3.1.5 The William Byrd Middle School Safe Routes to School Travel Plan

In 2008, *The William Byrd Middle School Safe Routes to School Travel Plan* identified a number of issues regarding pedestrian transportation and accommodations to bicycle and pedestrian travel around William Byrd Middle School which is located along Washington Avenue in Roanoke County. A survey of parents identified distance from the school and safety concerns as the two highest-ranked reasons as to why their children do not currently bike or walk to school. A number of other issues were identified including: insufficient crosswalks and curb cuts, the lack of a crosswalk and pedestrian crossing signs on Washington Avenue at the school entrance, inadequate signage, kiosks, and maps along the greenway, no formal connection between the greenway and the school campus, limited access between neighborhoods and the greenway, a lack of complete ADA accessibility, and a lack of bicycle parking at the school campus.

The plan identified the following strategies related to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that would improve the bicycle and pedestrian accessibility of the school campus and the surrounding transportation network:

- Construction of a 500-foot multi-use path to connect William Byrd Middle School and the Wolf Creek Greenway;
- Installation of lighting at greenway road crossings and other key locations;
- Installation of greenway informational signage and kiosks at Goode Park, Stonebridge Park, and other greenway access locations;
- Installation of curb cuts and ramps at locations where the greenway crosses Hardy Road, Spring Grove Drive, and Tulip Lane; and
- Installation of crosswalks and/or traffic control devices on Hardy Road, Washington Avenue, Spring Grove Drive, and Tulip Lane.

The 500-foot multi-use path would provide students with a safe alternative route to school. This mode of travel would also encourage healthy lifestyles by offering a mode of travel that would allow the students to walk and bicycle to school. Rather than crossing Washington Avenue, students could utilize the existing Wolf Creek Greenway culvert crossing under Washington Avenue to ride or walk through Goode Park and access the school campus via the proposed 500-foot multi-use path.

3.1.6 The Roanoke Valley Conceptual Greenway Plan (1995)

In December 1994, regional greenway efforts began when elected officials from the City of Roanoke, Roanoke County, the City of Salem and the Town of Vinton were appointed to serve on the Roanoke Valley Greenways/Open Space Steering Committee; which staff support was provided from the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission. This committee hired a consultant to develop a Conceptual Greenway Plan for the Roanoke Valley that was completed in December 1995.

In 1997, the four local governments established the Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission, an advisory body, with the signing of an Intergovernmental Agreement. The Commission's role is to facilitate coordinated planning, development, and maintenance of the greenway network. Around this time, a group of citizens established Pathfinders for Greenway, Inc. was set up as a non-profit, volunteer organization to assist with greenway education and promotion, volunteer coordination for construction and maintenance, and fundraising. As a result of the strong greenway initiatives in the Roanoke Valley, the Western Virginia Land Trust made greenways a top priority in their land preservation efforts.

3.1.7 Update to the Roanoke Valley Conceptual Greenway Plan (2007)

In 2007, a substantial update to the 1995 *Roanoke Valley Conceptual Greenway Plan* was conducted. The primary goals of the update were to prioritize and update the greenway routes included in the 1995 plan, to provide an organizational assessment to

examine the roles and responsibilities of various partners involved in the greenway process, and to describe accomplishments in the greenway initiatives. From this update, fifty-one (51) potential greenways were identified along various courses throughout the valley. The prioritization of when each of these greenways will be implemented is based on public input, the Greenway Steering Committee and the localities within the valley. The following is a description of the priority rankings:

- **Priority 1** - Only applies to the Roanoke River Greenway;
- **Priority 2** - Important regional projects, already underway, which could be finished in 5-10 years;
- **Priority 3** - Priorities within specific localities which work to enhance neighborhood values, economic development and public health. Most of these have had some preliminary work completed; and
- **Priority 4** - Greenway projects that are addressed as opportunity and resources arise on a case-by-case basis.

The Tinker Creek and Wolf Creek Greenways, which intersect the boundaries of the Vinton Area Corridors Plan, are identified as Priority 2 Greenways. The Glade Creek Greenway, which is projected to cross Walnut Avenue just west of 5th Street and Gus Nicks Boulevard just west of the



Image 3.1.7 A pedestrian enjoys a stroll along the Wolf Creek Greenway near Washington Avenue.

Town boundary in the City of Roanoke, was listed as a Priority 3. Additional greenways that are proposed within the Vinton area are the Gladetown Trail and improvements to the Birding and Wildlife Trail. These proposed trails do not intersect the study corridors and are identified as Priority 3 and 4 greenways, respectively. A map of the greenways is located in Appendix A.

3.2 EXISTING BICYCLE CONDITIONS

During March and April 2009, staff from the Roanoke Valley–Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC) sought to document existing conditions along the study area’s network of sidewalks, bike paths, trails, and other bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Staff determined that the best method for ascertaining the existing conditions for bicycle accommodations along the Vinton area study corridors would be to build on the BCI results. RVAMPO had compiled BCI scores for approximately 75% of the corridors being studied in the Plan. RVARC staff took additional measurements to complete the BCI analysis for the entire study area.

As mentioned in Section 3.1.1, the BCI and associated model was developed by the United States Department of Transportation as a part of its *National Bicycling and Walking Study* in 1998. The goal of the project was to develop a universal methodology, accepted by alternative transportation coordinators, traffic engineers, and transportation planners, that could determine how compatible a roadway is for allowing efficient operation of both bicycles and motor vehicles.

The full methodology utilized to score the corridors can be read in the RVAMPO’s *Regional Bicycle Suitability Study* (2003). For the purposes of evaluating the bicycle accommodations along the remaining Vinton study corridors, staff utilized the methodology and scoring sheets developed in the RVAMPO study to determine BCI scores for the remaining corridors not included in the 2003 study.

A map which can be found in Appendix A was developed to illustrate the score of each facility. Two roadway segments had the highest BCI scores of any in the corridor system. The first segment, located along South Pollard Street between Cleveland Avenue and Virginia Avenue, as well as the second segment, located along Hardy Road (Route 634) between Bypass Road and Greenway Landing, received BCI scores of ‘C’ which correspond to a moderately high level of compatibility.

The entire sections of Walnut Avenue, Lee Avenue, and South Pollard Street between Gus Nicks Boulevard and Cleveland Avenue received a ‘D’ for moderately low compatibility. Virginia Avenue from South Pollard Street to Bypass Road, the entire length of Bypass Road, and Hardy Road (Route 634) from Greenway Landing to the Bedford County line received an ‘E’ for very low compatibility. Virginia Avenue from the western Town boundary to South Pollard Street and Washington Avenue from South Pollard Street to the Bedford County line received an ‘F’ for extremely low levels of compatibility.

3.3 EXISTING PEDESTRIAN CONDITIONS

3.3.1 Crosswalks

The inventory of existing conditions also included staff recordation of crosswalk locations along the study corridors. Crosswalk locations were recorded at the intersections of Gus Nicks Boulevard and South Pollard Street, at the 200 block of East Washington Avenue, at the 600 block of East Washington Avenue, at the intersection of Washington Avenue/Mountain View Road, at the intersection of Washington Avenue/Bypass Road, and at the intersection of Lee Avenue/South Pollard Street.

The crosswalks at Lee Avenue and South Pollard Street, the 200 block of East Washington Avenue, and the 600 block of East Washington Avenue are the only crosswalks with pavement markings. The crosswalks at mid-block on Washington Avenue are striped on the pavement and the crosswalk at Lee

Avenue and South Pollard Street are marked by pavers. Of the two mid-block, striped crossings, it should be noted that only the crossing at the 600 block of East Washington Avenue has a pedestrian crossing sign warning the relatively fast-moving traffic of the crosswalk ahead.

The remainders of the crosswalk locations consist of apparent pedestrian coordinated traffic signalization at intersections; however, staff could not determine any actual effect of pressing the buttons at the crossings, as pressing the button to cross seemed to have no impact on traffic signal timing.



Image 3.3.1 The intersection of Lee and South Pollard Streets is marked with pavers.

It should be noted that there seemed to be remarkably few crosswalk locations in the study area overall. In particular, the Route 24 corridor has no apparent crosswalks or pedestrian signalization. High traffic volumes along this roadway coupled with the lack of sidewalks along portions of the corridor discourage pedestrian activity.

3.3.2 Sidewalks

Staff compiled an inventory of sidewalks along the corridor along with information on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ramps, sidewalk conditions, and any obstructions and/or issues with maintenance, sidewalk code enforcement encountered while performing the field work.

The full sidewalk inventory can be found in Appendix B. The study corridors not currently served with sidewalks include portions of Walnut

Avenue, portions of Washington Avenue within the Town limits, the entire section of Washington Avenue (Route 24) in Roanoke County, Bypass Road, Hardy Road (Rt. 634) in Roanoke County, and Virginia Avenue/Hardy Road between 200 feet east of South Pollard Street and Niagara Road. A number of segments lack ramps for full ADA accessibility including notably several segments on Walnut Avenue, the southernmost segments of South Pollard Street (between Jefferson Avenue and Virginia Avenue), Washington Avenue between North Preston Road and Marshall Avenue, and Virginia Avenue between the western Town line and the terminus of a sidewalk roughly 200 feet east of South Pollard Street.

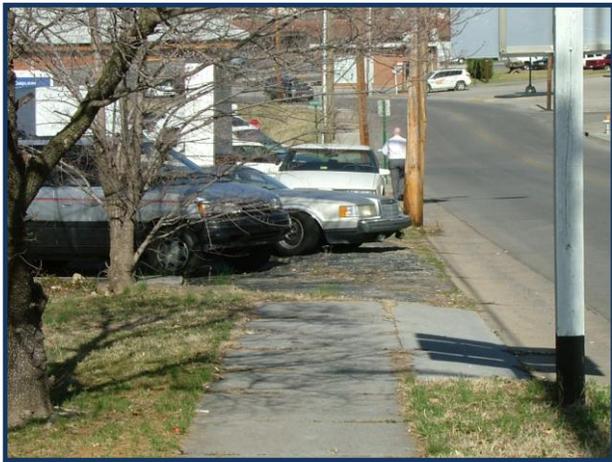


Image 3.3.2 Pedestrians are forced to walk in the gutter along South Pollard Street which needs significant improvements.

Staff recorded sidewalk conditions utilizing a condition grading system whereas sidewalks in excellent condition or like new condition were graded as ‘A’, sidewalks in good condition were graded as ‘B’, sidewalks that were in serviceable condition but appeared to need spot improvements were graded as ‘C.’

Most of the sidewalks were found to be in good to excellent overall condition with the exception of a few problem areas. The sidewalk segment on South Pollard Street between Cedar Avenue and Virginia Avenue was given the lowest condition rating. This segment of sidewalk has significant damage with gaps in the sidewalk along a portion of property where

pedestrians must walk in the gutter along the street due to the obstruction of vehicles and personal property.

Along the same segment of sidewalk, between Cedar Avenue and Virginia Avenue, it was noted that one curb cut located at 537 South Pollard was too large for the entrance of the property. The grade drops off significantly on the southern side of the curb cut. Numerous scrape marks and other evidence at the scene indicated that several vehicles have been damaged by improperly aligned curb cut.

In the opposite travel direction along South Pollard Street from Jefferson Avenue to Virginia Avenue (in the northbound direction of travel), a retaining wall failure on private property has contributed to the encroachment of earth and fill material onto the sidewalk.

Virginia Avenue lacks sidewalk from 200 feet east of South Pollard Street to Niagara Road (with the exception of one strip of sidewalk along the frontage of one eating establishment). A narrow foot path has been worn on what appears to be public right-of-way along the frontage of several commercial establishments on the eastbound side of Hardy Road between 705 Hardy Road and Niagara Road, demonstrating significant pedestrian traffic along this portion of Virginia Avenue.

The Town of Vinton’s Public Works Department is responsible for the maintenance and repair of existing sidewalks within the Town limits. In established neighborhoods, the property owners shall pay one-half of the cost of the



Image 3.3.3 A worn pedestrian path along Virginia Avenue indicates the need for sidewalks.

installation of new curbs, gutters and sidewalks; the Town will pay the remaining one-half if funds are available. Adjoining property owners along at least a block must mutually agree to the installation and cost sharing. In new residential developments, the property owners/developers are responsible for all costs associated with the installation of curbs, gutters, and sidewalks.



CHAPTER 4 – COMMUNITY FACILITIES

4.1 THE VINTON MUNICIPAL BUILDING

The Vinton Municipal Building is the administrative center for the Town of Vinton. Located along South Pollard Street in the heart of Downtown Vinton, this building was constructed in 1982 of a distinctive dark red brick. This building houses several Town Departments including Administration, Finance, Treasurer, Human Resources, Planning and Zoning, Police and Dispatch. The Municipal Building is also the venue for Vinton Town Council meetings which are held twice per month on the first and third Tuesdays, as well as Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals meetings.



Image 4.1 The Vinton Municipal Building

4.2 THE VINTON LIBRARY

The first public library in the Roanoke County Public Library system was opened on December 10, 1941 in a room at a community center. At this time, 500 books were in circulation. The Vinton Library, opened in 1970, was the first branch library in the Roanoke County Public Library system. Measuring 9,400 square feet in size, it was the largest branch for many years, until the Hollins Branch Public Library was remodeled in the early 1990's.

The Vinton Library contains an extensive collection of books, DVD's, children's books, audio books, magazines and other materials. It also includes a children's area, a computer instructional lab, and a

community meeting room. Open 64 hours per week, it is considered a full service branch library, offering research assistance, story times, teen activities, and programs and services for patrons of all ages. Centrally located in the Town of Vinton along Washington Avenue, it is an intrinsic part of the Vinton area and surrounding community.



Image 4.2 The Vinton Public Library

4.3 THE VINTON WAR MEMORIAL

The Vinton War Memorial, commonly referred to as Vinton's civic center, is a tribute to the veterans and 29 Vinton men who gave their lives during World War II and the Vietnam War. In 1944, an eight member war memorial commission was appointed by the Town Council to plan a memorial for World War II heroes. In 1945, a plan was presented to the Town Council which called for the purchase of an 11.25 acre tract located off Washington Street, now called Washington Avenue. The Town Council proceeded with the purchase of the land, paying \$15,000. Among the residents of the Town of Vinton and the War Memorial Commission, money was raised to start the construction of the entire project. The park was finished in 1946, the swimming pool opened in 1947, and the two-story brick building was dedicated and opened to the public on August 20, 1948.

Initially, the Vinton War Memorial included the town library, a kitchen, numerous meeting rooms, and a ballroom. After an extensive renovation in

2007, the Vinton War Memorial is now a beautiful event venue. The two-story colonial brick structure is composed of several meeting rooms, one large banquet room, one small banquet room, kitchen facilities, and offices for staff. The new look honors the facility’s history and tradition while offering guests an exceptional opportunity to have a memorable event at this community landmark.



Image 4.3 The Vinton War Memorial was renovated in 2007.

4.3.1 The Veteran’s Monument

Under construction at the time of this plan, the Vinton-Roanoke County Veterans Monument is dedicated to the memory of those who have served and those who continue to serve in our country's Armed Forces. Initial plans for the monument began in 2006, and a ground breaking ceremony was held on July 4, 2008. A competition was held to decide upon the design of the monument. Of the four models submitted in the competition, a design proposal called “High Ground” submitted by Larry Bechtel, John Kirtley, Jr. and Mary Babcock, received approval from the Vinton community. The artists made the following statement about the monument:

“The title of our design proposal, High Ground, came from a friend and Vietnam War Veteran who told me that in battle, a soldier always looks for the high ground.”

The design consists of a star-shaped walkway with a brick cobblestone effect that will surround and lead to the main part of the monument structure. The brick style pavers are available for individual

purchase in honor of a deceased veteran, someone who serves or has served, or a person one would like to recognize for any reason. The dogwood, an important symbol of the Town’s heritage, will be planted to accent the monument. A rendering of the proposed monument can be found in Appendix B.

4.3.2 Charles R. Hill Senior Center

The Charles R. Hill Senior Center resides on the same parcel as the Vinton War Memorial. Named for the former Mayor of the Town of Vinton, the Charles R. Hill Senior Center is available to the public for meetings, seminars, luncheons, dinners, weddings, receptions, social gatherings, and other special occasions.

4.4 THE VINTON MUSEUM

The Vinton Museum is housed in a family dwelling that was built in 1906. A native of Wellville, Virginia, J. H. Upson resigned his Lynchburg bookkeeping job in 1889 to move to Vinton. Bringing with him his new wife, Amelia Callis Upson, he opened a general store on the corner of Maple Street and Lee Avenue. Several years later, the Upson shingle hung over the doors of a grocery store and finally over the hardware store that he operated until his death in 1939.

In 1899, J.H. Upson purchased two parcels near his store where he built the ten-room house at 210 East Jackson Avenue, the current site of the Vinton Museum. In 1988, Mrs. Mary Upson Williams, daughter of J. H. and Amelia Upson, donated the Upson family home to the Town of Vinton for public or municipal purposes. Prior to her death in 1993, Williams made the following remarks about her donation, “I have lived here the bulk of my life. I want to give something back to the community, which has given to me.”

Following Williams’ death, the Town of Vinton leased the Upson house to the Vinton Historical Society, established in 1984, for use as a museum. The museum is dedicated to preserving and displaying local artifacts and family treasures for citizens and visitors to the area. More than 200

families have loaned or donated items for inclusion in the museum collection.

The Vinton Museum is home to thousands of items from the Vinton community and the surrounding Roanoke Valley. The collection includes pieces dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including Native American arrowheads, porcelain dolls, china, hand-made dough bowls, World War II memorabilia, a variety of period clothing, and a host of items from Vinton schools. They also have a vast collection of photographs taken in and around Vinton that capture the essence of the time period in which they were taken. The majority of the museum items were donated by individuals who realize the importance of historical preservation.



Image 4.4 The Vinton Museum was leased to the Vinton Historical Society in 1988.

The Vinton Historical Society has been responsible for the operation of the Vinton Museum since 1988. The Vinton Museum has been recently refurbished and is open daily Monday through Friday from fall through spring from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. It is open on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. or other times by appointment. Fundraising efforts, grants, and private donations have allowed the Vinton Historical Society to provide free admission to the public.

4.5 THE VINTON SWIMMING POOL

The Town of Vinton Special Programs Department operates a public municipal swimming pool for people of all ages. It is located behind the Vinton War Memorial. The pool has traditionally operated

between June and August of each year. On average, 3,000 to 4,000 patrons visit the pool each summer. After 60 years of service, the Vinton public swimming pool is scheduled to close in 2010. The age and condition of the pool, coupled with hard economic times are the primary reasons for the scheduled closing.



Image 4.5 The Vinton Swimming Pool is scheduled to close in 2010.

4.6 THE VINTON FARMERS' MARKET

The Vinton Farmers' Market is located on Lee Avenue in downtown Vinton. Since 1988 the market has provided a location for local farmers to sell fresh produce, home-made baked goods, jam, jellies, greenery, handmade crafts, flowers, and plants.

The Vinton Farmers' Market, recently renovated, features 24 covered stalls with tables for vendors and 43 free parking spaces for customers. The market area also features a permanent stage at which concerts and special events are held throughout the year. Special events promote the market, the vendors, the downtown, and the Vinton community.

The market is owned and operated by the Town of Vinton. The market is supervised by the Town of Vinton Special Programs Coordinator. The following items may be sold at the Farmers' Market: homegrown or harvested produce fruits or vegetables, limited prepared foods, jams, jellies, honey, and highly acidic canned goods, handmade craft, live plants and fresh greenery. The Special

Programs Coordinator has the authority to approve or disapprove any items sold on the Market.

4.7 THE VINTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Vinton Health Department, which serves residents in the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County, is one of seven local health departments within the Alleghany Health District. The Vinton Health Department is located in Downtown Vinton on South Pollard Street. It is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Clinic services are provided based on family income and a sliding fee scale and/or at no cost to customers.

Among the services provided at the Health Department are the following: family planning clinics, maternal and infant care coordination, immunization clinics, child safety seat programs, nursing home prescreenings, communicable disease tracking, as well as environmental health services including onsite sewage disposal, private wells, rabies, restaurant inspections, complaints and public pools.

