

# Re-Visioning Roxboro Strategic Planning Report

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Report:

Demographic Overview, Background

Vision, Mission, Council's Operating Principles

Draft Plan (Goals, Objectives, Activities)

Next Steps

Appendices:

Agendas & Notes for all planning sessions

A. December 1, 2005

B. December 17, 2005

C. January 3, 2006

D. February 4, 2006

Citizen & Employee Focus Group design & responses

E. January 27, 2006

F. January 28, 2006

<b>CITY SNAPSHOT:</b>											
<b>City of Roxboro, NC</b> (source: US Census, 2000)											
Population 2000	% White	% Non-white	% 0-17	% 18-64	% 65 & Over	% H.S. Educ or <	% College degree	Median Household Income	Poverty Rate	% Home-ownership	Median House Value
8,696	50%	50%	24%	58%	18%	85%	15%	\$26,875	16.8%	51%	\$72,900
<b>United States</b>											
	75%	25%	14%	74%	12%	76%	24%	\$41,994	12.4%	66%	\$119,600

## **Getting Started**

In an effort to develop a long-term vision for their city and engage people from throughout the community in strengthening its future, Roxboro's elected officials, with the assistance of staff from the UNC Chapel Hill School of Government's *Public Intersection Project*, undertook a strategic planning process in late 2005.

This report summarizes the approach Council used to advance its work, including the development of some internal principles of conduct, and the priorities they've chosen to guide their efforts on behalf of the City of Roxboro. The agendas and notes from the four Council planning sessions provide insight into the Council's recommendations and are included in this report as Appendix A.

One motivation for the planning process is to develop a comprehensive approach to city services to guide both staff and Council as they prepare the City's budgets, including the budget for FY 2006-07. Another interest is Council's desire for a higher level of citizen input and participation in the life of the City.

In conducting this phase of work, the process balanced the competing considerations of efficiency and cost-effectiveness while building in mechanisms to encourage community involvement in decision-making processes. Council chose to gauge acceptance, support, and relevance of their vision by soliciting feedback from a cross-section of citizens and city employees through a series of small focus groups, with 24 and 21 total attendees, respectively. The focus group questions and citizen and employee feedback are documented in Appendix B.

Council observed that the feedback and ranking data from these focus groups did not differ substantially from their own priorities but did impact many of the activities or the emphasis applied to the overall goals. For instance, as they considered how to apply stricter code enforcement, the number one criterion for deciding which properties to target first was the threat it presents to public safety. This supports and addresses the concern raised in the citizen focus groups about drug use and related activity. Furthermore, as a result of the focus group feedback, Council incorporated some additional strategies to communicate more effectively with citizens.

Council recognizes that future events will affect the issues identified as top priorities today. Recognizing that change is inevitable and planning too far into the future is impractical, council decided to treat this final document as a 'work in progress,' subject to continuous review and revision in order to adapt to changing conditions, circumstances, partners, and opportunities. Council also set short term and longer term objectives to determine how to factor elements from the plan into the work of the council and city staff. Self-evaluation should be ongoing and continuous.

Many challenging decisions remain before the Council. There are blank spots to fill, cost estimates to prepare, and information still to gather. This document is intentionally brief and the format user-friendly to encourage its sharing, discussion, and understanding with a variety of community organizations and citizens.

## **Vision for Roxboro:**

A community that is ...

- safe
- healthy
- scenic, quaint, vibrant
- family-oriented
- well-educated

Where citizens ...

- own more of the homes in which they live
- locate here by choice
- have all the opportunities they need for shopping, restaurants, jobs, entertainment, and fun/recreation

And everyone ...

- is and feels informed, appreciated, acknowledged, and invited to be actively involved with one another and the community.

## **Mission Statement:**

To create an inviting environment with opportunities that will add value to the community of Roxboro.

## **City Government can further this mission by:**

- Engaging other funders and governments to encourage change;
- Balancing enforcement and encouragement activities to guide behavior;
- Creating the environment in which positive things can happen; and
- Distinguishing between what the City does and what the City can influence through partnership and cooperation with local organizations and citizens to encourage growth and improve quality of life.

