

Roanoke Strategic Plan

Overview of Goals & Actions

A strategic plan is a blueprint to guide future growth and development of the community. It is a tool to guide decision makers in planning for the vision of a community. The goals and action steps are the most important and substantive section of a comprehensive strategic plan – without action items, a strategic plan is little more than a dream. The difference between a dream and a plan is the effort the visionaries take to make it happen.

Goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely. Goals must be accompanied by action items. Without a goal and an associated action, a strategic plan will be little more than a document to occupy shelf space.

Implementation of these ideas and recommendations should be carefully considered by the various organizations that carry out the vision set forth in this plan.

Roanoke Strategic Plan

Land Use

The land use issues that face Roanoke are typical of many small rural communities across the nation. Roanoke's expansion will be challenging due to the wetland area along State Route 24 and lack of solid and healthy infrastructure within the town's boundaries.

There is certainly a divide in the community with those in favor of growth and those who would like Roanoke to remain "status quo" . Through proper planning, it is possible for Roanoke to provide structured, orderly growth while maintaining its quaint, small town appeal. With proper regulations and zoning, a balance in growth will and can occur.

Issues

Undevelopable wetland area

Lack of growth strategy plan

Sewer/water would be taxed with new development

Lack of uniform town building codes

Land Use Goal

Provide land development that is harmonious with current land uses while maintaining the small town character and protecting the rich culture through the implementation of growth strategies and local land use planning.

Goal

Establish long range land use plan

Recommendations:

- Develop growth options for wetland area
- Develop building code for St. Rt. 24 growth
- Develop growth strategy for town
- Purchase buildings and land (when available)

Action Plan	Land Use
	Assign task force to determine all possible uses for wetlands area – include recreational possibilities. Work with Army Corps of Engineers to determine best and most economical use for wetland area.
	Develop long range land use plan – include zoning regulations and code, additional areas for parking (including large tour bus parking), recreational areas, agricultural areas, parks, additional walking trails, etc.
	Encourage town officials to set aside funding for long range planning efforts
	Encourage zoning board to develop uniform zoning codes to preserve and protect the historic character of Roanoke both downtown and along St. Rt. 24
	REDO (and other /town organizations) need to develop fund to buy available land and buildings to control and assist in growth
	Utilize Indiana Land Use consortium services – www.indianalanduse.org

INFRASTRUCTURE

Overview

The most significant challenge facing Roanoke today is the lack of solid water and sewer infrastructure. Without a solid foundation, growth in any capacity will tax an already failing system. Additional growth at this time would be detrimental to new and already existing businesses and residents. It is imperative the initial focus of this strategic plan be towards developing and funding infrastructure improvements. Without these improvements, new businesses could experience infrastructure failure within first two years of opening their business.

Residents could also see a decrease in the reliability of water and sewer service. Since this report has been previously noted a divide among residents who want growth and those that do not – creating a system in which new growth might hinder a resident's existing service is detrimental to gaining support for future growth. On the other hand, if these same residents were to experience improved service due to retail/commercial or industrial growth in their area, they are more likely to support future growth. Therefore, as Roanoke plans for growth, upgrading the existing infrastructure will be essential.

As several participants suggested in their interviews, "We (Roanoke) just need to bite the bullet and make the (sewer) improvements.

In addition to the immediate water and sewer needs, the infrastructure plan should include extending Main Street into the current Geiger Property. The extension would allow for easier access into the development for residents, tourists and business owners. This access would encourage current business owners to remain in Roanoke. It would also encourage potential new owners within the complex.

Goal

Upgrade water, sewer and other sanitary facilities to promote orderly growth and serve the existing needs of the businesses and residents of Roanoke

Suggestions/Action Plan

Complete work plan developed by Town Superintendent: plan should include future speculated business and residential growth

Encourage town officials to fund entire infrastructure plan

Investigate private and public funding options. Provide report to task force.

Extend Main Street to Geiger Property

Community Facilities

Over view

Roanoke has good family values, friendly people, an outstanding elementary school, close natural resources – a great place to raise a family. Yet many of those family members raised in Roanoke are not staying in Roanoke to raise their families. When interviewed, the younger generation explained that “there is very little for us to do here (in Roanoke)”

Within the last 10 years, Roanoke has lost its pharmacy, grocery store options, hardware store and family dining establishments. Residents are forced to go to Huntington or Fort Wayne for these amenities. While visiting Fort Wayne and Huntington for these needs, residents often buy gas and other amenities at that time, thus taking business away from existing Roanoke businesses.

In order to encourage residents and families to stay in the area, Roanoke needs to provide activities and places for residents to gather – like a Community Center.

Roanoke also needs to develop and enforce a uniform and unique building code – creating a well-groomed, business friendly environment.

Action Plan

Organize community action group – get residents of the community engaged in helping Roanoke – utilize volunteers and leverage private donations to build the community.

Assign task force to develop a plan to build a Community Center. Community Center needs to include place for children under 18 to “hang out” after park closes, a fitness facilities, meeting rooms, etc.

Develop and add trails around Roanoke. Work with Land Use task force to include trails in long range land use plan.

Construct skateboard park

Complete Phase Two of downtown beautification plan

Draft and adopt uniform sign ordinance within Roanoke boundaries

Erect decorative poles for community information along St. Rt. 24

Enforce zoning codes and regulations established by town council for existing and new businesses in Roanoke (including facades, signage, building materials, etc)

Adopt minimum landscaping requirements for developments

Commercial and Industrial Expansion

Overview

Roanoke is a wonderful small town, rich in heritage, full of pride and able to offer great assets such as the park, the elementary school and location – it is also the best kept secret in NE Indiana! What is not a secret is that the American population is growing at record rates. The number of Americans is projected to double by the year 2020. As in the past, the urban areas will see much of this growth, however, the urban areas are expanding. Many of the areas considered rural are now “suburban”. While Roanoke's anonymity has allowed for its small, quaint character, urban growth will soon be reaching the Roanoke boundaries.