4.8 SCHOOLS

4.8.1 Herman L. Horn Elementary

In 1961, East Vinton Elementary School, now Herman L. Horn, was constructed on Ruddell Road. In 1965 an addition was necessary to accommodate the growth. In 2005, another addition was completed, along with renovations of the school. Herman L. Horn consists of 38 classrooms with total student enrollment at 453. In addition, there are 75



Image 4.8.1 Herman L. Horn Elementary School

staff members. Other facilities include a paved walking trail, two play structures, and one baseball/softball field.

4.8.2 W.E. Cundiff Elementary

During the 1960's, rapid growth in population in the Vinton area led to overcrowding at Herman L. Horn and Roland E. Cook Elementary Schools. Therefore, a new elementary school became necessary. Hardy Road Elementary School officially opened its doors in August, 1972 with an enrollment of 732 students. The structure is located on a 22 acre tract on Hardy Road. In 1989, the Roanoke County School Board voted to change the name of Hardy Road Elementary School to W. E. Cundiff in honor of Bill Cundiff, a prominent businessman in the Vinton community. Currently, W.E. Cundiff consists of 37 classrooms with 520 students and 80 staff members.

4.8.3 William Byrd Middle and High

The majority of middle and high school age children and teenagers living along or near the Vinton study corridors attend William Byrd Middle and High School. Both facilities are located on one parcel located at 2902 Washington Avenue. Prior to its current location, William Byrd High School was



Image 4.8.3 A rendering of the office expansion of William Byrd High School. Source: Roanoke County Public Schools

located on Gus Nicks Boulevard where it was built in 1938. Reverend Leggett, the minister at Thrasher Memorial Methodist Church began campaigning for the construction of a new high school. In 1969, William Byrd High School was built at its current location. The old school was then converted to William Byrd Middle School. In 1988, a new middle

school was opened behind the current William High School High School.

Currently, there are 1,189 students attending William Byrd High School. There are 77 classrooms and 150 staff members. Other facilities include a football stadium, track, four tennis courts, a baseball field, and a softball field. All facilities are shared with William Byrd Middle School. The Middle School contains 60 classrooms, with 110 staff members and a student enrollment of 850.

In late summer 2009, facility improvements at William Byrd Middle and High School were approved by Roanoke County, VDOT and the Town of Vinton Public Works Department. Renovations include minor changes to William Byrd Middle School and expansions of the William Byrd High School’s administrative offices, gymnasium and cafeteria.

The facility on Gus Nicks Boulevard was last used as Central Middle School, an alternative school for students in need of additional academic support. The school was closed at the end of the 2008-2009 academic year, and the facility is currently vacant.

A map of the school districts can be found in Appendix A.

Roanoke County. They also provide back-up emergency services to other locations in Roanoke, Bedford, and Botetourt Counties. The station is manned by career firefighters and paramedics Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., and an advanced life support unit is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Vinton First Aid Crew and Vinton Volunteer Fire Department provide Fire and EMS coverage for the area primarily on nights, weekends, and holidays. The department is funded by the Vinton Town Council, Roanoke County Board of Supervisors, and citizen and corporate donations. The Vinton Fire Department was built in 1976. In 2007, an addition was built, which houses the Vinton First Aid Crew. In 2008, the Vinton Fire and EMS Station responded to 330 reported fire incidents and 1,518 reported rescue requests. A map of the



Image 4.9 The Vinton Firehouse and First Aid Crew Hall reporting districts may be found in Appendix A.

Table 4.8 School Enrollment Figures (1/2009)

Area Schools	Grades	Student Total
Herman L. Horn Elementary	Kindergarten – Grade 5	453
W.E. Cundiff Elementary	Kindergarten – Grade 5	520
William Byrd Middle	Grade 6 – 8	850
William Byrd High	Grade 9 – 12	1189

Source: Roanoke County Public Schools

4.9 PUBLIC SAFETY

The Vinton Fire and EMS Department serves the corporate limits of Vinton, as well as eastern

4.10 COMMUNICATIONS CENTER MERGER

At the time of this document, Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton had begun negotiations in evaluating the feasibility of merging their 911 call centers. In July 2009, the Vinton Town Council and the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors heard a presentation from staff on a preliminary investigation of the proposal outlining potential benefits and pitfalls of a communications center merger. The

investigation included visits to existing combined dispatching facilities in York and Albemarle counties, both of which reported major successes with the combined operations.

In both counties, a unified center served a county with rural and urban elements, a city or town, and in Albemarle's case, a major university. With each, a major difficulty in the beginning had been the acquisition of compatible radio systems, something that Roanoke County and Vinton already share. A merger would require some Roanoke County staff to become adept at dispatching public works crews, something they don't do now. County dispatchers are becoming familiar with that task already, in an experiment to handle after-midnight calls for the Western Virginia Water Authority.

Of the Town of Vinton's eight dispatching positions, only six are filled. Those six employees would be moved to the county's new dispatching center located in its public safety headquarters on Cove Road, and would become Roanoke County employees.

4.11 LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement in Roanoke County is divided into two organizations: the Roanoke County Police Department and the Roanoke County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office was the original law enforcement agency in Roanoke County, serving the citizens since 1838. The sheriff deputies provide three main areas of service to the community: corrections, court security, and civil processing. The Roanoke County Sheriff's Office has 103 sworn and civilian personnel which serves a population of 90,420. The Sheriff is an elected state constitutional officer who serves four year terms.

On November 7, 1989, the Roanoke County Police Department was established. This mandate was the beginning of an eight-month transition period from a Sheriff's Office into two separate law enforcement agencies, which was completed on June 30, 1990. On July 1, 1990 the Roanoke County Police Department assumed law enforcement activities. Since November 1997, the Roanoke County Police

Department has been nationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. The Department has an assigned strength of 146 sworn officers and 13 civilian support staff positions.



Image 4.11 Police patrol along Hardy Road

Residents in the Town of Vinton are served by the Vinton Police Department which is a state accredited agency. The Vinton Police Department is available 24 hours a day year round to assist in law enforcement, patrolling, traffic safety, animal control, and other community needs within the Town's corporate limits. A map of the reporting districts may be found in Appendix A.

4.12 PARKS & RECREATION

4.12.1 Goode Park

Goode Park is a 22-acre recreational area owned and operated by Roanoke County located north of Washington Avenue, and accessed by Leisure Lane. Park amenities include a picnic shelter, water fountains, a concession area with bathrooms, two seasonal athletic fields with lights for baseball and softball activities and parking accommodation for thirty vehicles. The park is located along Wolf Creek and includes a long stretch of the Wolf Creek Greenway. The park is open daily from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

4.12.2 Greenways

A greenway is a corridor of protected open space managed for conservation, recreation and non-motorized transportation. Greenways often follow

natural features such as ridgelines, rivers and stream valleys, but may also be constructed along abandoned rail lines and utility easements. Many greenways are multi-use paths that include accommodations for bicycles and pedestrians. Communities benefit from greenways which provide economic revitalization, environmental protection, recreational opportunities and alternative transportation, as well as the enhancement of cultural and historical resources.

Though primarily designed for recreational purposes, greenways also promote and encourage environmental preservation. From a functional perspective, greenways are vegetated linear parks that provide tree cover, wildlife habitats, and riparian buffers to protect natural watercourses such as streams and rivers. From a community perspective, greenways enhance social interaction by providing access between neighborhoods, opportunities to travel between destination points without an automobile, and recreational opportunities that encourage healthier lifestyles.

The Wolf Creek Greenway, a priority two greenway, begins at Hardy Road and passes through the study area at Washington Avenue, continuing through Goode and Stonebridge Parks and eventually connecting into the Blue Ridge Parkway. The first section of the Wolf Creek Greenway located in the Town of Vinton, was completed in 1999 and is one-half mile long. The second portion of the greenway, located in Roanoke County, was initiated as a trail project in 1995.

The trail was updated to greenway standards from Stonebridge Park to Goode Park. The entire trail is now 2.2 miles long with the most recent section completed and opened to the public in 2007. The third section includes an extension from Stonebridge Park to Mountain View Road and eventually to the Blue Ridge Parkway. The southern terminus is in Vinton off of Hardy Road and the northern terminus is located in Roanoke County off of Mountain View Road. It is a cinder surfaced greenway. Extensions from Hardy Road south to Vinton Business Center and down the creek to the Roanoke River Greenway are options in the future.

In 2001, the Town of Vinton widened a portion of Hardy Road from two lanes to five lanes from the intersection of Bypass Road to the Roanoke County line. Bicycle lanes and sidewalks were included with connections to the greenway. In 2007, Mountain View Road was reconfigured, curves removed, and bike lanes added along both sides of the road. These bicycle lanes connect to the greenway.

4.13 UTILITIES

The Town of Vinton Public Works Department is responsible for water and sewer services in Vinton and East Roanoke County, management of the storm water runoff system, street and sidewalk maintenance, garbage and recycling collections, and traffic signal maintenance. There are 60.3 miles of water lines and 66.1 miles of sewer lines in the service area. Curbside household garbage is collected free of charge within the corporate limits each week. Recyclable materials such as aluminum, steel cans, newspaper, and plastics are collected every other week, according to the Recycling Calendar given out each year by the Town. The Public Works Department also handles utility service problems such as low water pressure, sewer backups, leaks on public property, requests for utility taps, or other service related items.



Image 4.13 The Town of Vinton cleans up a mudslide on Hardy Road following a flood in 2003.

The following water, wastewater and stormwater management updates were provided by the Town of Vinton Public Work Department. A map of the

existing water and sewer utilities can be found in Appendix A.

4.13.1 Water and Wastewater

The Town of Vinton is proactive in planning for future water and wastewater needs in the Town and East County Utility Service Area. Multiple utility capital projects completed over the last 10 years affecting the study area corridors replaced overaged lines and preserved or improved line capacities. Major projects completed include Downtown Waterline & Wastewater Line Improvements, Hardy Road Waterline Improvements, Wolf Creek Wastewater Interceptor Replacement Project, Hardy Road Wastewater Pump Station Replacement, and Hardy Road Wastewater Force Main Extension. Additionally, a Water Supply and Distribution System Study was completed by a consulting engineer in 2006. Also, a wastewater capacity analysis of the Hardy Road Corridor was completed by a consulting engineer in 2007. Beginning in June 2009 a multi-year system-wide wastewater Inflow & Infiltration engineering study began, which will address both line condition and capacity issues in the collection system. These comprehensive engineering studies provide the Town a roadmap for future program planning and project development.

Groundwater is the Town’s primary water source and is supplied to the utility service area from ten dispersed wells. Present average daily system demand is 1.2 million gallons per day with a comfortable well capacity of 2.0 million gallons per day. This 800 thousand gallon per day surplus is available to meet future growth and development throughout the service area. An eleventh well, drilled but not yet developed, will boost surplus capacity to over 1.0 million gallons per day. Wastewater line capacity is generally sufficient in the corridor study areas and the Town has significant available wastewater treatment capacity at the regionally operated Water Pollution Control Plant. Present effluent flow from the Town is 1.2 million gallons per day compared to a plant capacity share of 3.0 million gallons per day.

In 2008, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors adopted amendments to Chapter 9 “Fire Prevention and Protection” of the Roanoke County Code implementing fire hydrant placement and flow standards. At the time of the 2008 amendment to the Roanoke County Code, the Town of Vinton had adopted the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code and appointed the Roanoke County Fire Marshal as the designated fire official for enforcement within the Town limits. Additionally, the Town implemented as policy in January 2008 standards identical to those adopted in the Roanoke County Code. Furthermore, the Town for well over ten years followed multi-jurisdictional design and construction standards, containing fire hydrant placement and flow requirements, which serve as the source document for the aforementioned fire prevention and protection code amendments. Finally, it should be noted for the record that all of the above standards apply to new construction, not to existing facilities.

The 2006 Water Supply and Distribution System Study analyzed water demands for residential, commercial, and industrial needs; as well as fire flow requirements. Residential, commercial, and industrial demands, present and future can be easily met by the system. Fire flow requirements identified the most problems. This is not surprising since a great many of the water lines serving the corridor areas were constructed over 40 years ago under much lower fire flow and hydrant placement practices. The estimated cost of upgrading these lines to current standards is \$4.3 million, based upon estimates contained in the 2006 distribution system study. The Town will need to address these deficiencies in the years ahead as part of a system-wide utility capital replacement program, which is expected to be in the range of \$35 million to \$40 million over the next 25 years.

Despite the above fire flow problems, new development and redevelopment along and around the corridors has been robust over the past 10 years. Construction of new or reconstruction of fast food restaurants such as Bojangles, Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonald’s, and Burger King stand out in the Town; and expansion of the New York Pizza



family restaurant is nearing completion. The startup of the Vinton Business Center with the opening of Cardinal Glass IG, a large industrial manufacturer with high water demands and fire flow requirements was a major milestone. Construction of a new Rite Aid Drugstore and Member One Federal Credit Union were also completed.

A new Off Track Betting Facility was completed within the corridor area, just in the last 5 years. A major expansion and renovation of the Kroger grocery store and the addition of a Super Dollar grocery store as a redevelopment in an existing shopping center were recently completed. Three existing churches underwent or are undergoing major expansions and additions in just the past 3 years. A new optician's office and retail outlet was constructed. The Vinton War Memorial was completely renovated and expanded. The newest addition in the corridors is an Advance Auto Parts store, reconstructed on the same site, completed in October 2009. In all cases above, the full water needs of the new, reconstructed, or expanded facilities were accommodated by the Vinton water system.

4.13.2 Stormwater Management

Stormwater Management refers to the planned control of surface water runoff resulting from rainfall. The goals of stormwater management are to prevent both flooding and pollution, with various local, state and federal regulations to guide how these goals are accomplished. Existing stormwater infrastructure in the corridors is old and in many cases undersized. The structural condition and capacity are not known, but owing to pipe age much of the system is likely nearing the end of its useful service life.

Many areas in or near the corridors are not presently served by stormwater collection systems. As new federal and state regulations governing both stormwater quantity and quality become effective, development and redevelopment along the corridors could be challenged. Full time maintenance of the collection system is on the horizon. The Town will need to address condition assessment of, investment in and maintenance of this important infrastructure

asset in the very near future. Significant capital investment is likely, but it is not possible to quantify an estimated cost at this time. A map of the existing stormwater facilities is available in Appendix A.



Image 4.13.2 Many areas in and around the study corridors are not presently served by stormwater collection systems.

4.13.3 Electric Service

Electricity is provided to the Vinton community by Appalachian Power Company, who serves about 1 million customers in West Virginia, Virginia and Tennessee. Appalachian Power is part of the American Electric Power system, one of the largest electric utilities in the United States, delivering electricity to more than 5 million customers in 11 states.

There are six transmission lines that serve the Roanoke Valley. There are major substation facilities at Cloverdale and Dixie Caverns. The last transmission line was built in the valley in 1994. Current forecasts indicate that by 2010, some of the equipment will be loaded at or beyond its rated capacity. The overloading of conditions will put the valley's electric grid in violation of North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) guidelines.

Given these forecasts, through the Huntington Court-Roanoke Transmission Reinforcement Project, Appalachian Power plans to construct approximately six miles of 138-kilovolt (kV) transmission lines to protect electric service in the greater Roanoke Valley. This project is estimated to cost \$15 million and will connect two existing

electric substations in northeast and southeast Roanoke. The project is needed to reinforce the regional electric supply and to ensure compliance with NERC standards. Following several weeks of public input, the company identified a preferred and alternate route for the project. A request to construct the project is currently before the Virginia State Corporation Commission. The project's proposed preferred route will enter the Town of Vinton's western jurisdictional boundary. A map of the proposed transmission lines is located in Appendix A.

4.13.4 Cable

Cable is available from Cox Communications within the study area. Connections to their network are available throughout the study area via both above and below ground lines, and include both cable for television, internet, and phone.

4.13.5 Gas

Within the study area, natural gas is available from Roanoke Gas.

4.13.6 Telephone

Verizon and Cox Communications, Inc. provide telephone services to businesses and residences throughout the study area.

4.13.7 Internet

High speed internet service is provided throughout the study area by Cox Communications, Inc. and Verizon.

CHAPTER 5 – RESOURCE PRESERVATION

5.1 CULTURAL RESOURCES

5.1.1 Blue Ridge Parkway

The Blue Ridge Parkway is a National Parkway and All-American Road in the United States, noted for its scenic beauty. It runs for 469 miles (755 km), mostly through the famous Blue Ridge, a major mountain chain that is part of the Appalachian Mountains. Land on either side of the road is maintained by the National Park Service. It is the longest, narrowest National Park in the world and is the most visited unit in the United States National Park System. In many places, the park is bordered by land protected by the United States Forest Service.

Begun during the administration of U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt, the project was originally called the "Appalachian Scenic Highway." Most construction was carried out by private contractors under federal contracts under an authorization by Harold L. Ickes in his role as federal public works administrator. Work began on September 11, 1935 near Cumberland Knob in North Carolina; construction in Virginia began the following February. On June 30, 1936, Congress formally authorized the project as the "Blue Ridge Parkway" and placed it under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Some work was carried out by various New Deal public works agencies. The Works Progress Administration did some roadway construction. Crews from the Emergency Relief Administration carried out landscape work and development of parkway recreation areas. Personnel from four Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps worked on roadside cleanup, roadside plantings, grading slopes and improving adjacent fields and forest lands. During World War II, the CCC crews were replaced by conscientious objectors in the Civilian Public Service program.

Construction of the parkway took over fifty-two years to complete, the last stretch (near the Linn Cove Viaduct) being laid around Grandfather Mountain in 1987. The Blue Ridge Parkway tunnels were constructed through the rock -- one in Virginia and twenty-five in North Carolina. Sections of the Parkway near the tunnels are often closed in winter.

(Due to dripping groundwater from above, freezing temperatures, and the lack of sunshine, ice often accumulates inside these areas even when the surrounding areas are above freezing.) The highest point on the parkway (south of Waynesville, near Mount Pisgah in North Carolina) is 6047 feet (according to the 2005 Parkway map) or 1845 meters above sea level (AMSL) on Richland Balsam Mountain at Milepost 431, and is often closed from November to April due to inclement weather such as snow, fog, and even freezing fog from low clouds. The parkway is carried across streams, railway ravines and cross roads by 168 bridges and six viaducts.



Image 5.1.1 The Blue Ridge Parkway can be accessed from Washington Avenue.

The parkway runs from the southern terminus of Shenandoah National Park's Skyline Drive in Virginia at Rockfish Gap to U.S. Route 441 at Oconaluftee in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park near Cherokee, North Carolina. There is no fee for using the parkway; however, commercial vehicles are prohibited without approval from the Park Service Headquarters, near Asheville, North Carolina. The roadway is not maintained in the winter, and sections which pass over especially high elevations and through tunnels are often impassable and therefore closed from late fall through early spring. Weather is extremely variable in the mountains, so conditions and closures often change rapidly. The speed limit is never higher than 45 mph (70 km/h) and lower in some sections.

The parkway uses short side roads to connect to other highways, and there are no direct interchanges with interstate highways, making it possible to enjoy wildlife and other scenery without stopping for cross-traffic. Mileposts along the parkway start at zero at the northeast end in Virginia and count to 469 at the southern end in North Carolina. The mileposts can be found on the west side of the road. Towns and cities along the way include Waynesboro, Roanoke, Vinton and Galax in Virginia; in North Carolina, Boone and Asheville, where it runs across the property of the Biltmore Estate. The Blue Ridge Parkway runs along the eastern border of Roanoke County with direct access to Washington Avenue.

Wildflowers dominate the parkway in the spring, including rhododendrons and dogwoods, moving from valleys to mountains as the cold weather retreats. Smaller annuals and perennials such as the daisy and aster flower are blooming through the summer. Brilliant autumn foliage occurs later in September on the mountaintops, descending to the valleys by October. Often in early to middle October and middle to late April, all three seasons can be seen simply by looking down from the cold and windy parkway to the green and warm valleys below. October is especially dramatic, as the colored leaves stand out boldly and occur mostly at the same time, unlike the flowers.