## **Council's Operating Principles:**

1. We value and strive for a team approach to governing that includes the perspectives, skills, and abilities of council, staff, citizen, and other potential partners.
2. We always serve others in a courteous, professional, and fair manner.
3. We want to make a positive difference in the lives of our residents by making decisions that consider the greater good of our community.
4. We appreciate and encourage a diversity of viewpoints; therefore, we listen with respect, respond promptly to all inquiries, and consider all input.
5. We expect to be fully informed in our decision-making and will not govern by anecdote.
6. We are passionate in our discussions, yet maintain a respect for each other.
7. We are willing to compromise.

## **What Are the Key Issues Facing Our Community?**

The work outlined by Council is a combination of new initiatives, continuing work, and mandates posed by other organizations. These issues also represent areas where Council might have direct influence – such as planning for water and sewer extensions or making upgrades to city employees’ information technology needs – or more opportunities for Council to build partnerships, such as through economic development, planning for growth, or beautification efforts.

In many cases, the actions Council lists support multiple goals and objectives. For example, “adding another staff person to complete the unified development ordinance” can also support plans for possible annexation, updating the land use plan, and/or providing greater code enforcement to upgrade ‘problem’ properties.

Change requires alterations on many fronts and in many ways. Since it is important to recognize both the type of change being undertaken and the line of responsibility for making that change happen; therefore, the document categorizes the various actions in the following ways:

**Goal #1: Increase tax base, not tax rate**

<b>Action needed</b>	<b>Who takes responsibility</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Additional action or information required</b>
Desire a minimum growth rate in tax base of 3% annually.  The City Council will keep this goal in mind as they make decisions on behalf of Roxboro's citizens.	Council Staff	ongoing	

## Goal #2: Economic development

Action needed	Who takes responsibility	7/07		Additional action or information required
		By 6/07	to 6/10	
<b><i>Capital Investment, Infrastructure</i></b>				
1. Replace or repair existing sewer lines to meet state requirements	Council Staff	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use information in Swartz report to decide next steps</li> </ul>	Council	Feb 22, 2006		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare cost estimates for FY 2006-07 budget</li> </ul>	Staff			
<b><i>Policy or procedural changes</i></b>				
2. Prepare economic development plan, including any incentives city is willing to offer	Staff	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review current plan with County for how, when, and where water line extensions are to be made</li> </ul>	Staff			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify any compromises that city is willing to make with developers or changes that might be suggested to County</li> </ul>	Council			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft economic development plan</li> </ul>	Staff			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate dialogue with Person County commissioners and staff and area developers about the city's economic development interests as expressed through the plan</li> </ul>	Council Staff			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather and consider incorporating feedback from County and developers into draft plan</li> </ul>	Staff			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize plan</li> </ul>	Council Staff			

**Goal #2: Economic development** – continued

Action needed	Who takes responsibility	By 6/07	7/07 to 6/10	Additional action or information required
3. Develop a unified development ordinance (UDO) that would encourage joint work with development partners and guide land use decisions.	Staff (work in progress)	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider adding another staff person to complete the ordinance and policy changes and other duties</li> </ul>	Council			Staff to provide cost estimate for FY 2006-07 budget
4. Review, revise land use plan	Staff	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate into the UDO</li> </ul>	Staff			
5. Offer incentives to residential and commercial property owners that invest in their property and increase the value and tax base of their homes.	Council Staff			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include options such as tax incentives, mini-grants, or low interest loans as part of the draft economic development plan.</li> </ul>	Staff			
6. Undertake consistent and increased code enforcement to upgrade problem properties.		X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an inventory of “hot spot” areas</li> </ul>	Staff			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritize enforcement based on objective criteria (crime, living conditions, proximity to schools, etc)</li> </ul>	Staff			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uphold enforcement, even when under pressure to back off</li> </ul>	Council			