This strategic plan is the first step towards harnessing and controlling the growth within Roanoke. Once the land use plan and zoning codes are in place, Roanoke needs to take proactive approach to expanding and attracting businesses to Roanoke.

Due to the rapidly changing economy, it is more important than ever for a town/county/region to diversify the industries and number of employers in their area. Areas such as Muncie, IN and Detroit, MI have seen first hand what can happen to a community that relied on one industry for employment and overall economic strength.

Goal

Retain and expand existing businesses while diversifying economic base.

Suggestions/Action Plans (once infrastructure is in place)

Create downtown revitalization zone

Create TIF district

Work with HCUED to develop industrial park and/or development along CR 200.

Invite Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC), Site Selectors, state and local officials to visit Roanoke

Meet with existing companies to determine their needs

Establish revolving loan fund to assist companies and community with economic development projects

Educate elected officials and residents about the benefits of and need for economic development in Roanoke

Actively recruit businesses to locate in Roanoke

Educate government and company officials on grants and incentives available for industrial expansion.

Promote REDO and/or other local organizations to purchase land and/or buildings when available to encourage structured growth.

TOWN MANAGER

Overview

Over the last 10 years, Roanoke has twice attempted to employ a town manager. Due to the nature of the reporting structure, the position has not maintained a long-term existence. In order to complete such an aggressive strategic plan, there needs to be a “plan manager”. There needs to be a person responsible for the implementation of the plan. While the plan can be overseen (and should be) by a task force of volunteers, the amount of work contained in Roanoke’s strategic plan can not be completed by volunteers alone.

In addition to the amount of work contained in the strategic plan, the amount of money required to complete the plan is far more than most small, local communities can handle. However, the number of grants and loans for both community and economic development projects are staggering. Most communities do not apply for these loans and grants because the work to apply is often daunting. Therefore, many of these grants and loans go unused each year. One of the responsibilities of a town manager (or equal) is to apply for grants and loans to fund the projects identified within a community’s strategic plan.

The Roanoke Town Council could create ordinance to allow a town manager to report to an executive. In creating this ordinance, the town manager would not be subject to the change in the town council members – please refer to Indiana Code 36-4-12-10 Sec. 10: <http://www.in.gov/legislative/ic/code/title36/ar4/ch12.html>

Action Items/Suggestions

Create town manager position

Encourage Town Council to pass ordinance allowing Town Manager to report to executive or executive committee

Tourism

Overview

The leaders of Roanoke have recognized the location and quaint small town feel as one of the strengths of Roanoke. They also recognize the need and desire of their residents to keep Roanoke "small, but thriving". One of the ways to incorporate both is through tourism.

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world and with 15,000 cars passing Roanoke on St. Rt. 24 each day – Roanoke is sitting in a prime location for tourism.

The key to tourism is to create a niche. If someone were to ask people from the Midwest if they had heard of Nashville, IN or Santa Claus, IN or Shipshewana, IN - most people would be able to identify the area or at the very least have heard about the area. If these same people were to ask about Seelyville, IN or Milan, IN or Georgetown, IN – very few people would have even heard about them. Why? It is not due to population...:

Nashville, IN (population 825)
Santa Claus, IN (population 2,041)
Shipshewana (population 536)

Seelyville (population 1182)
Milan (population 1816)
Georgetown (population 2227)

But rather Nashville, Santa Claus and Shipshewana have carved a niche for their community. To become a tourist destination, Roanoke needs to develop their niche.

Action Items/Suggestions

Establish an identity – suggestions included: organic, boutiques, specialty shops, healthy living

Increase festival activity

Partner with Vera Bradley, Shipshewana and other area tourism destinations (bus tours)

Develop partnership with current businesses – establish coupon program to be provided to bus tours, etc.

Refer to Immutible Rules of Successful Tourism (attached)
<http://www.awcnet.org/conf2003/RulesofSuccessfulTourism.pdf>

Task Force

Overview

Strategic plans most often fail due to lack of implementation. Too often, leaders will participate in a strategic planning process – only to have the finished report sit on a shelf due to lack of action.

In order to insure success, a task force of community and industry leaders needs to be developed to oversee and guide the implementation of this strategic plan. While all members of the community should be encouraged to be involved – the following are a list of potential task force members. Each of the names listed below were recommendations from community members. While the list contains many names, each person should be considered. The task force could (and should be) divided into committees. Each strategic section in this plan should be represented by a subcommittee. These subcommittees would include infrastructure, community facilities, town manager, land use plan, tourism and commercial and industrial expansion.

The list of potential task force members include:

- Pete Eshelmann
- Alice Echelmann
- Dave Harris
- Valerie Power
- EJ Richards
- Bob Rose
- Business Owners
- Residential representative
- Deloss Hartley
- Carol (from Carol's Furniture)
- Member from each generation
- Judge Turpin
- Perry Collins
- Paul Swain
- John Klingenberg
- Michelle Schweiterman
- John Nelson
- Jim Warner
- Rex, the barber
- Steve Cadawaller
- Bob Huffman
- Paul Roth
- Brian Seacour
- Junior Geiger
- Mike Domm
- Developer (Ellis)
- Jim Lang
- John Mann
- Katie Law
- Mike Gibson