Major trees include oak, hickory, and tulip tree at lower elevations and buckeye and ash in the middle, turning into conifers such as fir and spruce at the highest elevations on the parkway. Trees near ridges, peaks, and passes (often called gaps or notches) are often distorted and even contorted by the wind.

Highlights of the Blue Ridge Parkway near the study corridors are:

- **Mile Markers 84 to 87** - Peaks of Otter's spectacular views have been popular since the days of Thomas Jefferson.
- **Mile Marker 114.9** - Roanoke River Gorge opens before you from the overlook, after a 10-minute walk.

- **Mile Marker 115.1** - Virginia's Explore Park is currently closed. For more information see Section 5.1.3 of this Chapter.
- **Mile Marker 120.4** - Roanoke Mountain is a 3.7-mile (6.0 km) side trip. The one-way loop road takes you over the mountain for impressive views.
- **Mile Marker 129.6** - Roanoke Valley Overlook provides a view of the largest community along the parkway.

5.1.2 Viewsheds

The geographic location of the Vinton area provides several notable viewsheds from the Blue Ridge Parkway. A viewshed is an area of land that is visible to the human eye from a fixed vantage point. Viewsheds are areas of particular scenic or historic value that are deemed worthy of preservation against development or other change. Viewsheds are often spaces that are readily visible from public areas such as from public roadways or public parks.

Two of the study corridors, Hardy Road and Washington Avenue, intersect the Blue Ridge Parkway in Roanoke County, providing tourists with views in the Vinton community. It is important to ensure that these corridors are visually attractive and inviting. The Vinton Business Center is an area located within the Hardy Road viewshed that contains significant amounts of undeveloped land. The Master Plan for this park was designed to complement that character of the Blue Ridge Parkway and provide guidelines for protecting this viewshed. The majority of the viewshed from Washington Avenue is located in western Bedford County. There are, however, a few vacant parcels in Roanoke County that need to be carefully developed to minimize visual impacts from the Blue Ridge Parkway.

A map depicting the Blue Ridge Parkway viewsheds that pertain to Vinton and East Roanoke County is available in Appendix A.

5.1.3 Explore Park

Explore Park is a currently closed living history museum and recreational facility located at milepost 115 on the Blue Ridge Parkway in Roanoke County, Virginia. It includes various restored local historical structures and both hiking and biking trails, along with access to the Roanoke River for recreational use. The park is located near the gorge where the Roanoke River leaves the Roanoke Valley.

Explore Park was founded in 1985 by the River Foundation to develop a tourist attraction to draw visitors driving on the Blue Ridge Parkway to the Roanoke area. Early ideas included an expanded Mill Mountain Zoo and a historical theme park that would educate visitors on the journey of Lewis and Clark through the American frontier. Roanoke's then city manager Bern Ewart left his post to oversee the park's development. A lack of investment funds led the park to become a more modest living history museum focused on the early history of Southwest Virginia. Today's Explore Park began to emerge in late 1991 when reconstruction began on the 1837 Hofauger House of Roanoke County. Between 1991 and 2002 various other historical structures including a working tavern and grist mill were added to the property.

In 2001, Roanoke County made a long term financial commitment to the park when Virginia reduced the park's annual appropriation. Early in 2005, the Virginia Recreational Facilities Authority (VRFA), the state appointed board that owns Explore Park, signed a 50 year lease with Larry Vander Maten, a Florida based entrepreneur, to develop Explore Park into a viable business. Vander Maten has not completed development plans as of 2009.

5.1.4 The Vinton Dogwood Festival

The Vinton Dogwood Festival, which originated in the late 1950's, provides an opportunity for Town residents to show off their community to people throughout the region who visit the Town during the Wednesday through Saturday celebration. The festival is an annual event held each April when the dogwood blossoms are blooming. The festival includes a carnival, a parade that draws approximately 35,000 people each year, bands, the

crowning of a Vinton Dogwood Queen, contests, crafts and food vendors.



Image 5.1.4 Since the late 1950's, the Dogwood Festival has been an annual event in Downtown Vinton.

The festival originated through the Vinton Band Boosters who sold small dogwood trees to raise money for new uniforms for the William Byrd High School band. The dogwood sale turned into a community project that culminated into a festival in 1956, laying the groundwork for establishing Vinton as the “The Dogwood Capitol of Virginia”. The following year, the Vinton Town Council passed a resolution to make the Dogwood Festival an annual event.

5.2 ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

5.2.1 Watercourses and Floodways

The study area is bordered on the south by the Roanoke River and on the west by Tinker Creek. Wolf Creek cuts through the eastern portion of the study area and Glade Creek cuts through the northeastern portion. There are no major rivers or streams flowing across any of the major corridors or through the Vinton downtown area of the study. An elevation map featuring watercourses and floodways is located in Appendix A.

5.2.2 Topography

The Vinton community is located in a relatively flat portion of Roanoke County surrounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains. The topography is that of a valley

with a few rolling hills of smaller slope. Few areas exhibit a slope above 33 percent; however, within those areas all development is subject to applicable County ordinances addressing erosion and sediment control and steep slopes.

The areas designated as steep slopes present greater challenges for developers to overcome regarding land stabilization, access, retaining walls, fill additions and deletions and creating a favorable overall appearance of the development. A map of the topography in Vinton and East Roanoke County is provided in Appendix A.



Image 5.2.1 Glade Creek

5.2.3 Soils

The greatest concentration of soils in the study area are classified as *Urban Land Complex* and *Urban Land*, which cover all of the major corridors as well as the entire downtown area. These classifications are noted as having a combination of native and fill soils, and are variable with regards to depth, drainage and permeability. These areas have generally been cleared of trees and have been more intensely developed than other parts of the Study Area. Due to the mixture of both native and fill soils, development of these areas is listed as *variable* by the USDA for the construction of structures and roadways.

A second significant concentration of *Sandy Loam* soil is located in the area of Bypass Road. This classification is also variable with regards to depth, drainage and permeability. These areas have generally been cleared and developed. Any

development of these areas is listed as *moderate* to *severe* by the USDA for the development of structures and roadways due to both the depths to rocks below in addition to the soil classes being variable to shrinking and swelling during periods of drought and flood.

Karst topography creates landscapes through the breaking down of one or more layers of soluble bedrock, such as limestone or dolomite. Areas of karst can be identified by the formation of sinkholes and caves or a relative absence of surface water. Due to both the hazards and limitations presented by karst landscapes, development in these areas should be limited in scope. There are no known areas of karst within the study area corridors or downtown. A map of the soils in the Vinton area is provided in Appendix A.

5.3 HISTORICAL RESOURCES

5.3.1 Area History

Vinton's history began long before the Town was chartered in 1884. The Town can trace its heritage back to the mid-1700's when the area was first settled and even further back in time when the area was part of an Indian trail which led to the Carolinas. Settlers began moving into the Roanoke Valley during the mid-1700's to take advantage of the fertile land and abundant water supply.

Some of the early settlers in the Vinton area were Jacob Vinyard, John McAdoo, Christian Gish and his brother David Gish. The Gish brothers established a grist mill on Glade Creek in 1797. This led to the first unofficial name for the Vinton area- Gish's Mill.

As the railroad expanded into the Roanoke Valley, Gish's Mill became a flag stop for the Atlantic, Mississippi, & Ohio Railroad. Initially, Gish's Depot was nothing more than a small box car, but after the Civil War the railroad company constructed a more substantial depot building. During the early post-Civil War period, only a few families lived in the general area. One of the prominent families in Gish's Mill was the Vinyard's. The Vinyard family owned much of the land located within the current boundaries of the Town of Vinton. Over the years,

other families settled around Gish's Depot. Some of the early families settling in this area were the Joneses, Funks, Pollards, Pedigos, Walkers, McLeans, and Basses.



Image 5.3.1 The heritage of the Town of Vinton is deeply rooted in the railroad expansion, as shown in this photograph of the Mill and Garthright Bridge. Source: The Vinton Museum

In the late 1870's and early 1880's, the Gish Family led a movement to establish a town at the depot site. During this period, the boundaries for the Town were delineated, individual building lots were platted and sold, and a school house was constructed. In 1882, development occurring in the newly chartered City of Roanoke began causing an influx of people into the Gish's Mill area. A mass meeting was held in the early months of 1883 to consider the question of incorporation. Incorporation was supported at the meeting, and several suggestions for the name of the town were proposed. The group settled on the Town of Vinton. There are two possible explanations as to the origin of this name. The first explanation is that Vinton is a combination of the names of two prominent families in the area, the Vinyards and the Prestons. The second explanation indicates that Vinton was an old Indian name suggested by B.A. Jones, one of the community leaders.

In 1838, Roanoke County was formed and Gish's Mill became a part of the County. The Town of Vinton was incorporated by the Virginia General Assembly on March 17, 1884, with a population of 584 people and a land area of 1.5 square miles. Following incorporation, the Town of Vinton

experienced continued development. Much of the development in the Town resulted from the spin-off of economic growth occurring in the City of Roanoke. The economic and social linkages formed between the City of Roanoke and Vinton in the late 1800's have continued through to the present.

During the late 1880's, a number of land companies were formed including the Pedigo Addition, Vinton Land, Loan and Building Company, Aetna Land Company, Glade Land Company, and Midway Land Company. Much of the existing farm land was made available for development during this period of time due to land speculation. Fortunes were made and lost in the course of a few months. After a number of "boom" years, the intense speculation subsided. Land and housing costs were greatly reduced. Many of the families who purchased the low-cost properties were employees of the Norfolk & Western Railway Company. It was at this time the Town of Vinton became known as the "working man's town".

As the population expanded, a demand for new services was evidenced. The first weekly newspaper, the *Vinton Dispatch*, was established in 1889. Religious denominations grew as the population increased. Initially, the Methodists were the only denomination having a place of worship; however, over the years Lutherans, Baptists, Presbyterians, and other denominations also constructed churches.

Vinton's business and industrial character has changed slowly since



Image 5.3.2 In March 2009, staff from the Town of Vinton dressed in period costume for the 125th Anniversary celebration.

the turn of the century. For the most part, Vinton residents have relied fairly heavily on the availability of employment in Roanoke; however, several large businesses have been established in and near the Town, and these industries have been positive factors in Vinton's history by supporting the Town's economic base. In 1917, the American Viscose Plant opened near Vinton, providing many job opportunities for residents. Unfortunately, the Viscose Plant closed in the 1950's.

Burlington Mills, now known as Precision Fabrics Group Inc., was established in the Town in 1937. Gish's Mill, the "original" industry in Vinton, was refurbished many times over the years and in 1946 changed its name to Vinton Milling Company. The Vinton Fuel Company was another early industry in Vinton. Southern States Cooperative established their Mill in Vinton in 1935.

Several new commercial enterprises have located in Vinton within the last few decades. Much of this new commercial growth has been centered along Hardy Road. In 1985, Town officials used state, local, and private funds to establish the 30-acre Vinton Industrial Park in south Vinton, which has further expanded the economic tax base.

5.3.2 Historic Structures

The National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the official list of the Nation's historic places. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 authorized this register as part of a national program designed to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect historic and archeological resources. There are no historic places in the Town of Vinton or East Roanoke County listed on the National Register.

In addition to the National Register, the State of Virginia has an official list of places important to Virginia's history. The Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR), also established in 1966, is managed by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR). The same criteria are used to evaluate resources for inclusion in both the national and state registers. As with the National Register, there are no historic

places in the Town of Vinton or East Roanoke County listed on the State Register.

According to Robert H. Logan, II, in his book titled *Historic Sites in Roanoke County, Virginia*, one structure of historical significance is identified in the Vinton area. Built during the late 19th century, this structure is a renovated I-form private residence located on the northside of Mountain View Road (Route 651) near the Blue Ridge Parkway. Located outside of the Vinton study corridors, this structure is identified as a "Grade 5", meaning it is an early I-form that may be in less than ideal condition or may have been significantly altered.

In the early 1990's, DHR conducted architectural surveys for numerous Roanoke County structures. In 1992, Frazier Associates completed the *Historical Architecture Reconnaissance Survey Report* for Roanoke County. Neither of these surveys identified any structures of historical significance in the Vinton area. It is important to note that while these sources are comprehensive in nature, they may not be an accurate reflection of the state of historic structures in the Vinton area. There may be some structures of historical significance that may not have been surveyed, may have been demolished or were perhaps unknown by researchers.

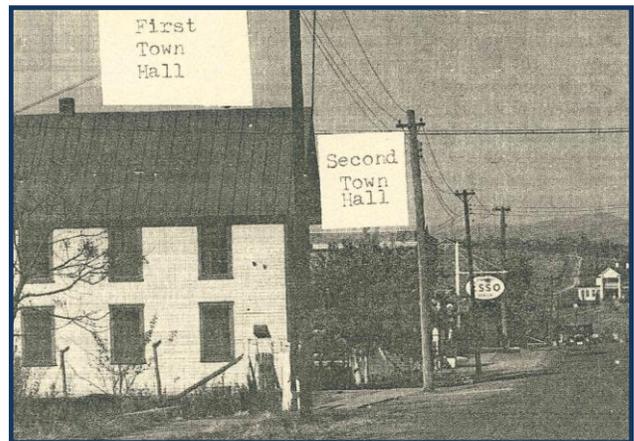


Image 5.3.3 The identification and protection of structures of historical significance is crucial to preserving the character of the Vinton community. Source: The Vinton Museum

According to DHR representatives, an inventory of approximately 70 historical sites in Vinton was reported by Darlene Coulson in the *Reconnaissance Survey of Architectural and Historical Resources in the*

Town of Vinton, 1993. At the time of this document, none of these structures have been formally evaluated by DHR or found eligible for the National or State Registers. Three bridges along Walnut Avenue (Tinker Creek) and Washington Avenue (Wolf Creek) were found ineligible by the Historic Structures Task Group in 1995, and later the Roland E. Cook School was found ineligible in 1999.



Image 5.3.4 This clock has been a streetscape feature in Downtown Vinton for decades. Source: The Vinton Museum

5.3.3 Cemeteries

As documented in the 2000 study *Cultural Expressions of Nature in Sacred Contexts: Documentation of Family & Community Cemeteries in Roanoke County, Virginia* by Thomas S. Klatka, Roanoke Regional Preservation Office, Virginia Department of Historic Resources' (DHR), there are twelve cemeteries located in and around the Vinton Area Corridors Plan study boundaries.

The location of each cemetery identified in the study was recorded on the Roanoke and Stewartsville Geological Survey quadrangle maps generated by the United States Department of the Interior in 1963. There are no cemeteries identified on the Hardy quadrangle map, so documentation for cemeteries in this area of Roanoke County is not provided. The cemeteries are presented in alphabetical order, generally by family surname or earliest recorded interment in the cemetery, with a brief description.

- **Abraham Vinyard** is located south of Virginia Avenue and west of Niagara Road
- **Baker Cemetery** is located east of the Blue Ridge Parkway and west of Chestnut Mountain Drive, likely on National Park Service Property
- **Blue Ridge Baptist Church** is located west of Blue Ridge Parkway and south of Hardy Road
- **Christian Vinyard** is located south of Virginia Avenue, east of Niagara Road south of Lauderdale Avenue
- **Gish-Muse** is located south of Mountain View Road and north of Wolf Creek
- **Gladetown Cemetery** is located south of Virginia Avenue and southeast of South Pollard street, south of Giles Avenue
- **Howell** is located east of the Blue Ridge Parkway and north of Washington Avenue along Mountain View Road (Route 651)
- **Lunsford** is located north of Mountain View Road (Route 651) and northeast of Terry Drive
- **Mason Road Cemetery** is located south of Hardy Road
- **Mountain View Cemetery** is located off of Mountain View Road and north of Ruddell Road
- **Preston Cemetery** is located north of Washington Avenue and east of Mountain View Road in the rear yard of 1008 Jeanette Avenue and is recorded as an unconfirmed cemetery meaning that the remains of the cemetery are unclear
- **Ruddell Cemetery** is located north of Mountain View Cemetery and east of Mountain View Road (Route 651) off of Bali Hai Drive and Olney Drive; possibly vacated so may no longer exist.

CHAPTER 6 – LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

6.1 EXISTING LAND USE

In general, existing land use refers to the description of how land is currently occupied or used. Parcels are tracts of land that may or may not contain structures (such as residential homes or commercial buildings). The Roanoke County Department of Real Estate Valuation is responsible for conducting yearly assessments of over 44,500 parcels in Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton for tax purposes. To analyze the existing land uses along the Vinton study corridors, data was collected from the Roanoke County Real Estate assessments records that were compiled in January 2009. The existing land use analysis breakdown includes only parcels directly fronting on the study corridors.

As shown in Table 6.1, vacant parcels comprised the highest percentage of existing land uses along the study corridors, with over 179 acres. Parcels were determined to be vacant if undeveloped or developed with an unoccupied structure at the time of this study. It is important to note that for purposes of real estate valuation, the parcels in Goode Park are included in the vacant land use category.

Civic, governmental and institutional uses held the second highest percentage of existing land uses along the study corridors. Comprising over 136 acres, this category included uses such as churches, day care centers, schools, fire and rescue stations, and other community facilities.

Commercial uses accounted for over 20% of the existing land uses along the study corridors, ranking this category of uses the third highest with just over 120 acres. This category includes uses such as: automobile sales and services, banks, carwashes, laundromats, convenience stores, mini-warehouses, offices, restaurants and retail establishments. This use category also includes strip malls and shopping centers including Lake Drive Plaza on Hardy Road, East Vinton Plaza on Washington Avenue, and River Park Shopping Center on Bypass Road.

Residential and industrial land uses were the fourth and fifth highest percentage of land uses along the

study corridors at 15% and 11%, respectively. Residential uses, which comprise over 90 acres along the study corridors, include single-family dwellings, patio homes, duplexes, garden apartments and townhouses. Industrial uses, which comprise over 63 acres along the study corridors, include light and heavy manufacturing, warehouses, and other miscellaneous industrial uses. Examples of heavy manufacturing include the PFG manufacturing plant on Virginia Avenue and the Southern States site on Walnut Avenue. The Vinton Business Center on Hardy Road is designed for lighter manufacturing uses.

A map showing the existing land use broken down by parcel along the Vinton study corridors is provided in Appendix A.

Table 6.1 Existing Land Use

Existing Land Use	Acreage	Percentage
Residential	90.56	15.33%
Civic/Government/Institutional	136.51	23.12%
Commercial	120.36	20.38%
Industrial	63.57	10.76%
Vacant	179.61	30.41%
Total	590.61	100.00%

6.2 PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

Of the 554 parcels located along the Vinton study corridors, there are 361 property owners identified per Roanoke County Real Estate records. As shown in Table 6.2, there are 16 property owners who own five acres or more of land along the Vinton study corridors. The top three property holders are the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors, the Roanoke County School Board and the Town of Vinton.

The largest property holder is the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors with 73.44 acres amongst 8 parcels. These parcels include the Vinton Business Center, jointly owned by the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County, and Goode Park. The second largest property holder is the Roanoke County School Board with 71.07 acres amongst 3 parcels. These

Table 6.2 Property Ownership by Total Acreage

Ranking	Owner Name	Common Name/ Current Business/ Location	Total Acreage	Number of Parcels
1	Roanoke County Board of Supervisors	Vinton Business Park, Goode Park, etc.	73.44	8
2	Roanoke County School Board	W E Cundiff Elementary, William Byrd Middle & High	71.07	3
3	Town of Vinton	Vinton War Memorial, Municipal Building, etc.	47.25	26
4	Precision Fabrics Group Inc	PFG/Vinton Weaving Mill	30.80	1
5	Cardinal IG Company	Cardinal Glass	25.25	1
6	McAdams Norman Properties II LLC	River Park Shopping Center	14.94	1
7	Centro NP Lake Drive Plaza LLC	Lake Drive Plaza/Kroger Shopping Center	13.17	2
8	New Testament Baptist Church	New Testament Baptist Church	7.37	1
9	Bush	Corner of Feather Road and Washington Avenue	6.86	2
10	Lakewood Apartments	Blue Ridge Manor Apartments	6.79	1
11	Muse	Hardy Road/ Beechwood Drive	6.07	1
12	Winter Properties Partnership, LLP	Winter's Mini Storage & Washington Court	5.73	2
13	Vinton Investors LLC	AOL Vinton Mini Storage	5.60	1
14	Brabham	Texaco/Alert Driver Training	5.52	4
15	Ashton/Vinton	East Vinton Plaza	5.30	1
16	Lynn Haven Baptist Church Trustees	Lynn Haven Baptist Church	5.05	1

parcels include William Byrd Middle and High Schools and the W.E. Cundiff Elementary School. The third largest property holder is the Town of Vinton with 47.25 acres distributed among 26 parcels. These parcels include the Vinton War Memorial, the Vinton Municipal Building, and several parcels along Glade Creek that were purchased through FEMA.