**Goal #2: Economic development** – continued

Action needed	Who takes responsibility	7/07		Additional action or information required
		By 6/07	to 6/10	
<i>Partnerships, Relationships</i>				
7. Explore methods to increase or cooperate on industrial recruitment ventures.	Council Staff	X	X	Draft Economic Development Plan
• Meet with Person County officials to discuss potential co-recruitment strategies and opportunities	Council	X		
• Meet with Durham County officials to discuss potential co-recruitment strategies and opportunities	Council		X	
8. Market area’s assets through attendance at monthly Director’s Table meetings (EDC, Arts Council, RUDC, Merchants Association, Chamber, TDA)	Council	X		Assign Council member to group
9. Advertise Roxboro’s ‘excess’ water capacity		X		
• Provide data about water capacity to potential collaborators in Person County and surrounding area (planning & economic development programs )	Staff	X		
• Include this data on City’s website	Staff	X		
10. Collaborate with others locally to offer entertainment in public spaces to attract visitors and encourage civic pride and involvement. (Chamber of Commerce, Parks & Recreation, Arts Council, etc.)	Council Staff	X	X	
• Continue to provide logistical support for planned events (permitting, management, security, clean-up)	Staff			
• Provide financial contributions when possible	Council			



### Goal #3: Forecast and planning for growth

Action needed	Who takes responsibility	By 6/07	7/07 to 6/10	Additional action or information required
<i>Study, Collect data</i>				
11. Plan for possible annexation	Council Staff	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather data, establish criteria for annexing area, develop plan to accomplish for west side of Roxboro using consultant to conduct study and prepare report.</li> </ul>	Staff			Staff to prepare cost estimate for FY 2006-07 budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage voluntary annexation by writing UDO policies that encourage this.</li> </ul>	Staff			
12. Establish up to a one-mile Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) boundary that promotes growth in a manner consistent with existing uses inside the city limits.		X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin discussions with County about the establishment and identify the natural boundary lines for short- and long-term ETJ.</li> </ul>	Council Staff	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess implications for staff for code enforcement related to ETJ</li> </ul>	Staff	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add Western Roxboro annexation study to ETJ study</li> </ul>		X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After forming ETJ, conduct a broad annexation study</li> </ul>			X	
13. Obtain permit from state to ensure water supply from Dan River.		X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NC Division of Environment and Natural Resources is completing the next phase, an environmental assessment, which required a comment period by 16 state agencies.</li> </ul>	Staff to follow up	early 2006		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Status of this permit informs other conversations, especially about economic development.</li> </ul>	Council Staff			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss how to use and market access to Dan River Water, especially with Durham County</li> </ul>			X	

### Goal #3: Forecast and planning for growth - continued

Action needed	Who takes responsibility	By 6/07	7/07 to 6/10	Additional action or information required
<b><i>Policy or Procedural Changes</i></b>				
14. Expand underground utilities in uptown area			X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require underground utilities for all new construction by writing this into the UDO.</li> </ul>	Staff			
15. Update land use plan	Staff	X		
<b><i>Partnerships, relationships</i></b>				
16. Provide community education to convey status of current waste water treatment system, especially the treatment plant, through publications, postcards in water bills, information on the website, press releases, possibly tours, and other community involvement vehicles as might be developed.	Staff	X		
17. Explore establishing Neighborhood Planning Councils, Community Watch, or some other form of information exchange, to engage more residents in residents in participating in and planning for City's future.	Council Staff	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use employees that are already communicating on a one-on-one basis with citizens, to establish feedback systems (Fire Safety Education officer, etc.)</li> </ul>	Staff			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage citizens in issuing invitations, organizing the audiences, and making logistical arrangements.</li> </ul>	Staff Council			