The fourth largest property holder along the study corridors is Precision Fabrics Group, Incorporated (PFG) with one parcel with a land mass of 30.8 acres. This industrial site is home to PFG, commonly referred to as the Vinton Weaving Mill. The fifth largest property holder is Cardinal IG Company located in the Vinton Business Center. Cardinal Glass is located on a 25.25 acre parcel. It is currently the only business located within the Vinton Business Center.

The sixth and seventh largest property holders along the study corridors are the owners of the parcels within the River Park and Lake Drive Plaza Shopping Centers located within the Town of Vinton. The River Park Shopping Center is owned by McAdams Norman Properties II, LLC. It is located along Bypass Road near the intersection of Bypass Road and Washington Avenue and is comprised of 14.94 acres. The Lake Drive Plaza shopping center is owned by

Centro NP Lake Drive Plaza, LLC. It is located along Hardy Road near the intersection of Bypass Road. It is comprised of 13.17 acres distributed over two parcels. Due to their land masses, frontage on major roadways, and number of entrance points, both of these shopping centers offer prime development and redevelopment opportunities along the study corridors.

For the remaining list of large property holders along the study corridors, refer to Table 6.2.

6.3 FUTURE LAND USE

The Future Land Use designation of a property serves as a policy guide for future land use decisions. Future land use is a tool used by governing bodies, Planning Commissioners and planning staff to identify the most desirable locations in their jurisdiction for specific land uses. The existing land use and zoning of a property are not always balanced with the future land use designation. At times, these factors may be contradictory to one another. Over time, as properties develop and redevelop, these factors should be complementary of each other. Future land use designations are particularly important when parcels are proposed for rezoning from one zoning district to another.



The Future Land Use designation for any property in the Roanoke County or Town of Vinton can be found on the Future Land Use Maps of each jurisdiction, which are components of the Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan and the Town of Vinton Comprehensive Plan. Due to anticipated traffic projections, increasing amounts of vacant buildings, and proposed transportation improvements, the land along the study corridors is ideal for substantial development and redevelopment.

As the Future Land Use exists at the time of this study, over 60% of the land fronting and surrounding the study corridors is identified for commercial development. Similarly, approximately 21% of the land is identified for residential and mixed-use development. Parcels identified for conservation or community facilities comprise over 10% of the land along the study corridors. Over 5%

of the land is identified for industrial development. A map depicting the current Future Land Use conditions along the study corridors can be found in Appendix A.

6.4 ZONING

Each property in Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton has a zoning classification. Each zoning classification determines what land uses are permitted on the property, as well as where a building can be located, how tall the building may be, and how much building or lot coverage is permitted on the property. For more information pertaining to the zoning classifications of parcels along the study corridors, refer to the Zoning District map located in Appendix A.

6.4.1 Roanoke County

The land along the study corridors within Roanoke County is comprised primarily of residential zoning districts. As shown in Table 6.4, over 20% of the frontage parcels are zoned R-1 Low Density Residential, R-2 Medium Density Residential, R-3 Medium Density Multi-Family or R-4 High-Density Multi-Family Residential. Of the residentially zoned properties along the study corridors, the R-1 Low Density Residential district is the most prevalent zoning district comprising approximately 105 acres, 17.77% of the total land along the study corridors.

The PTD Planned Technology Development District is the second largest zoning district along the study corridors, comprising 16.44% of the frontage parcels measuring 97 acres. All of the land zoned PTD along the study corridors is located in the Vinton Business Center off of Hardy Road. The C-2 General Commercial and the C-1 Office Districts contain approximately 50 acres of land, equating to 8.5% of the total land along the study corridors. Agriculturally zoned land comprises a very small portion of land along these major roads in East Roanoke County. The AG-3 Agricultural Rural Preserve District accounts for approximately 3.6 acres or 0.61% of frontage property land along the study corridors.

Table 6.3 Future Land Use

Future Land Use	Jurisdiction	Acreage	Percentage
Core	Roanoke County	47.97	7.46%
Development	Roanoke County	37.75	5.87%
Neighborhood Conservation	Roanoke County	61.87	9.62%
Transition	Roanoke County	164.86	25.63%
Community Facilities	Town of Vinton	32.07	4.99%
Conservation/ Open Space	Town of Vinton	19.77	3.07%
General Commercial	Town of Vinton	43.43	6.75%
High-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	10.77	1.67%
Heavy Industrial	Town of Vinton	35.65	5.54%
Low-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	10.84	1.69%
Medium-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	14.64	2.28%
Park and Recreation	Town of Vinton	15.25	2.37%
Residential Business	Town of Vinton	62.28	9.68%
Retail Service Commercial	Town of Vinton	85.99	13.37%
Total		643.14*	100.00%

*Total Acreage includes parcels located outside the boundaries of the Vinton Area Corridors Plan.

6.4.2 Town of Vinton

Within the Town of Vinton, the land along the study corridors is primarily zoned GB General Business measuring over 112 acres (19.10%). The second largest zoning category is the RB Residential Business District comprising over 95 acres (16.14%). The M-1 Limited Industrial and M-2 General Industrial Districts, account for over 41 acres along the study corridors (7.04%). Areas of industrially zoned land include Southern States, PFG, and businesses located north of Walnut Avenue along the railroad tracks.

The R-1 Low Density Zoning District comprises

over 27 acres (4.66%) of land along the study corridors. Several large parcels located south of Washington Avenue near the Roanoke County line are zoned R-1, including Lynn Haven Baptist Church. The R-2 Medium Density Residential and R-3 High Density Residential Zoning Districts account for over 3% of the land along the study corridors for a total of 22.81 acres.

The remaining land along the study corridors within the Town of Vinton is designated CB Central Business which accounts for 14.32 acres (2.42%) and PO Public/Open Space comprising over 6 acres (1.03%).

Zoning	Jurisdiction	Acreage	Percentage
AG3 - Agricultural Rural Preserve	Roanoke County	3.60	0.61%
C1 - Office	Roanoke County	4.88	0.83%
C2 - General Commercial	Roanoke County	45.28	7.67%
PTD - Planned Technology Development	Roanoke County	97.12	16.44%
R1 - Low-Density Residential	Roanoke County	104.98	17.77%
R2 - Medium-Density Residential	Roanoke County	0.17	0.03%
R3 - Medium Density Multi-Family Residential	Roanoke County	7.34	1.24%
R4 - High-Density Multi-Family Residential	Roanoke County	6.79	1.15%
CB - Central Business	Town of Vinton	14.32	2.42%
GB - General Business	Town of Vinton	112.79	19.10%
M1 - Limited Industrial	Town of Vinton	8.58	1.45%
M2 - General Industrial	Town of Vinton	33.00	5.59%
PO - Public/Open Space	Town of Vinton	6.09	1.03%
R1 - Low-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	27.53	4.66%
R2 - Medium Density Residential	Town of Vinton	20.82	3.53%
R3 - High Density Residential	Town of Vinton	1.99	0.34%
RB - Residential Business	Town of Vinton	95.34	16.14%
Total		590.61	100.00%



Image 6.4.2 The PFG plant is located on Virginia Avenue near the limits of Roanoke City.

6.5 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

According the Town of Vinton’s 2004 Comprehensive Plan, approximately 85% of the land within the Town is developed and the Town lacks suitable vacant land for new growth and expansion. As with many small towns, Vinton has faced challenges in retaining businesses, leaving vacant buildings throughout the study corridors. As Vinton continues to redevelop and infill opportunities become scarce, it is likely that land along Hardy Road and Washington Avenue in Roanoke County will experience increasing development pressures. There are vacant tracts of land along these corridors that are suitable for development. As these parcels begin to be developed, appropriate land uses and

potential transportation impacts need to be carefully evaluated.

6.5.1 Gainsharing Agreement

On March 2, 1999, the Town of Vinton and the County of Roanoke entered into a Gainsharing Agreement. The purpose of the agreement was to provide for the sharing of certain local tax revenues and the costs of certain public services. A map depicting the boundaries of the Gainsharing Agreement can be found in Appendix A. One of the shared costs included an agreement to jointly fund the development costs of the Vinton Business Center, formerly known as the McDonald Farm (see Section 6.5.3).

On November 6, 2001, the agreement of valuation of the McDonald Farm was made by the Town and the County. Also, the County appropriated funds for some development costs, and both parties agreed that there would be pre-agreement between the Town and the County prior to additional construction, or provisions for prospect incentives. Additionally it was agreed that tax revenues would be shared equally by the Town and the County based on development contributions of each area.

The most recent Vinton Business Center Gainsharing Agreement between the Town and the County was entered into on August 15, 2006. This agreement consisted of mutual promises agreed upon by the Town and the County including but not limited to a specified sum of monies, equal investments in the Vinton Business Center from both parties, and conveyance of one-half undivided interest in the remaining real estate (66.74 acres).

Per the Gainsharing Agreement documents, Vinton Business Center site development would be phased and generated tax revenues and agreed-upon capital improvements would be equally shared by both the Town and the County.

Phase I development included the construction of berms, trails, and a stormwater detention pond. Phase II development included the grading of the site for the Cardinal Glass development. Finally, the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County jointly became the Park Association, which included Roanoke

County reimbursement to the Town of Vinton for half of the park maintenance expenses.

6.5.2 Economic Opportunity Areas

In accordance with the 2005 Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan, three Economic Opportunity Areas are identified in Eastern Roanoke County along the Vinton study corridors (refer to Appendix A). One area is the Vinton Business Center located on Hardy Road. At the time of this document, Cardinal Glass is the only business located within this park. The remaining three parcels in the Vinton Business Center are vacant.

The second area is located along Washington Avenue between Goode Park, Feather Road and Maplewood Drive. At the time of this document, existing businesses and developments within this area include, but are not limited to: Blue Ridge Manor Apartments (1973), East Vinton Plaza (1983, renovated 2007), Parkridge Business Center (1960), Winter Properties Partnership (2008), Winter’s Mini Storage (1987, expanded 2003), AOL Vinton Mini Storage (2006), and the Vinton Moose Lodge (1965).

The third area is located on the southwest corner of Feather Road and Washington Avenue. This area includes one parcel of land on which a convenience store and fast food restaurant have been established. On November 22, 1994, the property was rezoned by the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors from R-1, Low Density Residential to C-2, General Commercial. According to Roanoke County Real Estate records, the convenience store was constructed in 1997.

6.5.3 Vinton Business Center

On October 26, 1999, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors rezoned a 99.38 acre tract of real estate, otherwise known as the McDonald Farm, for a mixed use development, hereinafter referred to as the “park”. The parcel is located in east Roanoke County along Hardy Road, adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway. The mixed-use park was a cooperative venture between the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County. The land was purchased by the Town of Vinton in 1985. The costs of this

development, as well as current and future tax revenues generated by the development are shared between the two localities in accordance with the Gainsharing Agreement.

A rezoning changed the parcel’s zoning classification from R-1, Low Density Residential District, to the zoning classification of PTD, Planned Technology Development District. The conditions of the rezoning included a 10 page document entitled “Protective Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions for the McDonald Farm”, four proffers, and a conceptual master plan designed by Mattern & Craig, Inc., dated October 26, 1999. The proffers, restrictions, and master plan specify details regarding the development of the park such as exterior building standards, permitted and prohibited land uses, landscaping, stormwater management, signage, outside storage, construction timeframes, and site maintenance. A map of the master plan can be found in Appendix A.

Currently, the Cardinal Glass Company is the only business located at the Vinton Business Center. The site is located approximately five miles from the nearest interstate interchange (I-581) and includes several additional buildable sites, public streets, stormwater management facilities, and a proposed trail system designed for public use. The Center’s entrance road is completed and is owned and maintained by VDOT.

The trail system at the Vinton Business Center is intended to be developed in conjunction with the development of sites at the Center. The ownership and maintenance responsibilities may be conveyed to a public or private entity in the future. The Town of Vinton has applied for grant assistance for construction of the proposed two mile trail system in the Vinton Business Center. However, at the time this document was written, no grants had been obtained, and the trails had not been constructed.

In order to improve visibility of the Vinton Business Center, staffs from Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton have been working with sign companies to design a freestanding monument sign that will be erected at the entrance along Hardy Road. For a

conceptual rendering of the proposed monument sign, please refer to Appendix B.



Image 6.5.3 The Cardinal Glass Company was the first tenant in the Vinton Business Center.

6.5.4 Virginia Main Street Program

In 2000, the Town of Vinton became a Virginia Main Street Program Affiliate Community. As an affiliate member, the Town’s mission is to support the Vinton business community and to strive to produce the desired economic, housing and public service funding necessary to revitalize Downtown Vinton and the surrounding community.

The Virginia Main Street Program is designed to address the need for revitalization of smaller to mid-sized downtowns. There are certain criteria that communities must meet to obtain the full Virginia Main Street designation. The two eligibility criteria are to:

- Have a population of no more than 75,000 based on the 2000 census (cities and towns only), and
- Have at least 50 commercial enterprises and 70 commercial structures in the proposed Main Street district.

For communities like Vinton who are just getting started in downtown revitalization, or perhaps communities that do not want full Main Street designation, the Affiliate Program is an alternative solution. The Virginia Main Street Program also serves as a clearinghouse for information regarding

the latest tools and techniques in downtown development.

6.5.5 Downtown Revitalization

Downtown Vinton is an area consisting of approximately 10 blocks that is bordered to the west by the railroad and Glade Creek, to the north by Washington Avenue, to the east by Jefferson Park, and to the south by Virginia Avenue. Three of the study corridors included in this plan serve as major access roads to Downtown Vinton: South Pollard Street, Walnut Avenue and Washington Avenue.



Image 6.5.5 In June 2009, a public meeting was hosted by the Town of Vinton and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development for Downtown Revitalization.

Concurrently with this study, the Town of Vinton applied for and successfully obtained a Virginia Community Development and Housing Planning Grant specifically for the Business District Revitalization (BDR) efforts in the Central Business District (CBD). The Planning Grant is a pre-qualifier for a larger Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) construction grant. CDBG is a federally-funded grant administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Since 1982, the DHCD has been providing the CDBG to eligible communities for projects that address critical community needs including housing infrastructure, and economic development. The grant funds will be used to develop a Downtown Economic Restructuring/Marketing Plan and a Downtown Physical Improvement Plan for its BDR project.

The three national objectives for CDBG monies are to fund:

- Activities benefiting low- and moderate-income families;
- Activities which aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight; and
- Activities designed to meet community needs having a particular urgency because existing conditions pose a serious and immediate threat to the community.

Generally, projects must address one of the three national objectives as detailed above. Projects which do not meet at least one of the three national objectives are typically not considered for funding.

The Town anticipates it will take approximately two years to complete the preliminary work before the submittal of the actual construction project grant application. A map showing the boundaries of the work for the first part of the revitalization grant is included in Appendix A.

Since receiving the grant the Town and DHCD staff had several conversations with the appointed citizen management team and the revitalization project has grown from the original designated area to encompass more than just the immediate Downtown Vinton. The Town feels downtown revitalization is needed due to the increased number of vacant and underutilized buildings, dated storefronts, competition from nearby downtown City of Roanoke and suburban shopping centers, as well as a decline in sales in the CBD. Additionally, downtown revitalization was previously identified as “one of the five critical elements Town leaders and citizens must address to ensure the very vitality and image of the community” during the Town’s 2004-2024 Comprehensive Plan revision and adoption process.

6.5.6 Commercial Corridor Matching Grant Program

The County of Roanoke has a Commercial Matching Grant Program that encourages owners and tenants of business properties to make improvements above and beyond current building and zoning

requirements. The purpose of these improvements is to enhance beautification and economic redevelopment along particular highway corridors in Roanoke County. Potential improvements include, but are not limited to façade renovations, landscaping, lighting, parking and signage.

The program is administered through the Roanoke County Economic Development Authority (EDA). The program provides 50% matching grant funds with a \$15,000 matching cap through the EDA, as well as an available \$5,000 increase (\$20,000 total) approved through the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors. Eligible properties are located in the following areas: Hollins/Williamson Road corridor, 11/460 West Corridor and Downtown Vinton (see Section 6.5.7 Downtown Façade Grant Program).

6.5.7 Downtown Façade Grant Program

The Town of Vinton has a Downtown Façade Grant Program that provides financial assistance to small businesses within the Downtown area that wish to improve their property. The grants available under this program range from \$500 to \$5,000. The program provides for a 50% reimbursement of qualified expenses, which include building façade and other general property improvements undertaken in accordance with the established design guidelines.

Improvement guidelines are for exterior improvements only and address architecture, signage, landscaping, walls, lighting, veneers, and awnings. Grant assistance for improvements to the building exterior sides or rear is subject to review by the Advisory Committee. As with the Commercial Corridor Matching Grant Program, the Downtown Façade Grant Program is administered by the Roanoke County EDA.

Eligible properties are located in the Downtown Vinton area bordered by Washington Avenue, Maple Street, East/West Jackson Avenue, and Walnut Avenue. This area includes properties on both sides of the streets, including East and West Lee Avenues and South Pollard Street.

Currently, eight downtown buildings have been updated using the Downtown Façade Program. The buildings are:

1. Allstate Insurance, 119 West Lee Avenue
2. Former SOS Building, 121 West Lee Avenue
3. Lori's, 203 South Maple Street
4. Dogwood Restaurant/Vacant DeLong's, 106 and 108 East Lee Avenue
5. Jan's Fabulous Finds (Vacant), 118 East Lee Avenue
6. The Barbeque Grill, 126 East Lee Avenue
7. Citizens Upholstery, 125 East Lee Avenue
8. Vinton Appliance Center, 100 East Lee Avenue

6.5.8 Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce

The Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce consists of a president, a first and second vice-president, and a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is a group of 16 members from various occupations and positions in the Vinton community. The Chamber sponsors various events including *Business After Hours*, membership luncheons, wine tastings, silent auctions, golf tournaments, festivals and parades.

Partnership links include the Town of Vinton, the Vinton Museum and Historical Society, Vinton First Aid, Vinton and Roanoke County Parks and Recreation, Vinton Messenger, Vinton Voice, Vinton Dogwood Festival, Inc., Botetourt County Chamber of Commerce, National Park Service – Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The Chamber publishes *The Vinton Image*, a magazine that highlights the Town of Vinton and the surrounding area, as well as a monthly Vinton Area Chamber Newsletter. The Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce has a growing membership and always welcomes new members.

6.6 UPCOMING DEVELOPMENT

Due to the nature of the economy in the months prior to and during this study, development in the corridor area was sparse. From January 2005 to December 2008, there were six review submissions for subdivisions and 21 site plan submissions on the corridor parcels that fronted on the corridor roads. However, there were submissions for review in the areas adjoining the corridor areas and those development projects are currently in various stages of completion.

Of the study corridor area site plan reviews, 13 were in the Town of Vinton and eight in the Roanoke County/Town of Vinton area. There were two additional site plan submissions for review in the areas adjoining the corridor. Those consisted of reviews for church additions and alterations, school recreation area renovations, fast food restaurant renovations and remodeling, grocery store renovations and remodeling, and a development for low-income elderly housing.

The six subdivision plan submissions included two developments in the Town of Vinton and four in the Roanoke County/Town of Vinton areas. These residential development plans consisted of reviews for phased subdivisions and one townhouse development.

6.7 VACANT PARCELS

As of the beginning of 2009, there were 133 vacant parcels totaling over 229 acres located along the study corridors. Ninety-four parcels were unimproved or empty lots, 26 parcels were improved with vacant buildings, and 13 were semi-improved with parking

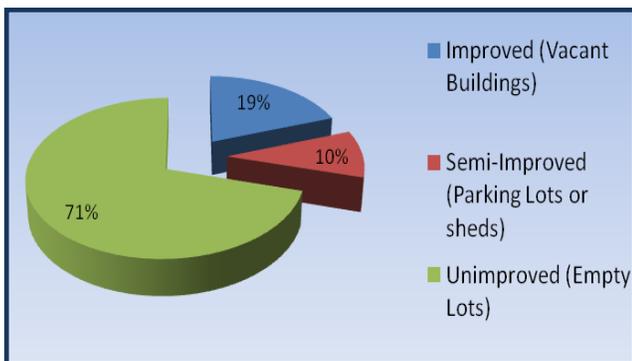


Image 6.7.1 Vacant Parcel Breakdown

lots or a shed located on the parcel.

There were six parcels greater than 10 acres including four in the Vinton Business Center, one on Hardy Road and one on Highland Road known as the old William Byrd High School. Of the six largest parcels, four are located in the County and two in the Town for a total of 93.12 acres.

There were three parcels between five and ten acres including one on each of Washington and Walnut Avenues and one on Hardy Road in the Vinton Business Center. Of these three parcels, two are located in the county and one in the Town for a total of 93.12 acres.

There were 81 parcels between one and five acres. Of these 81 parcels, 14 were located in the County and 67 in the Town for a total of over 98 acres.

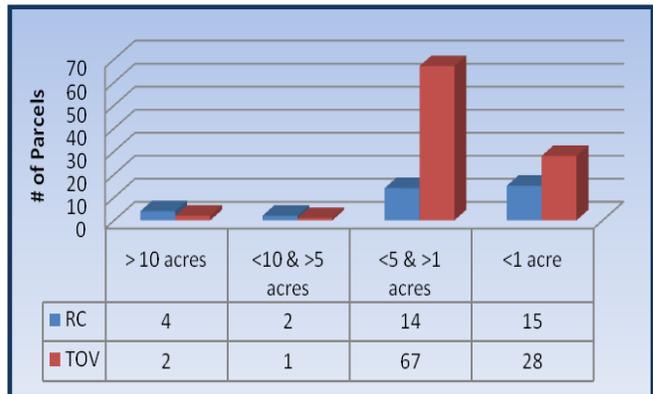


Image 6.7.2 Vacant Parcel Size Breakdown by Municipality

There were 43 parcels with less than one acre. Of these 43 parcels, 15 were located in the County and 28 in the Town totaling over 17 acres. For a map of the vacant parcels along the study corridors parcels, refer to Appendix A.

6.8 DEVELOPMENT & REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Town of Vinton’s 2004 Economic and Community Development Plan identifies the River Park Shopping Center as a prime location for redevelopment. This site is ideally located between three major arterials serving the Town of Vinton and

East Roanoke County – Washington Avenue, Bypass Road and Hardy Road. The shopping center has access points on Washington Avenue and Bypass Road and shares cross-access entrances with an adjacent financial institution. During this study, a gas station was constructed in the parking lot of the River Park Shopping Center. The size of the River Park Shopping Center parcel, numerous vacant parcels located adjacent to the shopping center and direct access to major arterials roads suggest that this site is ideal for supporting a planned commercial development.

The corridors in Downtown Vinton offer several sites with development and redevelopment potential. These opportunities include, but are not limited to the following locations:

- Vinton Ford Motors Company Properties,
- Cundiff Pharmacy building,
- Antique store,
- Rear portion of the former SOS Building,
- Property on South Pollard Street beside Campbell's Barber shop, and
- Numerous commercially zoned houses that are vacant or being used for residential purposes

For examples of development and redevelopment opportunities in Downtown Vinton, refer to Map 27 in Appendix B.

On the Washington Avenue corridor there are numerous sites available for potential redevelopment. These sites include:

- Old William Byrd High School,
- Former Vinton Ford Motors,
- Strip mall including Valley Hall,
- Vacant gas station on Washington Avenue, and
- Roanoke Antique Vehicle site.

The Hardy Road corridor contains many sites with development and redevelopment potential, including:

- The former Tire for Less site,
- The former Rite Aide building,
- The undeveloped parcel adjacent to the former Rite Aide building,
- Several undeveloped parcels in the 1200 and 1300 blocks of Hardy Road, and
- Several undeveloped sites in the Vinton Business Center.



Image 6.8.1 Vacant Parcel in Downtown Vinton

CHAPTER 7 – COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

7.1 COMMUNITY SURVEY

7.1.1 Survey Methodology

Staff from the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County Planning Departments conducted a community survey of property owners and residents along the study corridors. The target population for the community survey was property owners and residents in the Vinton community, as well as commuters traveling along the study corridors. For this reason, the survey was open and unrestricted to respondents.

Over 650 property owners and residents of parcels fronting the study corridors were informed of the community survey through the first community meeting invitation mailed in early January 2009. Over 250 surveys were distributed throughout the Vinton community at venues such as the Vinton Municipal Building, the Vinton Library, local restaurants, recreational facilities, banks and laundromats. Additional public outreach efforts included advertising the community survey through a Roanoke County news release, a message on Roanoke Valley Television (RVT Channel 3) and a blog on *Twitter*.

Taking advantage of the cost saving techniques available with the Internet, planning staff from Vinton and Roanoke County encouraged the public to complete the survey online. For citizens preferring to submit paper surveys, hard copies of the four-page survey (found in Appendix B) were made available at the January community meeting, at the Vinton and Roanoke County planning departments, the Vinton Library, and various businesses in the Vinton area. Staff also provided citizens with the opportunity to request the survey by U.S. mail. Among the benefits of this mixed-mode strategy of survey distribution, were providing survey respondents with alternative survey modes, the time and cost savings associated with eliminating the printing and mailing of surveys, as well as the time and cost savings of having returned survey data already in an electronic format.

The survey consisted of multiple choice, short-answer and open-ended questions. The questions

addressed topics such as demographics, community likes and dislikes, bicycle and pedestrian amenities, streetscape features, transportation issues, resource preservation, community facilities and future development along the study corridors. The following is an analysis of the survey responses, which were collected through February 28, 2009.

Of the 652 surveys mailed, 130 were returned, yielding a 20% response rate. Of the surveys received, 112 were submitted online (86%) and 18 were received by mail (14%). An additional 250 surveys were distributed throughout the Vinton community, which drops the response rate to 14%. As the survey was open to the public at large, an accurate response rate is of little predictive value.

Please refer to Appendix B for illustrative graphs depicting the survey results.

7.1.2 Getting to Know You

Five demographics questions, intended to understand the composition of the population responding to the survey, were included in the survey. The first five questions related to gender, age, relationship to study corridors, length of time living or working along study corridors and the frequency in which the respondents traveled the study corridors. All survey responses were anonymous unless the respondent chose to disclose information pertaining to their identity.

7.1.2.1 Gender

The survey results demonstrate that there was a slight variation among male and female respondents. More than half of the respondents were males (53%). Females represented forty-four (44%) percent of respondents. The remaining three (3%) percent of respondents chose not to answer the question or reveal their gender.

7.1.2.2 Age

The age of respondents varied considerably in the survey results. Forty-two percent (42%) of respondents were between the ages of 35-49. Twenty-six percent (26%) of respondents were between the ages of 50-64. Twelve percent (12%) of the respondents fell within the 65 and older

category, and ten percent (10%) of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 34. The respondents in the “no response” and “18-24” categories were evenly distributed with each category receiving five percent (5%) of survey respondents. No surveys were returned for respondents under the age of 18.

7.1.2.3 Connection to Study Corridors

Almost two-thirds (64%) of survey respondents indicated that they lived and/or worked along the study corridors. The second highest category of responses was respondents who primarily drive along the study corridors (commuters) to reach a destination at 30%. Staff assumed that respondents who live and/or work along the study corridors frequently drive the study corridors; therefore, those who drive along the study corridors are categorized as commuters. Five (5%) percent of respondents answered the “neither” category, indicating that they are possibly bicyclists or pedestrians who utilize the greenways intersecting the study corridors for recreational purposes. The remaining respondents (1%) chose not to answer the question.

7.1.2.4 Living and Working along the Study Corridors

When asked how long respondents had lived and/or worked along the study corridors, over one-third (36%) of respondents indicated more than 20 years. The second highest response category was between 11-20 years with twenty-seven percent (27%) of the responses. Eighteen percent (18%) of respondents reported living and/or working along the study corridors between 5-10 years and fourteen percent (14%) reported less than 5 years. The remaining five percent (5%) did not provide a response. This question was useful in identifying issues shared by respondents who had lived and/or worked in Vinton for many years, as well as those new to the community.

7.1.2.5 Traveling the Study Corridors

Over two-thirds (67%) of survey respondents indicated that they travel the study corridors on a daily basis. The remaining respondents travel the study corridors in varying intervals. Eleven percent (11%) of respondents indicated traveling the study corridors at a frequency of two to three times per week, while eight percent (8%) of respondents travel the corridors once a week. Ten percent (10%) of the respondents indicate traveling the study corridors on a monthly basis. Less than three percent (3%) of the respondents travel the study corridors on a yearly basis.

7.1.3 Transportation

7.1.3.1 Modes of Transportation

In order to gauge the primary modes of transportation utilized along the study corridors, respondents were asked to identify the means in which they reach their destinations. Overwhelmingly, respondents answered that the automobile was their primary source of transportation. The use of bicycles ranked second, followed by pedestrians who walk to some of their destinations. Very few respondents indicated using the Valley Metro bus routes or an alternative mode of transportation not provided as an answer choice. No respondents indicated use of RADAR or a taxi service.

7.1.3.2 Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

In anticipating that automobiles would be a high ranking answer on the modes of transportation utilized along the study corridors, staff asked if respondents would consider bicycling or walking to their destinations more often if bicycle and pedestrian improvements were made along the study corridors. Over half (54%) of respondents indicated that they would walk or bike more often if improvements were made along the study corridors. Less than one-third (28%) of respondents answered “no”, improvements would not encourage them to consider bicycling or walking more often. Eighteen percent (18%) of respondents chose not to provide a response.

7.1.3.3 Safety Improvements and Streetscape Features

To capture respondents’ opinions on where specific safety improvements are needed along the study corridors, staff formulated a question with a matrix of safety improvements and streetscape features that could be designated by study corridor. Bicycle lanes, crosswalks and sidewalks received the highest number of responses. The study corridors receiving the most responses for these three streetscape features were Washington Avenue, Hardy Road and Walnut Avenue, followed closely by Virginia Avenue and Bypass Road.

The highest ranking safety improvements were turning lanes, access points and medians. Washington Avenue, Hardy Road and Virginia Avenue received the highest number of responses for safety improvements needed along the study corridors. A breakdown of responses by study corridor can be found in Appendix B.

7.1.3.4 Traffic Inconveniences

The final question asked about transportation related issues related to inconveniences encountered by respondents while traveling along the study corridors. As with the previous question, a matrix of answer choices was provided allowing the respondent to designate a corresponding study corridor. The answer choices included congestion, delays, excessive speed, heavy truck traffic and signal coordination or timing. The results indicated that the highest ranking inconvenience encountered by the respondents is congestion along the study corridors, particularly South Pollard Street and Washington Avenue. Delays and signal coordination and timing were the second and third ranking category, followed by excessive speed and heavy truck traffic.

7.1.4 Land Use and Development

7.1.4.1 Businesses and Services

The survey provided respondents with an opportunity to identify businesses and services they would like to see along the study corridors.

Respondents were asked to select as many businesses and services as they preferred. Staff provided 16 multiple choice answers, along with an “other” category. The results are shown below in Figure 7.1.4.1. An overwhelming amount of respondents indicated their desire for sit-down family restaurants. The second highest ranking category was retail establishments, followed closely by big box stores. Professional and medical offices rounded out the top five responses.

7.1.4.2 Streetscape Amenities

The survey also provided respondents with an opportunity to comment on streetscape amenities they would like to see added to the study corridors. Similar to the transportation related questions, this question was formatted as a matrix with multiple choices answers that correspond to specific corridors. The top five responses included:

1. Underground utilities
2. Street Trees
3. Sidewalks
4. Building Facades
5. Lighting

Bar graphs displaying the desired streetscape amenities by study corridor are provided in Appendix B.

7.1.5 Resource Preservation

7.1.5.1 Community Facilities

The survey offered respondents an opportunity to provide input on improvements needed to community facilities and/or services within the Vinton community. Respondents were given multiple choice answers with the ability to supply open responses. There was also an “other” category. In analyzing the responses, staff noticed that 65 respondents chose to skip this question which could possibly be indicative of satisfaction with community facilities in the Vinton area.

The community facility receiving the highest number of responses was the Vinton Library. In reviewing the open-ended responses, the comments received about the Vinton Library overwhelmingly indicate

that residents feel the library needs to be renovated, expanded or relocated. The residents want the library to remain in Vinton, but feel it is crowded and outdated. A few residents mentioned moving the library to Downtown Vinton.

In regards to customer service at the library, residents were pleased with the "great staff" and "outstanding job" performance. Other suggestions included adding a drop-off box, adding more computers, updating technology, additional parking, bicycle racks, and the need for more community meeting space. A few comments were received about aesthetically sprucing up the building by trimming trees, adding landscaping and taking measures to make the building more noticeable.

The Wolf Creek and Tinker Creek Greenways received many comments regarding the need to connect the two trail systems into the Roanoke River Greenway, as well as adding more benches and trash receptacles along the paths.

The third highest number of responses was received about the William Byrd Middle and High Schools. The majority of the comments indicated that the schools are overcrowded and in need of expansion. At the time of this study, construction commenced on the expansion and renovation of the high school.

Several responses were received about respondents' satisfaction with police, fire and rescue services. Comments were received regarding concerns about the need for opticom lights in all directions on the stop lights to help facilitate the movement of emergency vehicles along the study corridors.

7.1.5.2 Cultural, Environmental or Historical Resources

The final question on the survey asked respondents to comment on the cultural, environmental and historical resources along the study corridors. Numerous comments were received about drainage concerns and trash and debris accumulation along Hardy Road. Many respondents expressed comments about preserving the small town, quaint feeling of the Town of Vinton. Other comments suggested doing more to preserve historic structures

in the Vinton area. For a list of more detailed comments, refer to Appendix B.

7.2 BUSINESS OWNER INTERVIEWS

The business owner/employee surveys that were conducted by staff focused on four main subject areas: Transportation, Streetscape Improvements/Aesthetics, Development, and "Your Community."

A range of responses was based primarily on the location of the business. Most of the businesses located in the main downtown area off of South Pollard Street had feedback, suggestions, and an overall interest in the corridor study. In general, these business owners did not hesitate to be interviewed and most of them were familiar with the plan/had attended the community meeting, and had completed the online survey. However, the businesses in the outlying areas such as the entrance corridor along Hardy Road and the stretch of Walnut Avenue ending at Southern States were not interested in the corridor plan and had little feedback or participation in the interview process. Most of these businesses were not interested in offering suggestions and several refused surveys.

7.2.1 Downtown Business Owner Interviews

For Downtown business owners, the transportation issues focused primarily on the poor flow of traffic through the downtown area, specifically late in the afternoon. Most owners felt that the post office was the main source of traffic problems in this area and that relocating the post office to a larger space with more adequate parking may be a remedy to downtown traffic concerns. Businesses were also concerned with the speed of traffic through the downtown which makes on-street parking dangerous and difficult. It was repeated many times that the parking downtown is inadequate.

In the area of Streetscape Improvements and Aesthetics, most downtown business owners would like to see benches, plants, and façade improvements. However, the interviewees

overwhelmingly stated that aesthetics and streetscape improvements are not primary concerns for them, whereas lack of business and foot traffic are more pressing issues.

In the Development portion of the survey, most business owners would like to see more retail businesses downtown. They would also like to see amenities such as a movie theater and recreation options for the young people in the area. Although it is not in the downtown area, nearly every interview participant said they would like to see a new business in the vacant Rite Aid building. The business owners also said they would like to see more promotion/assistance from the town for small businesses.

The Your Community interview results were mostly positive. Most downtown business owners live in the town and think Vinton is a wonderful community with great potential.

7.2.2 Hardy Road/Bypass Road Business Owner Interviews

For business owners along Hardy and Bypass Road, the transportation issues focused primarily on the amount and flow of traffic on these corridors. The concerns were that the traffic has increased substantially in the last years, with several specific mentions of residents of the Smith Mountain Lake area greatly contributing to the congestion. The flow of traffic is slowed to a crawl in the morning due to the work and school traffic as well as in the evening due to these same commuters returning home from their places of employment.

In addition to these two issues, other concerns included the speed of the traffic travelling down the corridor, the hills in several areas which obscure sight distances, and the timing of traffic lights – all which make entering and exiting the roads treacherous.

In the area of Streetscape Improvements and Aesthetics, the interviewees overwhelmingly mentioned adding crosswalks to several locations in all the corridor study areas. There was a considerable amount of concern for the elderly

population’s pedestrian safety when navigating the corridors.

In regards to the Development segment of the survey, the overwhelming majority of business respondents requested a larger “sit-down” restaurant as a business that would be most needed in the area. There were various opinions as to the actual specifics of the type, as input included additional fast food restaurants, affordable family style restaurants or a larger chain restaurant.

Several respondents mentioned the need for more recreational facilities with programs for children and entertainment facilities for children and families alike. Large retail stores and coffee shops were mentioned as well as a fair amount of input that stated things in the Town and the Vinton area of Roanoke County were just fine as they are now.

In the area of the community as a whole, most respondents commented that they really had no comments for any changes that needed to be made and liked the area as it was. The few that made comments had concerns about the increasing number of vacant buildings in the area and plans for the use of these buildings in the future.

7.2.3 Washington Avenue Business Owner Interviews

Traffic volume during peak hours and the congestion of existing traffic patterns were the highest concerns of business owners along Washington Avenue. Many businesses located within the Town of Vinton commented on the need for turning lanes. They felt, at most, a middle turning lane would reduce the number of accidents on Washington Avenue. In addition, many businesses located near Bypass Road had concerns with the overall traffic configuration. Many comments centered on accessibility to the businesses located near Bypass Road. Businesses located within Roanoke County generally had two major concerns: the closing of the cross-over located near Domino’s Pizza, and the traffic congestion and speeding created from the William Byrd Middle and High Schools. Many business owners and employees would like to see the cross-over near Domino’s Pizza reinstalled.

There were not many Streetscape Improvement comments. Many business owners and employees felt there were more important issues facing the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County but agreed some aesthetic changes would be “nice”. Others felt that sidewalks, improved lighting, and improved signage would be beneficial for safety reasons only.

In regards to the Development portion of the survey, business owners and employees were much more outspoken. “Sit down” and fast food restaurants were the most common response. They would also like to see more activities or businesses geared toward children and young adults in the area. Some businesses commented on the vacant Rite Aid building located on Hardy Road and vacant buildings in general located in the downtown portion of the Town of Vinton. In addition, comments varied from “more professional businesses” to “specialty women clothing stores.” Business owners also commented on types of businesses they felt there were too many of in the Vinton study area.

In the area of Your Community, many business owners commented on better coordination between Town of Vinton Police and Roanoke County Police. Overall, many of the comments were positive; however, some business owners had negative general comments in regards to the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County Community Development Departments as a whole.

7.3 VINTON AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce serves as a liaison between businesses, residents, organizations, and governmental entities in the Vinton area. The Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce was formed to provide a more focused representation of area business interests. Staff made a presentation regarding this plan to the Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce to encourage business owners and residents to attend and provide comments at the community meetings.

The Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce and the Roanoke County Department of Economic

Development assisted in the inventory of vacant and available parcels along the study corridors. For the results of this inventory, refer to Appendix A.