### Goal #3: Forecast and planning for growth - continued

Action needed	Who takes responsibility	7/07		Additional action or information required
		By 6/07	to 6/10	
<i>Study, Collect data</i>				
18. Convene meeting with US Congressional representatives to discuss traffic congestion and space limitations of current Post Office	Mayor Council	X		Arrange meeting
19. Eliminate the unused railway spur at entry way to city to encourage redevelopment and beautify entryway.			X	
• Research what Council's role might be in this endeavor	Staff		X	
• Contact railroad to determine their plans for the unused spur	Staff		X	
20. Assess impact of growth in and from neighboring counties to assess how that affects Roxboro and to identify shared interests		X		
• Explore opportunities to collaborate, explore their interests, and express Roxboro's interests (Elected officials in: Person, Durham, Granville, Caswell, Orange, Southern Virginia)	Mayor Council	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Economic Development Plan complete</li> <li>• Arrange meetings</li> <li>• Share data analysis, when available</li> </ul>
• Study growth and demographic patterns of areas that developed in a similar way similar to Roxboro to determine what can be learned from their experiences. (Cary, Apex, etc.)	Mayor Staff	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine comparable places</li> <li>• Arrange personal or telephone interviews</li> </ul>
• Consider sharing cost of data analysis software package with Chamber of Commerce.	Staff	X		Costs to be presented to Council in FY 2006-07 budget planning
• Include data analysis in updated land use plan	Staff	X		

**Goal #3: Forecast and planning for growth - continued**

Action needed	Who takes responsibility	By 6/07	7/07 to 6/10	Additional action or information required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider a city-wide or regional GIS system with Person County</li> </ul>	Staff	X		City staff to meet with County staff to discuss feasibility and cost of such a system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use this data to market the City in creative ways, including marketing the ‘livability’ of Roxboro for those who commute other places for employment.</li> </ul>	Staff	X		
21. Convey Roxboro’s transportation needs to officials with the Department of Transportation (DOT)			X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask DOT to update the thoroughfare plan for the area.</li> </ul>	Council Staff		X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with NC Legislators to continue to lobby DOT and others to widen Highway 501 North to four lanes.</li> </ul>	Council		X	

## Goal #4: Enhance Housing Stock and Mix

Action needed	Who takes responsibility	By 6/07	7/07 to 6/10	Additional action or information required
<b><i>Policy or Procedural Changes</i></b>				
22. Greater code enforcement to upgrade ‘problem’ properties		X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider privilege license for rental properties to help fund code enforcement</li> </ul>	Staff to develop Council to adopt	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct land use survey to identify and prioritize dilapidated housing</li> </ul>	Staff	X		
<b><i>Partnerships, Relationships</i></b>				
23. Hold a “housing summit” of housing related groups to consider shared concerns and collaborative problem-solving approaches to enhancing housing stock and mix in Roxboro. (include banks, FHA, displaced tenants, Housing Authority, Realtors Association, Habitat-For-Humanity, home builders, etc.)	Staff Council	X		Develop a list of potential invitees and draft agenda
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collect data on strategies the City could implement, such as incentives or grants, to strive towards and promote minimum housing standards. Present the possibilities at the summit for discussion.</li> </ul>	Mayor Staff	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create educational materials and list of incentives for potential home owners</li> </ul>	Staff	X		

## Goal #5: Undertake City Beautification Efforts

Action needed	Who takes responsibility	By 6/07	7/07 to 6/10	Additional action or information required
<b><i>Policy or Procedural Changes</i></b>				
24. Fund and uphold code enforcement efforts on dilapidated buildings and unkempt properties.	Council Staff	X		
<b><i>Partnerships, Relationships</i></b>				
25. Partner with Chamber of Commerce and other like-minded organizations to create and fund beautification awards for businesses, home owners, and renters.	Council Staff	X		Review discontinued program for possible adaptation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Chamber's information outlets to publicize awards program</li> </ul>	Staff	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Chamber to develop details and cost of Beautification Awards program</li> </ul>	Staff	X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renew loan and grants programs with Chamber and explore strategies to encourage corporate sponsorship.</li> </ul>			X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve youth volunteers in beautification efforts</li> </ul>	Council Staff	X		