7.4 COMMUNITY MEETINGS

7.4.1 January Community Meeting

The first community meeting was held on Thursday, January 29, 2009 in the North Ballroom of the Vinton War Memorial. Over 650 notices were mailed to property owners, residents and tenants along the study corridors with information regarding the community meeting. For the convenience of residents and business owners, two open house style meetings were held at different times throughout the day. Approximately fifty (50) citizens were in attendance between the two sessions.



Image 7.4.1 The first community meeting was held on January 29, 2009 at the Vinton War Memorial.

The community meeting sessions were facilitated by staff from Roanoke County, the Town of Vinton and the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC). Several maps were displayed at various stations throughout the room, including aesthetics, land use and development, transportation and infrastructure. Flipcharts were set up along with information material at each station so citizens could leave comments and questions. For a summary of the comments received at the community meeting, refer to Appendix B.

7.4.2 June Community Meeting

The second community meeting was held on Thursday, June 18, 2009 in the South Ballroom of the Vinton War Memorial. As with the January community meeting, over 650 notices were mailed to property owners, residents and tenants, as well as attendees from the first community meeting. Approximately 15 people attended the meeting. The community meeting consisted of an open house held at 6:30 p.m. followed by a formal presentation from Roanoke County staff at 7:00 p.m.

At this meeting, staff presented a summary of the comments received at the January community meeting, results of the community survey, an overview of the business owner interviews, draft goals and recommendations, and three proposed Future Land Use scenarios. The meeting was concluded with a question and answer session, as well as an overview of the next steps following the community meeting. Questions and concerns raised at the meeting included funding mechanisms for proposed recommendations, timelines for the implementation schedule, transportation related topics and coordination of the future land use amendments along Hardy Road with the proposed VDOT road widening project.



Image 7.4.2 Mayor Brad Grose provides opening remarks at the second community meeting.

7.5 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

In addition to the community meetings, business owner interviews and community survey, staff from Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton conducted

stakeholder interviews with several intergovernmental agencies, including VDOT, the Vinton Public Works Department, the Blue Ridge Parkway and representatives from the Roanoke County and Vinton fire and rescue departments. The focus of these interviews was to examine current conditions along the study corridors, identify issues of concern, discuss future projects and their effects on the study corridors, and solicit input from these stakeholders on recommendations along the study corridors.

The first stakeholder meeting was held on January 23, 2009, focusing on transportation and safety issues along the study corridors. Staff from VDOT, the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County attended this meeting. On March 20, 2009, staff from VDOT, the Vinton Public Works Department, Roanoke County, the Town of Vinton and RVARC conducted a field study of the study corridors and discussed proposed road improvement projects. As a result of these stakeholder meetings, VDOT is now coordinating with the Vinton Public Works Department to rescope the Walnut Avenue Six-Year Improvement Plan Project and determine an amended phasing schedule.

The second stakeholder meeting, held on April 10, 2009, was hosted by the Town of Vinton and included the Roanoke County Fire Marshal, paid and volunteer staff from the Vinton Fire and Rescue Departments, Economic Development staff and the Vinton Public Works Director and Assistant Director. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the state of existing water and sewer infrastructure along the study corridors and discuss its capability of supporting future development and redevelopment. The second portion of the meeting was devoted to safety along the study corridors. Staff discussed the potential for additional bicycle and pedestrian accommodations along the study corridors and impacts this would cause to fire and rescue personnel.

The third stakeholder meeting was held with representatives from the National Park Service and the Blue Ridge Parkway. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss viewshed preservation, land

use and development adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway, future projects along the Blue Ridge Parkway and greenway connections.



CHAPTER 8 – GOALS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

8.1 PLAN GOALS

The goals of the Vinton Area Corridors Plan are based upon the following areas of focus: aesthetics and community character, land use, transportation, and community involvement and participation. The four main goals are:

- 1. Improve the visual appearance of the corridors while protecting the community’s character and identity;**
- 2. Encourage quality development and redevelopment along the study corridors and the revitalization of Downtown Vinton;**
- 3. Increase the capacity and safety of transportation facilities along the corridors; and**
- 4. Provide a variety of opportunities for the community to actively participate and be involved in the implementation of this Plan and in the development of future planning studies.**

These goals may be achieved by implementing the plan recommendations found in this chapter, which include amending the Future Land Use Maps for the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County, creating new zoning overlay districts, generating Design Guidelines for the study corridors, modifying the Commercial Corridor Matching Grant and the Downtown Façade Programs, planning for gateway and streetscape improvements and supporting alternative modes of transportation such as bicycles and buses. The following recommendations are intended to provide long-term direction for planners, engineers, elected and appointed officials, property owners, developers, business owners, citizens and other stakeholders through the subsequent adoption of plans, ordinances and design guidelines.

8.2 FUTURE LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the most significant components included in the recommendations for the Plan are proposed amendments to the Future Land Use Maps included in the Roanoke County and Town of Vinton Comprehensive Plans. The future land use designations along the study corridors were last modified during the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan rewrites in 2004 and 2005, respectively. Since these revisions, many changes have occurred along the study corridors, including new commercial development and redevelopment, successful obtainment of a CDBG Planning Grant for Downtown Revitalization, state funding to conduct a feasibility study for the vacant Vinton Ford Motors properties located at the intersection of Washington Avenue and South Pollard Street, and numerous planned and implemented infrastructure improvements.

As Vinton continues to grow and land is consumed, alternative measures for mitigating growth will present increased demands for infill development within the Town of Vinton and expansion into eastern Roanoke County where vacant land is available. The current Future Land Use Maps for the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County should be updated to account for new development, proposed redevelopment, and anticipated improvements to the transportation network.

Three alternative future land use map scenarios were presented to the public for comment at the community meeting held in June 2009. The alternative scenarios ranged from minor modifications to more aggressive growth modifications. Following the community meeting, county and town staff evaluated the public comments and presented them at Planning Commission work sessions. As a result of the work sessions, a fourth alternative scenario was drafted for presentation at the public hearing held in December 2009.

The following sections describe the proposed future land use amendments in more detail. All of the

future land use scenario maps can be found in Appendix A.

8.2.1 Future Land Use Scenario 1

The first Future Land Use Scenario includes basic changes to the current future land use designations along the study corridors. The modifications complement the existing land uses and current zoning designations of the land along the study corridors. Some adjustments include properties along Glade Creek that are located in the floodplain and were purchased by the Town of Vinton. The changes also incorporate the correction of mapping errors. A map of Future Land Use Scenario 1 can be found in Appendix A.

The proposed modifications in Scenario 1 include the following:

- Amending the southern portion of the Old William Byrd High School parcel owned by the Roanoke County School Board, zoned R-2 Residential, and located on Gus Nicks Boulevard from High-Density Residential to Community Facilities;
- Changing the northern portion of the parcel on Gus Nick Boulevard and adjacent to the Norfolk-Southern Railroad from High-Density Residential to General Commercial in its entirety;
- Expanding the Conservation designation along Tinker Avenue to nine small parcels currently identified as Parks and Recreation due to the Town of Vinton’s acquisition of these parcels located within the floodplain along Glade Creek;
- Changing the Conservation/Open Space designation of five parcels located between 525 Tinker Avenue to the corner of 6th Street and Tinker Avenue to Low-Density Residential;
- Convert the 200 block south of West Virginia Avenue from Residential Business to Retail Service Commercial;
- Changing the designation of parcels in the Edgefield - Section 2, Deer Ridge, and

Greenway Landing residential subdivisions from Development to Neighborhood Conservation;

- Changing the designations of Goode Park and an adjacent parcel with an established religious assembly use from Transition to Neighborhood Conservation;
- Updating the designation of a parcel on the south of Hardy Road near the eastern limits of the Town of Vinton from Residential Business to Community Facilities;
- Changing the designation of a parcel on Hardy Road across from Deer Ridge which is owned by the Town of Vinton from Residential Business (Town of Vinton) to Community Facilities; and
- Converting the common area and parcels in Phase II of the Feather Garden development from Transition to Neighborhood Conservation.

Table 8.2.1 Future Land Use Scenario 1

Future Land Use	Jurisdiction	Acreage	Percentage
Core	Roanoke County	47.91	7.45%
Development	Roanoke County	15.36	2.39%
Neighborhood Conservation	Roanoke County	112.29	17.46%
Transition	Roanoke County	138.43	21.52%
Community Facilities	Town of Vinton	42.45	6.60%
Conservation/Open Space	Town of Vinton	19.06	2.96%
General Commercial	Town of Vinton	43.72	6.80%
High-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	1.99	0.31%
Heavy Industrial	Town of Vinton	35.64	5.54%
Low-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	12.82	1.99%
Medium-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	14.63	2.27%
Park and Recreation	Town of Vinton	14.16	2.20%
Residential Business	Town of Vinton	58.71	9.13%
Retail Service Commercial	Town of Vinton	85.98	13.37%
Total		643.14	100.00%



To highlight the major amendments in Scenario 1, significant reductions are proposed in the amount of land designated as Development and High-Density Residential. The drop in land designated as Development is based on the amount of new residential development occurring in Roanoke County as of 1998, leading to significant increases in the Neighborhood Conservation designation. The proposed modifications to Goode Park, an adjacent parcel with an established religious assembly use, and amendments to the Feather Garden development led to a decrease in the amount of land designated Transition in Roanoke County. The proposed changes to a portion of the Old William Byrd High School parcel led to increases in the Town of Vinton’s Community Facilities designation.

8.2.2 Future Land Use Scenario 2

The second Future Land Use Scenario incorporates the changes proposed in Scenario 1 with minor modifications in the intensity of commercial and retail land uses along the study corridors. A map of Future Land Use Scenario 2 can be found in Appendix A.

In addition to the changes in Scenario 1, the modifications proposed in Future Land Use Scenario 2 include the following:

- Changing the designation of a block of parcels on Walnut Avenue from General Commercial to Retail Service Commercial;
- Converting the designation of two blocks of parcels on the south of West Virginia Avenue and adjacent to 3rd and 2nd Streets, from Residential Business to Retail Service Commercial;
- Updating a block of parcels on the north side of East Virginia Avenue between Spruce Street, Pine Street and Virginia Avenue that are designated General Business from Medium-Density Residential to Retail Service Commercial;
- Changing the designation of six parcels on the south side of the Bypass and Hardy Road intersection from Residential Business to Retail Service Commercial;

- Updating numerous parcels designated Residential Business on the north and south sides of Hardy Road from Medium-Density Residential to Residential Business;
- Changing a block of parcels on the south side of Washington Avenue and adjacent to Lindenwood and Maple Drives from Neighborhood Conservation to Transition;
- Changing the designation of numerous parcels on the north side of Hardy Road near the eastern limits of the Town of Vinton from Residential Business and General Commercial to Retail Service Commercial;
- Converting the frontage of parcels on the south side of Hardy Road from Development to Transition; and
- Changing five parcels on the north side of Hardy Road and adjacent to Feather Lake

Future Land Use	Jurisdiction	Acreage	Percentage
Core	Roanoke County	47.90	7.45%
Development	Roanoke County	6.65	1.03%
Neighborhood Conservation	Roanoke County	105.21	16.36%
Transition	Roanoke County	152.78	23.76%
Community Facilities	Town of Vinton	42.45	6.60%
Conservation/Open Space	Town of Vinton	19.06	2.96%
General Commercial	Town of Vinton	40.99	6.37%
High-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	1.99	0.31%
Heavy Industrial	Town of Vinton	35.64	5.54%
Low-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	12.82	1.99%
Medium-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	11.56	1.80%
Park and Recreation	Town of Vinton	14.16	2.20%
Residential Business	Town of Vinton	45.85	7.13%
Retail Service Commercial	Town of Vinton	106.08	16.49%
Total		643.14	100.00%



Drive from Neighborhood Conservation to Transition.

Due to the conversion of frontage parcels along Hardy Road in Roanoke County, the modifications in Scenario 2 propose a significant reduction in land designated as Development, as well as a similar increase in land designated Transition.

8.2.3 Future Land Use Scenario 3

The third Future Land Use Scenario incorporates the changes found in Scenarios 1 and 2 with major modifications along the study corridors. A map of Future Land Use Scenario 3 can be found in Appendix A.

In addition to the changes in Scenario 1 and 2, the modifications proposed in Future Land Use Scenario 3 include the following:

- Expanding the Retail Service Commercial designation on the majority of the parcels north and south of Walnut Avenue between 5th Street and West Jackson Avenue which are currently designated General Commercial;
- Converting the designation of the block of parcels north of East Virginia Avenue from Medium-Density Residential to General Commercial;
- Changing the two parcels south of Hardy Road between Vinyard Road and Bypass Road designated General Business from the Retail Service Commercial designation to General Commercial;
- Changing three parcels northwest of the intersection of Bypass and Hardy Roads designated General Business from Retail Service Commercial to General Commercial;
- Change the block south of Hardy Road between Clearview Drive to south of Preston Road from Residential Business to Retail Service Commercial;
- Changing the parcels north of Washington Avenue between the Vinton War Memorial and Halliahurst Avenue from Residential Business to Retail Service Commercial;
- Changing the designation of the parcels south of Washington Avenue between Church Street and South Mitchell Road from Medium-Density Residential, High-Density Residential, or Residential Business to Retail Service Commercial;
- Changing a block of eleven parcels south of Washington Avenue along Fairmont Drive and Marshall Avenue from Residential Business and Medium-Density Residential to Retail Service Commercial;
- Changing the designation of a row of parcels between Washington Avenue and Fairmont Drive between Marshall Avenue and Bush Drive from Retail Service Commercial to General Commercial;
- Change the designation of one parcel south of Washington Avenue along Wolf Creek from Core to Conservation;
- Expand the split-designation of one parcel south of Washington Avenue from Development to Core;
- Change the designation of three parcels north of Washington Avenue between William Byrd High School and Stonebridge Circle from Neighborhood Conservation to Transition;
- Convert the designation of numerous parcels north and south of Hardy Road near the eastern limits of Vinton from Residential Business to Retail Service Commercial;
- Change the designation of parcels along Wolf Creek north and south of Hardy Road from Development to Conservation;
- Expand the Transition designation of parcels north and south of Hardy Road between Deer Ridge Lane and Feather Road; and
- Convert the designation of the parcels in the Vinton Business Center from Transition to Principal Industrial.

Scenario 3 adds the Conservation designation to a few parcels along the study corridors, providing additional protection of areas along Wolf Creek

including the greenway. Contrary to this protection, this scenario proposes to designate parcels within the Vinton Business Center to Principal Industrial. The current future land use map does not designate any land along the study corridors Principal Industrial. In the Town of Vinton, Scenario 3 eliminates the High-Density Residential designation of land along the study corridors.

Table 8.2.3 Future Land Use Scenario 3

Future Land Use	Jurisdiction	Acreage	Percentage
Conservation	Roanoke County	2.88	0.45%
Core	Roanoke County	50.82	7.90%
Development	Roanoke County	0.06	0.01%
Neighborhood Conservation	Roanoke County	91.35	14.20%
Principal Industrial	Roanoke County	97.12	15.10%
Transition	Roanoke County	70.32	10.93%
Community Facilities	Town of Vinton	42.45	6.60%
Conservation/Open Space	Town of Vinton	20.96	3.26%
General Commercial	Town of Vinton	57.35	8.92%
Heavy Industrial	Town of Vinton	35.64	5.54%
Low-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	10.78	1.68%
Medium-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	7.31	1.14%
Park and Recreation	Town of Vinton	14.16	2.20%
Residential Business	Town of Vinton	4.15	0.65%
Retail Service Commercial	Town of Vinton	137.80	21.43%
Total		643.14	100.00%

8.2.4 Future Land Use Scenario 4

The fourth Future Land Use Scenario was adopted by the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors and the Vinton Town Council for incorporation into each jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan. The future land use modifications proposed in this scenario represented the preferences of both the Vinton and

Roanoke County Planning Commissions. During the late summer and early fall of 2009, staff held work sessions with both Planning Commissions to discuss the current future land use along the study corridors, as well as the amendments proposed in Scenarios 1, 2 and 3. To assist the Commissioners, staff supplemented the work sessions by presenting the results of the community survey, business owner interviews, and comments received from the community meetings. All of this information was incorporated into the modifications proposed in Scenario 4. A map of Future Land Use Scenario 4 can be found in Appendix A.

Of the future land use amendments proposed in Scenarios 1, 2, and 3, the following modifications were supported and recommended by the Planning Commissioners in Scenario 4:

- Amending the southern portion of the Old William Byrd High School parcel owned by the Roanoke County School Board, zoned R-2 Residential, and located on Gus Nicks Boulevard from High-Density Residential to Community Facilities;
- Changing the designation of the northern portion of the parcel on Gus Nick Boulevard and adjacent to the Norfolk-Southern Railroad from High-Density Residential to General Commercial;
- Expanding the Conservation designation along Tinker Avenue to nine small parcels currently identified as Parks and Recreation due to the Town of Vinton’s acquisition of these parcels located within the floodplain along Glade Creek;
- Changing the Conservation/Open Space designation of five parcels located between 525 Tinker Avenue to the corner of 6th Street and Tinker Avenue to Low-Density Residential;
- Convert the 200 block south of West Virginia Avenue from Residential Business to Retail Service Commercial;
- Amend the Retail Service Commercial designation of the parcels in the Lake Drive



Table 8.2.4 Future Land Use Scenario 4

Future Land Use	Jurisdiction	Acreage	Percentage
Conservation	Roanoke County	2.88	0.45%
Core	Roanoke County	50.83	7.90%
Development	Roanoke County	0.07	0.01%
Neighborhood Conservation	Roanoke County	92.68	14.41%
Transition	Roanoke County	166.1	25.83%
Community Facilities	Town of Vinton	42.45	6.60%
Conservation/Open Space	Town of Vinton	20.97	3.26%
General Commercial	Town of Vinton	56.91	8.85%
Heavy Industrial	Town of Vinton	35.64	5.54%
Low-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	10.88	1.69%
Medium-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	12.27	1.91%
Heavy-Density Residential	Town of Vinton	1.99	0.31%
Park and Recreation	Town of Vinton	14.16	2.20%
Residential Business	Town of Vinton	52.14	8.11%
Retail Service Commercial	Town of Vinton	83.19	12.93%
Total		643.14	100.00%

- Expand the split-designation of one parcel south of Washington Avenue from Development to Core;
- Change the designation of parcels along Wolf Creek north and south of Hardy Road from Development to Conservation;
- Expand the Transition designation of frontage parcels north and south of Hardy Road between Deer Ridge Lane and Feather Road;
- Changing the designation of parcels in the Edgefield - Section 2, Deer Ridge, and Greenway Landing residential subdivisions from Development to Neighborhood Conservation;
- Changing the designation of a parcel on Hardy Road across from Deer Ridge which is owned by the Town of Vinton from Residential Business (Town of Vinton) to Community Facilities;
- Converting the common area and parcels in Phase II of the Feather Garden development from Transition to Neighborhood Conservation; and
- Changing a row of parcels on the south side of Washington Avenue and adjacent to Lindenwood and Maple Drives from Neighborhood Conservation to Transition.

- Plaza Shopping Center to General Commercial;
- Change the block south of Hardy Road between Clearview Drive to south of Preston Road from Residential Business to Retail Service Commercial;
- Changing the designations of Goode Park, and an adjacent parcel with an established religious assembly use from Transition to Neighborhood Conservation;
- Change the designation of one parcel south of Washington Avenue along Wolf Creek from Core to Conservation;

8.3 ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

Three zoning overlay districts are recommended along the study corridors that will encourage higher quality development standards for non-residential parcels along the study corridors, as well as improve and preserve the history and character of the study corridors. To adopt these overlays, separate actions must be taken by the governing bodies of each jurisdiction for inclusion into the respective zoning ordinances.

8.3.1 Entrance Corridor Overlay District

The development of an Entrance Corridor Overlay District (ECOD) for the Vinton study corridors will



encourage appropriate redevelopment of existing commercial and industrial structures and the compatibility of new development. Design guidelines should be crafted to improve the architectural and visual character of these major corridors and encourage compatibility with surrounding natural landforms, vegetation and environmental resources. The design guidelines for this proposed zoning overlay district will apply to parcels located within the ECOD boundary and should include standards for permitted and prohibited land uses, as well as site development. The site development criteria that may be addressed in this overlay district include site access, vehicular circulation, parking lot design, landscaping and setbacks.

8.3.2 Central Business District

As indicated in the *Town of Vinton’s 2004 Economic and Community Development Plan*, the Town has difficulty attracting and retaining viable businesses, which has resulted in scattered vacant buildings and underutilized parcels. With the exception of the downtown area, the Town of Vinton lacks well-defined commercial districts, resulting in intermingled land uses dispersed along the study corridors often poorly separated from residential land uses. The incompatibility of commercial, industrial and residential land uses has caused issues with community identity, aesthetics, continuity in streetscape amenities, open space, bicycle and pedestrian interconnectivity and vehicular access and circulation.

As Downtown revitalization efforts are underway in the Town of Vinton, the boundaries of the Central Business District (CB) need to be reviewed for compatibility with the boundaries of the Community Development Block Grant. The zoning district regulations need to be reviewed for compatibility for infill development and mixed-use development which should allow for residential units.

8.3.3 Historic District

At the current time, neither the Town of Vinton’s nor Roanoke County’s zoning ordinances contain regulations for the establishment of Historic Overlay

Districts. Creating Historic Overlay Districts would afford property owners the opportunity to obtain historic tax credits and allow the Town and County to use various incentives to improve and preserve the history of Vinton and East Roanoke County. Housing conditions are deteriorating in many of the neighborhoods in the Town of Vinton. The edges of the neighborhoods lack definition and pedestrian access is poor with little to no connections to local parks and greenways. As identified in the *Vinton Economic and Community Development Plan*, zoning regulations fail to preserve the older housing stock throughout many neighborhoods in the Town of Vinton.

Of the seven Roanoke County listings on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), none are located along our study corridors. The County and Town should work with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to conduct archaeological, architectural and historic surveys that focus on identifying and assessing historic resources in the Vinton area. The Town of Vinton 2004-2024 Comprehensive Plan proposes a Historic District centered on Vinton’s downtown and Jefferson Park neighborhood.

8.4 GATEWAY AND WAYFINDING SIGNAGE RECOMMENDATIONS

8.4.1 Gateway Entrances

The gateways into the Town of Vinton fail to provide a clear physical delineation between it and the City of Roanoke and Roanoke County. Comments received through the community survey indicate that many residents and commuters desire a stronger sense of arrival as they travel along the study corridors. Due to the existing buildout along the study corridors including buildings, parking lots, signs, and screening, it is often difficult to ascertain when you are leaving one jurisdiction and arriving in another. Existing infrastructure such as bridges and railroad overpasses, coupled with natural landscape features such as creeks and open space, distract motorists from the existing entrance signs and landscaping along the gateways into Vinton.

In order to create effective gateways that promote a sense of arrival and signify a distinctive community identity that is attractive and inviting, the Town of Vinton needs to develop a consistent branding theme that can be applied to gateway features, key civic buildings, and other places of interest. The existing gateway entrance signs need to be updated with fresh coats of paint or replaced with larger signs. A gateway entrance sign needs to be constructed along Hardy Road. Landscaping should be added or redesigned around the gateway entrance signs, in medians, and along both sides of the roadways to provide year round color and texture.



Image 8.4.1 Landscaping is needed to enhance the gateway entrance into the Town of Vinton along Walnut Avenue.

Other improvements such as decorative street lights, hanging baskets, banners, benches, attractive fencing, tree wells, and improved pedestrian amenities should be added to gateways. Alternative intersection realignments and corridor designs should be considered for slowing traffic at the entrances. Specific plans of action regarding the entrances can be found in the 2004 Town of Vinton *Economic and Community Development Plan*. Conceptual renderings regarding gateway entrance improvements are provided in Appendix B of this document.

8.4.2 Wayfinding and Public Signage

One of the strategies outlined in the Town of Vinton’s Comprehensive Plan recommends the design and implementation of an informational and directional sign system to places of interest in the

Town of Vinton. Wayfinding and public signs located along the study corridors are not serving their purpose effectively. The placement and proximity of the signs clutter the corridors and obstruct visibility. In 2008, staff from RVARC began conducting an inventory of the existing wayfinding and public signs along the study corridors. For results of their findings and recommendations, see the *Vinton Area Wayfinding and Public Signage Study* found in Appendix B.

8.5 STREETScape IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the gateway entrance recommendations, streetscape improvements need to be considered throughout the entire study corridor area. The community survey indicated that bicycle lanes, crosswalks and sidewalks were the highest ranking streetscape improvements desired by citizens. As opportunities arise for installation of new traffic signalization, pavement restriping, or the reconstruction of corridors, the following general recommendations should be considered along the study corridors.

8.5.1 Bicycle Recommendations

In 2004, the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board adopted the *Policy for Integrating Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations* providing framework for how the VDOT will accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians in the planning, funding, design, construction, operation and maintenance of Virginia’s transportation network. This policy significantly improved the availability for a county to use its secondary roads allocation to plan, design, and construct bicycle accommodations.

According to the *Rural Bikeway Plan* prepared by RVARC, “this policy also eliminates the past VDOT policy requiring that a roadway be included in an approved bikeway plan in order for bicycle accommodations to be considered as part of roadway improvements using Federal and State Funding” (*Rural Bikeway Plan*, 10). In order to effectively



Image 8.5.1 Streets signs in Downtown Vinton discourage bicyclists

utilize the existing and planned transportation network, this policy should be applied to all of the Vinton study corridors. The VDOT *Policy for Integrating Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations* is provided in Appendix B.

The Town of Vinton and Roanoke County should also utilize cost-effective techniques, where applicable and practical, to better accommodate bicyclists. Various techniques and treatments are available that can be coordinated with paving, maintenance, and construction schedules with the individual localities and VDOT. Some of these techniques include:

- Include bicycle accommodation in the planning and design of the Walnut Avenue and Hardy Road Six Year Road Improvement Projects
- Improved signage, such as share the roadway signs
- Striping on right edge of lanes to provide paved shoulder for bicyclists
- Spot improvements
- Changes in roadway design or operation
- Improve secondary bicycle accommodations at appropriate locations (i.e. bicycle racks at the Vinton Public Library and the Vinton Municipal Building)

- Remove signs from Downtown Vinton that discourage bicyclists

As these improvements are made to the physical environment, it is important to ensure that proper measures are taken to condition the behaviors of bicyclists and motorists along the study corridors. At a minimum, bicyclists and motorists should be familiar with all applicable traffic laws and basic bicycle safety. Other recommendations for acclimating bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists can be effectively addressed through education, awareness and advocacy efforts through community stakeholders and program. To help facilitate this understanding, Appendix B includes a copy of the Virginia Bicycling Laws and Bicycling Safety Tips.

In 2005, the *Bikeway Plan for the Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization* was approved as an update to the 1997 *Bikeway Plan*. It serves as a strategic guiding document for the implementation of bicycle accommodation within the Roanoke Valley that was collaboratively developed with members from Roanoke County, the City of Roanoke, the City of Salem, the Town of Vinton, Botetourt County and VDOT involved in the advisory committee. Both the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County should ensure that this plan and all subsequent amendments are adopted into their respective Comprehensive Plans.

8.5.2 Crosswalks

While it is often difficult to predict where pedestrian crossings are most prevalent, it is important that pedestrian crossings be provided at concentrated nodes of mixed-use activities along the study corridors. These nodes are indicative of areas where pedestrian crossings are likely to occur, such as apartment complexes, community centers, schools, parks, shopping areas, restaurants, bus stops, and libraries. Traffic control signal timing should be improved at intersections when feasible, particularly those equipped with existing push-buttons.

While the study corridors need to be evaluated comprehensively for crosswalk improvements at key intersections, the following intersections were identified in the *Pedestrian Access to Commercial Centers*



Image 8.5.2 Crosswalks are needed at the intersection of South Pollard Street and Washington Avenue.

study completed by the Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (RVAMPO) in July 2006 for consideration to enhance the safety and efficiency of the pedestrian network at key intersections along the study corridors:

- **Hardy Road and Vinyard Road** - this intersection experiences an increased amount of pedestrian traffic due to existing land uses near the intersection. Vinyard Road connects businesses such as the Lancerlot Sport Complex, Vinton Bowling Center, and Colonial Downs Off Track Betting to Hardy Road. Residents living in apartments located on the northwest corner of this intersection use Vinyard Road to connect them to nearby commercial establishments, as well as amenities such as the Valley Metro bus stop located in the parking lot of the Lake Drive Plaza.
- **Hardy Road and Niagara Road** – this intersection is signalized and located adjacent to numerous fast food establishments such as a Kentucky Fried Chicken, Long John Silver’s, and Burger King. The commercial nature of this intersection, coupled with heavy traffic volumes, indicate the need for crosswalks to enhance the safety of pedestrians utilizing this intersection.
- **Hardy Road and Clearview Drive** - Sidewalks are located along both sides of

Hardy Road at the intersection of Clearview Drive, however, there are no crosswalks present at this signalized intersection.

Staff noticed a few intersections along the study corridors that have pedestrian signalization installed on the traffic poles; however the signalization is not in use. One example is the intersection of Washington Avenue and Bypass Road. Other areas such as the intersection of Washington Avenue and South Pollard Street have curb corners designed with handicapped accessibility, but there are no crosswalks striped across the intersection.

8.5.3 Sidewalks

The existing sidewalks located along portions of the study corridors are discontinuous and inefficient. The sidewalk network should be expanded to fill in gaps and connect to existing and proposed greenways. Additional pedestrian facilities should be installed to increase the safety and efficiency of pedestrian accommodations. It is recommended that consideration be given to requiring new or improved sidewalk installation during the rezoning, special use, or site review process for new development or redevelopment opportunities along the study corridors.

There are numerous areas along the study corridors where dirt paths are visible along the edge of the roadway indicating concentrated pedestrian activity between commercial centers, public buildings and Downtown areas where sidewalk installation should be of higher priority. Examples of where these paths



Image 8.5.3 Sidewalk installation at the corner of Virginia Avenue and 3rd Street.

are visible are along Walnut Avenue near the City of Roanoke, in front of the William Byrd Middle and High Schools along Washington Avenue, and portions of Virginia Avenue and Hardy Road mostly between South Pollard Street and the intersection of Bypass Road and Hardy Road.

The existing sidewalk network in the Town of Vinton should be extended into Roanoke County along Hardy Road connecting the Wolf Creek Greenway, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Vinton Business Center where trails are proposed in the Master Plan (see Appendix A). The installation of both sidewalks and bicycle lanes should be supported by Roanoke County with the proposed widening of Hardy Road, formerly identified on VDOT’s Six-Year Improvement Plan.

To enhance pedestrian activity between Virginia Avenue and Downtown Vinton, spot improvements should be considered for existing sidewalks located along the southern portion of South Pollard Street between Cleveland and Virginia Avenues. According to the RVARC’s sidewalk inventory, this was the only section of sidewalk along the study corridors receiving a “Grade C” condition.

All sidewalks should be constructed using standard width as recommended by the American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) or local guidelines. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines should be followed when constructing curb ramps and pedestrian crossings.

8.5.4 Landscaping

Roadways with landscaped medians and street trees provide signification aesthetic and environmental benefits within a community. Landscaped medians provide areas for community identification or gateway entrance signs. Street trees provide shade for pedestrians by being planted either between the curb and edge of sidewalk or behind the sidewalk.

Many localities are adopting long-range Tree Action Plans to conserve and manage tree resources. Plan goals are developed which commit to conserving current tree assets and increase the effectiveness of urban forestry with planning and policymaking.

Energy conservation is practiced through tree canopy program which shade homes, saving owners 20-25% in energy costs.

Increasing the tree canopy coverage improves water quality by reducing water quantity in urban areas within a community and reducing surface runoff. Other benefits include improved wildlife habitats, improved air quality, increased property values, improved screening and privacy, and reductions in the impacts of lights, wind and noise. For a map of specific streetscape needs along the study corridors, refer to the conceptual drawing in Appendix B.

8.5.5 Pedestrian Lighting

To improve safety along the study corridors, pedestrian lighting should be installed in conjunction with pedestrian improvements. The light poles can also be designed to hang planter baskets and display banners.

8.5.6 Underground Utilities

Underground utilities were ranked as the top response in streetscape features desired by citizens. Utility poles are typically located within the right-of-way, creating conflict with proposed sidewalks and landscaping.

8.5.7 Other Amenities

Other types of streetscape amenities such as trash receptacles, decorative benches, bicycle racks, attractive railings and planter boxes should also be considered along the study corridors.

8.6 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

For Vinton to continue to prosper, opportunities for development, redevelopment and infill must be carefully evaluated. Throughout the development of this plan, economic development representatives from Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton were consulted on matters regarding land use and economic development. The following funding sources, issues, recommendations, and plans of action have been identified to retain viable businesses and attract new growth.

8.6.1 Commercial Corridor Matching Grant Program

As the Commercial Corridor Matching Grant Program is currently structured, business and/or property owners along Hardy Road and Washington Avenue are not eligible for this program. To improve participation in this program, enhance aesthetics, and provide incentives for development and redevelopment, the boundaries of this program should be expanded to the portions of the these gateway entrance corridors that lie in East Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton.

As outlined in the Hollins Area Plan, a component of the Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan adopted in November 2008, the following Commercial Corridor Matching Grant Program amendments should also be considered for the Plan:

1. Retain an architecture firm to respond to inquiries from business owners to design three options for the owner to choose from;
2. Initiate an application fee that would help cover the architectural design fee;
3. Provide templates for monument sign and landscaping design;
4. Create incentives through Economic Development for use of green building and Low Impact Design techniques;
5. Evaluate tax incentives, coordinated through Economic Development and the Roanoke County Commissioner of Revenue, to encourage program participation; and
6. Determine tiered levels of funding or matching grant percentage dependent upon:
 - a. Type of Project
 - i. Façade renovations would qualify for \$50,000
 - ii. Monument signs would qualify for \$20,000
 - iii. Landscaping would qualify for \$15,000
 - b. Percentage of Compliance

- i. 33% matching grant funds if project is below minimum Zoning Ordinance requirements
- ii. 50% matching grant funds if project meets Zoning Ordinance requirements
- iii. 66% matching grant funds if project exceeds Zoning Ordinance requirements.

8.6.2 Downtown Façade Program

To improve the participation in the Downtown Façade Program and enhance the appearance of Downtown Vinton, the program should be reviewed for its effectiveness. To encourage use of the program, at a minimum, the following amendments should be considered:

- Expand program boundaries to coordinate with the Downtown Revitalization area, as determined in the DHCD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG),
- Evaluate the program for inclusion of interior renovations and alleyway,
- Development of façade design and sign standards to promote uniformity among specialty merchants area,
- Increase levels of funding or matching grant percentages, and
- Evaluate tax incentives, coordinated through Economic Development and the Roanoke County Commissioner of Revenue.

For conceptual renderings provided by Edward Mazeika, a property owner in Downtown Vinton, please refer to Appendix B.

8.6.3 Virginia Main Street Program

The Town of Vinton should evaluate the designation criteria for becoming a Virginia Main Street Community. If eligible, the Town should apply for full designation as a Virginia Main Street Community. If ineligible, the Town should consider taking the appropriate measures to meet the requirements for full Main Street designation. Additionally, as referenced in the Town of Vinton’s

Comprehensive Plan, a full time economic development coordinator should be hired who can serve as the downtown “Main Street” coordinator.

8.6.4 Economic Opportunity Areas

As identified in the 2005 Roanoke County Comprehensive Plan, Roanoke County should consider expanding the economic opportunity areas to provide continuity along Washington Avenue and Hardy Road. The expansion of these areas should be evaluated in conjunction with the proposed Future Land Use amendments set forth in this plan. The County should encourage development and redevelopment in these economic opportunity areas that are served with public utilities.

8.6.5 Vinton Business Center

The Town of Vinton and Roanoke County should focus marketing efforts on the Vinton Business Center to attract compatible commercial, light industrial and office uses to this site to increase the tax base, expand employment opportunities, and support the development of this publicly owned business park. To increase marketing and promote visibility of the Vinton Business Center, a monument sign should be constructed at the entrance along Hardy Road. A rendering of the sign that has been selected can be found in Appendix B.



Image 8.6.5 The entrance to the Vinton Business Center needs an identification sign along Hardy Road.

To ensure economic feasibility of the Vinton Business Center, the County and Town should consider re-evaluating the various land uses proposed in the Master Plan. Any amendments should

complement the character of the surrounding community. Protective and restrictive covenants should be carefully reviewed, so that future development will not compromise quality measures such as retention of natural vegetation, site and building design criteria, open space conservation, incorporation of recreational amenities and viewshed protections.

8.6.6 Downtown Revitalization

In collaboration with DHCD, the Town of Vinton, with the support and assistance of Roanoke County, should continue efforts to implement the revitalization of Downtown Vinton using CDBG monies.

The revitalization of Downtown Vinton should focus on traditional town center principles of promoting mixed land uses to encourage economic and social diversity:

- Encouraging pedestrian activity with sidewalks and crosswalks;
- Making use of on-street parking as opposed to parking lots,
- Gaining value from unused space by creating public spaces where people can gather;
- Constructing smaller scale buildings closer to the street; and
- Enhancing public transit opportunities.



Image 8.6.6 The Vinton Ford Motors properties are a significant redevelopment opportunity near the heart of Downtown Vinton.

8.6.7 Vinton Ford Motors Property

In 2009, the Virginia Department of Housing and Development Authority (VHDA) awarded the Town of Vinton a \$10,000 planning grant in order to conduct a Mixed Use/Mixed Income Feasibility Study of the former Vinton Ford Motor Company site. Wiley|Wilson of Lynchburg, in conjunction with Hill Studios of Roanoke, conducted the study, providing the Town with three development and redevelopment options for the site. The results of the study were presented to the Vinton Town Council in December 2009.

8.6.8 New Town Centers

The River Park Shopping Center is located in a prime area for development of a planned commercial town center. The site is ideally located between three major arterials serving the Town of Vinton and East Roanoke County - Bypass Road, Hardy Road and Washington Avenue. The Town of Vinton’s 2004 *Economic and Community Development Plan* recommends strategies that the Town should undertake to assist in a public-private venture. These recommendations include:

- Formation of a development corporation composed of key property owners, businesses, and the Town that would serve as the driving force for assembling land and gaining commitments of prospective businesses;
- Development of a preliminary conceptual

design for the New Town Center;

- Development of a recreational area behind the New Town Center connecting the Center with a pedestrian link to downtown through Jefferson Park; and
- Identifying support infrastructure needs to help generate the private investment.

Other opportunities for development of planned commercial centers are the East Vinton Plaza and Lake Drive Plaza shopping centers.

8.6.9 Water and Sewer Infrastructure

The Town of Vinton strives to remain proactive and aggressive in planning for future water and sewer needs in the community. In order to ensure that development and redevelopment opportunities are viable, the Town of Vinton must address several concerns regarding placement of fire hydrants and improvements to water lines. In 2008, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors adopted amendments to Chapter 9 “Fire Prevention and Protection” of the Roanoke County Code implementing fire hydrant placement and flow standards. At the time of the 2008 amendment to the Roanoke County Code, the Town of Vinton had adopted the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code and appointed the Roanoke County Fire Marshal as the designated fire official for enforcement within the Town limits.

The current capacity and conditions of water within the Town of Vinton will not support future development and redevelopment. The older and smaller water lines will not support required quantity and flow of water to support the fire hydrants in or adjacent to proposed development. *Anderson and Associates* currently performs as the Town’s general services engineer consultant analyzing the capacity and conditions of water and sewer facilities. The Town of Vinton will have to address the issues with the capacity limits of existing infrastructure to spur economic development within the Town limits.



Image 8.6.8 Vacant parcel adjacent to River Park Shopping Center along Bypass Road.