## Goal #6: Provide Support for City Work Force

Action needed	Who takes responsibility	By 6/07	7/07 to 6/10	Additional action or information required
26. Ensure competitive compensation packages are offered to City employees.		X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request an update to the classification and compensation study, done by the MAPS Group in 2004, to include overall benefits and wage (total compensation) comparison</li> </ul>	Council Staff	X		Council to define instructions to MAPS Group about the scope of benchmark comparisons – possible inclusion of private sector employers in the area.
27. Explore rewarding employee productivity through performance-based recognition system and incentives.	Council	X		Council to define expectations and parameters for staff in drafting a plan
28. Invest in employee safety and training to ensure competent, safe, and certified work force.	Council Staff	X	X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximize employee's job safety by employing a safety officer, developing a safety policy, and providing safety training on a periodic basis.</li> </ul>				Staff to continue policies and plans for training
29. Seek staff feedback on a regular basis to gauge morale and satisfaction by conducting employee satisfaction survey.	Staff	X		Decide on format and frequency

## GOAL #7: Ensure Responsiveness Throughout City Services

Action needed	Who takes responsibility	By 6/07	7/07 to 6/10	Additional action or information required
30. Create operational principles for customer service to set expectations for employee performance.	Staff	X		Design process to develop operational principles. Define level of involvement of and review by all employees.
31. Develop city-wide tracking system for requests citizens make of the City. Use data to evaluate the type of request, response time, and disposition of request.	Staff	X		
32. Build customer service components into annual staff evaluations.	Staff		X	Develop tracking systems, define performance criteria, and use the data in employee evaluations.
33. Develop a technology plan to update and support outdated technology (software and hardware).	Staff	X		Cost of staffing IT in-house or cooperatively with the County.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a new IT system, including an accounting system</li> </ul>			X	Staff to develop cost estimate



## **What Next?**

The final draft report is intended to be a continual work-in-progress and not a static document. It provides a fundamental structure on which on-going self-evaluation and rejuvenating activities might be built.

Staff will need to further develop and refine the document, particularly to provide data on the financing required to do the work. Once that is done, Council will need to re-prioritize within these categories so that specific time frames can be assigned for each action step. Much of this may happen as Council and staff hold budget work sessions in preparation of considering and adopting a budget for Fiscal Year 2006-07, which begins July 1, 2006. Many of the infrastructure decisions will be folded in to the Capital Improvement Plan that covers long-term funding for City needs.

Elements from the final draft strategic plan, especially those that require changes in policies or procedures and strengthening or developing relationships, will be factored into the annual work plans for council, the manager, department heads, and other staff. In this way, the plan becomes a tool and a guiding force for holding all accountable to their work.

Sharing this work with others in the local community and beyond is the joint responsibility of Mayor, Council, and staff. To encourage healthy civic engagement, it will be critical for the City to continually provide information to citizens – both one-on-one and in mass communication – about decisions, plans, and actions. Often, understanding *why* things happen can generate some measure of support even if there is disagreement about the decision itself.

## **How Can the City Respond?**

Throughout this planning process, the Council expressed interest in opening up lines of communication between citizens and City government in both traditional and innovative ways. Developing continuous feedback loops between citizens and Council, Council and other partners, Council and city staff will stimulate both information-sharing and problem-solving. One way Council might do this is to announce this commitment to civic engagement by sharing the Operating Principles prominently and consistently in printed documents, public spaces, and spoken words. The commitment will need to be reinforced and demonstrated through the Council's actions.

Finally, Council and staff can consider and continue this work by agreeing to revisit it in a regular and continuous way. Specific review session(s) can be set aside annually, incorporated into customary meeting times, or folded into a broader community planning and evaluation process. Any of these or other review practices may be used, depending on community circumstances and desired outcomes. The essential function is to obligate the time and effort towards the review, commit to making necessary adjustments, celebrate and share accomplishments, and add new goals as they become appropriate.