8.7 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

8.7.1 Adopt-A-Highway Program

In 1988, VDOT launched the Adopt-A-Highway program. This program allows volunteer groups and individuals to improve the aesthetics in their community. Volunteers agree to a two-year commitment of “adopting” a two mile or more stretch of roadway and picking up trash at least four times each year. This program promotes volunteerism, encourages social interaction and establishes a foundation for environmental awareness in a community.

Volunteers earn recognition for their efforts by the Adopt-A-Highway signs placed along the roadway. VDOT provides the safety vests, trash bags and information needed to ensure that trash is picked up safely along the roadway. Numerous comments about trash and debris accumulation along Hardy Road were voiced by citizens participating in the Vinton Area Corridors Plan Community survey. This program can help mitigate those issues and reclaim a sense of community pride.

8.7.2 Adopt-A-Spot Programs

The Adopt-A-Spot Program was originally created as a supplement to the Adopt-A-Highway Program by the State Recycling and Litter Prevention office. This locally administered program encourages citizen participation in beautifying specific areas within communities such as medians, parks, parking lots and vacant lots that are not covered in the Adopt-A-Highway Program. Similar to the Adopt-A-Highway Program, organizations and individuals receive public recognition for their efforts through the display of a sign. To encourage healthy landscaping, promote citizen participation, and enhance the visual appearance along the study corridors, the Town of Vinton should evaluate the positive impacts of an Adopt-A-Spot Program by identifying potential locations, evaluating safety and other regulations, and developing local sponsorship guidelines. In many urban localities, the Public Works Department administers the program.

8.7.3 The Comprehensive Roadside Management Program

The Comprehensive Roadside Management Program is administered by VDOT. This program enables private businesses, civic organizations, communities, individuals and local governments an opportunity to improve the appearance and safety of the state maintained right-of-way by participating in project development, establishment, and maintenance of landscaping activities within the state maintained right-of-way. The Town of Vinton and Roanoke County should encourage participation and sponsorship in this program.

8.8 TRANSPORTATION

8.8.1 Access Management

To provide interconnectivity between land use and transportation planning, access control measures need to be applied to future development and redevelopment along the Vinton study corridors. The number of existing access points reduces the functionality of the corridors. Access management principles such as shared parking lots, reducing the number of driveways and entrance points, utilizing parallel roads and retrofitting existing residential streets are all measures that should be incorporated into local plans and ordinances.

8.8.2 William Byrd Traffic Impact Analysis

In accordance with the *FY 2010-2015 Priority List of Revenue Sharing Projects*, the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors has submitted an application that the extension of the existing turn lane on eastbound Washington Avenue (Route 24) at the entrance to William Byrd Middle and High Schools be included in the Revenue Sharing Program. If funding for this project is approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Board, construction will be carried out in the 2010 construction season by VDOT.

8.8.3 Six-Year Improvement Plan Projects

The Town of Vinton and VDOT should continue efforts to re-scope the Walnut Avenue Six-Year Road Improvement Project. Owing to major reductions in state transportation funding, the Walnut Avenue Corridor Improvement Project will be accomplished as a series of smaller projects with connectivity. At the time of this planning effort, the exact project scopes are still being finalized by VDOT.

The County of Roanoke should consider returning the reconstruction and widening of Hardy Road (Route 634) to the Six-Year Improvement Plan when sufficient funds are available. Input from Bedford County and the Blue Ridge Parkway should be sought during the scoping and/or preliminary engineering of this project, as their current infrastructure only accommodates two lanes.

The *Bikeway Plan for the Roanoke Valley Area Metropolitan Planning Organization*, completed in August 2005, designates Hardy Road as a Priority Corridor for Bicycle Accommodations in Roanoke County. As the Town of Vinton has made improvements along Hardy Road from Bypass Road to the eastern limits of Vinton that include widening from two to four lanes and adding sidewalks and bicycle lanes, it is appropriate for Roanoke County to evaluate and advocate the inclusion of bicycle lanes and pedestrian facilities (sidewalks & greenways connections) with the planned Six-Year Plan road improvements.

In accordance with the Vinton Business Center Master Plan, this project should include the realignment of Feather Road and the future extension of Cardinal Park Drive, as they intersect with Hardy Road. The proposed recreational trails in the Vinton Business Center, the proximity to the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the existing connection to the Wolf Creek Greenway, all contribute to the high prioritization of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations along Hardy Road. The improvements should ensure that future road conditions are appropriate for the various commercial and light industrial land uses targeted in the Vinton Business Center Master Plan.

8.8.4 Realignment of South Pollard Street

As identified in the Town of Vinton's 2004 *Economic and Community Development Plan*, the intersection of South Pollard Street and Virginia Avenue should be redesigned to improve visibility. Circulation into Downtown Vinton could also be improved by realigning South Pollard Street and enhancing the intersection with lighting and open space.

8.8.5 Parking on South Pollard Street

The results of the Community Survey indicate that congestion and delays are the predominant inconveniences experienced by motorists traveling along South Pollard Street. Contributing factors to these inconveniences include on-street parking, parking enforcement, left turns onto West Lee Street from northbound motorists, and the location of the post office. To alleviate the congestion and delays along South Pollard Street, the Town should consider limiting parking to one side of the street, or prohibiting on-street parking altogether. This would require that alternative parking areas be determined for merchants and residents living in Downtown Vinton.

8.8.6 Turning Radius on Virginia Avenue

The turning radius at the intersection of 3rd Street and Virginia Avenue is not sufficient for the truck traffic leaving and entering this industrial area, specifically PFG. The turning radius should be evaluated for potential improvements to facilitate safer maneuverability through this intersection.

8.8.7 Speed Limit Changes

As of September 28, 2009, the speed limit on the segment of Walnut Avenue from Third Street to the City of Roanoke line was reduced from 35 miles per hour to 25 miles per hour in both the east bound and west bound directions (see Appendix B). The Town of Vinton made this change as a public safety measure because the travel lane width, shoulders, clearances, and access points along this roadway are not designed for a 35 miles per hour speed limit. The speed limit reduction was reviewed by the

Town’s Highway Safety Commission who supported the proposal. The Vinton Town Council endorsed the Commission’s recommendation. Additionally, consultation with engineers from the Virginia Department of Transportation confirmed that 25 miles per hour is the appropriate speed for this segment of Walnut Avenue.

As development and redevelopment occurs in Vinton and Eastern Roanoke County, speed limits along the remaining study corridors should be evaluated. Infrastructure improvements such as bicycle lanes and sidewalks may also facilitate the need for speed limit adjustments.

8.8.8 CORTAN

The preliminary results of the Roanoke County 2009 Fiscal Year End Report indicate increased usage in the CORTAN program. The increased usage led to unanticipated expenditures in public transportation funding during the 2009 fiscal year. Although it is difficult to forecast usage rates, additional funding was allocated for public transportation services in the 2010 fiscal year budget. As a result of the increased usage and recent budget implications, staff from Roanoke County and CORTAN are working together to determine a more efficient means of monitoring participation in the CORTAN program by performing trend analyses.

According to data compiled in the Roanoke County Statistical Abstract, the increase usage of the CORTAN program may partially be attributed to the aging population in Roanoke County. For purposes of this analysis, it is important to note that these population statistics are derived from the 2000 U.S. Census data which includes the Town of Vinton. As shown in Figure 8.8.8, the median age of the Roanoke County population is higher than the state average. While this graph shows a population trend in Roanoke County that is similar to the state of Virginia from 1970 to 2000, the median age of the population in Roanoke County has increased at a faster rate than the state. When compared to the state of Virginia as a whole, the numbers from the 2007 American Community Survey indicate that the

rate of increase in the median age of residents in Roanoke County has slowed.

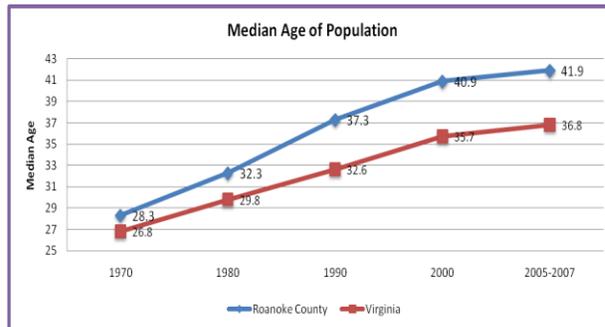


Figure 8.8.8 The aging population in Roanoke County suggests the need to evaluate current public transportation services.

Source: Roanoke County Statistical Abstract

8.8.9 Valley Metro

The County should evaluate the need to extend the current Valley Metro bus routes serving the Town of Vinton to Eastern Roanoke County. Extending the bus routes along Washington Avenue (Route 24) in Roanoke County would ensure access to commercial centers, increase ridership, provide an alternative mode of transportation for the aging population and link Eastern Roanoke County into the Valley’s aspiring multi-modal transportation network.

8.9 COMMUNITY FACILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

8.9.1 The Vinton Library

The Vinton Public Library is outdated and needs to be assessed for expansion, relocation or renovation to meet the growing needs of the Vinton community. Among the comments received from citizens regarding physical improvements and services needed, the following comments were received from citizens: the need for additional parking, installation of bicycle racks outside the facility, improvements to pedestrian access across Washington Avenue, more community meeting space and installation of a drop-off box. Comments regarding aesthetics included sprucing up the building by trimming trees, adding landscaping,

updating the monument sign and taking measures to make the building more noticeable.

8.9.2 The Vinton Post Office

Access to and from the Vinton Post Office can be very difficult and dangerous at peak times during the weekday. An alternative location for the post office should be considered in Downtown Vinton, or parking and access should be addressed at its current location.

8.9.3 The Vinton Farmer’s Market

The Vinton Farmer’s Market has a significant presence in the community and serves as a gathering spot for residents and tourists to sell and purchase local goods. Several comments were received from citizens about the need to renovate this facility to make it available for year-round use.

8.9.4 Old William Byrd High School

The Town of Vinton’s 2004 *Economic and Community Development Plan* recommends converting this facility into an assisted living facility or elderly housing.



Image 8.9.4 A suitable land use needs to be determined for the Old William Byrd High School.

8.9.5 Greenways

Enhancements are needed along Hardy Road (Route 634) at the entrance to the Wolf Creek Greenway. The existing signage could be improved to clearly distinguish the entrance to the greenway, as well as by adding more vibrant landscaping. The proposed

widening of Hardy Road should incorporate a greenway connection across Hardy Road connecting the Wolf Creek Greenway to the trails proposed in the Vinton Business Center Master Plan and potentially to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Many citizens indicated a desire to provide a connection between the Wolf Creek and Tinker Creek Greenways.

8.10 FUNDING SOURCES

8.10.1 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

According to VDOT, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) was signed into law by President Obama on Feb.17, 2009. Virginia will receive a total of \$694.5 million in highway funding from ARRA to invest in improving our transportation system. The priorities of this act are to address deficient pavements, structurally deficient bridges and much-needed highway capacity and rail improvements to improve the economic competitiveness of the Commonwealth and offer safe, reliable transportation options for all Virginians.

In May 2009, the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Office of the Secretary of Transportation announced that \$2.0 million of transportation enhancement funding was awarded for the Roanoke River Greenway. The tourism and economic development potential of this major regional trail project made is a strong candidate for funding. The Roanoke River Greenway is a 31 mile bicycle and pedestrian trail that links the cities of Roanoke and Salem, Roanoke County, and the Town of Vinton. Once completed, the greenway will provide linkages to neighborhoods, industrial facilities, business centers, parks, schools, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Additionally, this greenway will make future trail connections available with Montgomery and Franklin Counties.

The first segment of the greenway that the transportation enhancement funding will focus on is connecting the Roanoke River Greenway to the Tinker Creek Greenway at the Western Virginia

Water Authority’s wastewater treatments plant in Southeast Roanoke. The second segment is the portion of the Roanoke River Greenway up to the Roanoke County line. The projected cost of these two portions of the greenway is \$1,400,000.

8.10.2 Capital Improvements Program

The Town of Vinton and Roanoke County should incorporate the recommendations found in this document, including economic development initiatives and transportation improvements into the annual capital improvement budgets. These funds would leverage federal and state financial assistance.

8.10.3 Department of Historic Resources (DHR)

The Department of Historic Resources encourages regional economic competitiveness by offering funding to Certified Local Governments in the form of grants for a variety of uses including surveys of architectural resources and preparation of National Register of Historic Places nominations for heritage resources. Grant funding from DHR may also be used to train and educate Architecture Review Boards and aide in the development of programs and materials to assist the Board in carrying out its daily functions. The rehabilitation of publicly owned buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places and public education programs concerned with local resources and any of the board benefits associated with heritage stewardship program are grant eligible. The Town and County should encourage use of historic tax credits to reduce renovation costs for eligible properties.

8.10.4 Economic Development Authority (EDA)

Throughout the United States, Economic/Industrial Development Authorities assist new and expanding businesses in securing tax-exempt industrial development revenue bonds. These bonds provide as much as 100% financing at interest rates that are much lower than those available from other sources. For the past 15 years, federal regulations have restricted the use of these bonds to financing of

manufacturing facilities. Bonds are issued when financing these facilities, covering the cost of land, buildings, machinery or equipment. A mortgage or lien on the financed property is then secured and repaid from the revenue of the project. Seven directors appointed by the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors govern the Economic Development Authority of Roanoke County, created in 1971. It is authorized to acquire, own, lease and dispose of local properties that will potentially promote industry and develop trade in Virginia.

8.10.5 Public/Private Partnerships (PPP)

Opportunities for additional economic development funding may be available from soliciting corporate sponsorships from commercial and industrial businesses in the Town of Vinton and Eastern Roanoke County. Creating a special tax district for commercial and industrial properties to generate funding for study corridor improvements that will benefit business owners is also a funding opportunity.

8.10.6 Revenue Sharing

The VDOT Revenue Sharing Program provides Roanoke County with an annual opportunity to receive State matching funds for the construction, maintenance, and improvements to primary and secondary roads in the State’s highway system. VDOT and County staff review and evaluate each request received for inclusion in the Revenue Sharing Program. An application for Revenue Sharing Program funding must be made by resolution of the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors. Project funding is allocated by resolution of the Commonwealth Transportation Board. Construction may be performed by VDOT, or where appropriate, by Roanoke County under an agreement with VDOT. The maximum state participation amount is \$1 million per locality.

8.10.7 Six-Year Improvement Plan

The Six-Year Improvement Program allocates funds for transportation projects proposed for construction, development or study in the next six



fiscal years. The program is updated annually and is categorized into urban, primary and secondary systems projects.

8.10.8 Safe Routes to Schools Program

The Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS), launched in September 2006 by Governor Timothy M. Kaine, encourages primary and secondary age children to safely walk and bicycle to school. This program teaches school-age children bicycle and pedestrian safety, promotes healthy and active lifestyles, and funds projects that improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. The SRTS is a federally-funded program that is administered in the Commonwealth of Virginia by VDOT. It was created through the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU Act).

The SRTS program is designed to facilitate partnerships among schools, parents, students, local governments, community groups and non-profit organizations in communities across the nation. This is a phased program that is divided into infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects. The first phase of the program requires approval of a School Travel Plan. Once this Plan is approved, applicants may apply for implementation funding. The funding limit for infrastructure projects is \$500,000 per locality. The funding limit for non-infrastructure projects is \$50,000 per application. The SRTS program provides 100% of the funding so a match is not required. Program guidelines do indicate that applicants are encouraged to leverage funding from other sources.

In 2008, Roanoke County Public Schools were award recipients for SRTS program implementation and bicycle education at William Byrd Middle School.

8.10.9 Virginia Department of Business Assistance (VDBA)

The VDBA is a resource for helping entrepreneurs get their small businesses started and off the ground. As the businesses become established, the VDBA

helps them continue to grow over the years. The agency would provide access to problem solving, workforce training, and other such amenities for local business within the Town of Vinton and east Roanoke County.

The Virginia Small Business Development Center Network (VSBDC) is an additional resource for providing information and services such as economic and business data, a resource library, site location analysis, marketing assistance, and specialized training workshops.

8.10.10 Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

The Virginia Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program provides funding to eligible units of local government through a competitive grant process to address community development needs including housing, downtown revitalization and infrastructure. Funding is available to DHCD by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In the spring of each year, Community Improvement Grant (CIG) applications are due to DHCD for funding consideration for specific projects. The Town of Vinton has successfully obtained CDBG funding for a planning grant for Downtown Revitalization. A Community Improvement Grant application is the next step to formally applying for capital funding for the downtown revitalization projects.

8.10.11 Other Economic Development Programs

Entrepreneur Training and MicroEnterprise Loan Program

An Entrepreneur Training and MicroEnterprise Loan Program is offered through THIS VALLEY WORKS and Total Action Against Poverty (TAP). This program lasts five sessions and includes business start-up, management, marketing, planning and finances. The five sessions are available for a \$12 registration fee per business. Program participants will receive technical assistance in developing business plans and financial projections. Start-up or

expansion loans of up to \$35,000 may be available for qualifying micro-businesses.

Eligible businesses must be located in the RVARC area (Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, and Roanoke counties and the cities of Clifton Forge, Covington, Roanoke, and Salem) and business owners must qualify as low to moderate income, or 51% of the employees must qualify as such. Mentoring will also be provided through the start-up or expansion. Those planning childcare facilities will have specific training sessions.

New Markets Tax Credits Program

The Virginia Small Business Financing Authority’s (VSBFA) New Markets Tax Credits Program is designed to help existing businesses fund the purchase of real estate occupied by their companies and/or capital equipment used in their operation. The VSBFA serves as the conduit through which the Community Reinvestment Fund makes New Markets Tax Credits loans available.

Providing Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs (P.A.C.E.)

The P.A.C.E. Program provides access to capital for disadvantaged Virginia businesses by encouraging banks to make loans that they would otherwise not make due to a borrower’s risk profile. The program is administered by the VSBFA for the Department of Minority Business Enterprise (DMBE). The P.A.C.E. program provides two financing mechanisms, the Capital Access Fund for Disadvantaged Businesses and the Loan Guaranty Fund for Disadvantaged Businesses.

Small Business Environmental Compliance Assistance Fund

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Virginia Department of Business Assistance (DBA) to develop and administer a revolving loan program. Through this program, low-interest rate loans are available to small businesses for the purchase and installation of replacement equipment needed to comply with the Clean Air Act; or to implement voluntary pollution prevention measures;

or for the implementation of selected voluntary agricultural best management (BMPs) practices as listed in the Virginia Agricultural BMP Manual.

Taxable Industrial Development Bond (IDB) Program

Economic development financing is available for the acquisition, construction and equipping of commercial and industrial facilities. Through the public taxable bond market, the VSBFA supplies financing to Virginia businesses. Taxable bonds, exempt from Virginia state income tax, provide long-term, fixed asset financing. The applicant must own, manage, or occupy the facility being financed and be providing goods or services.

Virginia Community Reinvestment Program

The VSBFA’s Community Reinvestment Program is designed to help existing businesses fund the purchase of owner occupied real estate and/or capital equipment. The VSBFA serves as the conduit through which the Community Reinvestment Fund (CRF – a Minnesota based 501 c3) makes loans in economically disadvantaged areas, to disadvantaged business owners, or in situations that create economic benefit or important public impact as determined by the VSBFA and CRF. The assets financed will be pledged as collateral for these loans.

Virginia Economic Development Loan Fund (VEDLF)

For businesses creating new jobs or saving "at risk" jobs in Virginia, a program was set up to fill the financing gap between private lending and private equity. VEDLF can only contribute up to 40% of the project cost and the company must provide a minimum of 10% as cash equity, the maximum loan amount is \$1,000,000, and one permanent, full-time job must be created or saved for each \$20,000 borrowed. Companies manufacturing or exporting goods may receive the loan and the funds can be used for land and buildings, expansion or improvement of facilities, construction of new facilities, or to purchase machinery and equipment. This loan cannot be used for working capital.



8.11 SCHEDULE OF IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

A scheduled of implementation strategies for the Plan is provided in Appendix B. The strategies are grouped by topic, responsible party, and timeframes. The timeframes are Tier 1 (0-5 years), Tier 2 (6-10 years) and Tier 3 (10+ years). Some strategies are planned to be completed within the years allocated in one timeframe, while others cross timeframes.