

Roanoke Valley – Alleghany Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

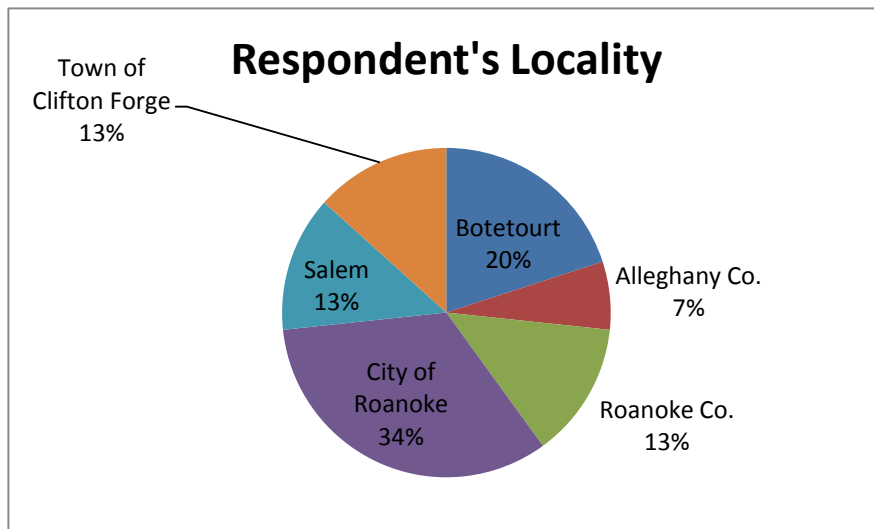
Summary of Public Informational Meetings and Public Comments

Two public informational meetings were held in the project area in the month of October. The first meeting was held in Clifton Forge on Wednesday, October 1, 2008 at the Clifton Forge Fire Department and the second was held in Roanoke County on Thursday, October 9, 2008 at the Roanoke County Administration Center. The meetings were held in an open house style format opening with a brief presentation from 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM to maximize participation. A total of 14 individuals participated in the regional meetings. Each participant was asked to review the draft project listing and to complete a survey. 11 survey forms were collected from the meetings and 2 additional responses were made directly on the project web site. In addition, two individuals responded with comments directed to staff.

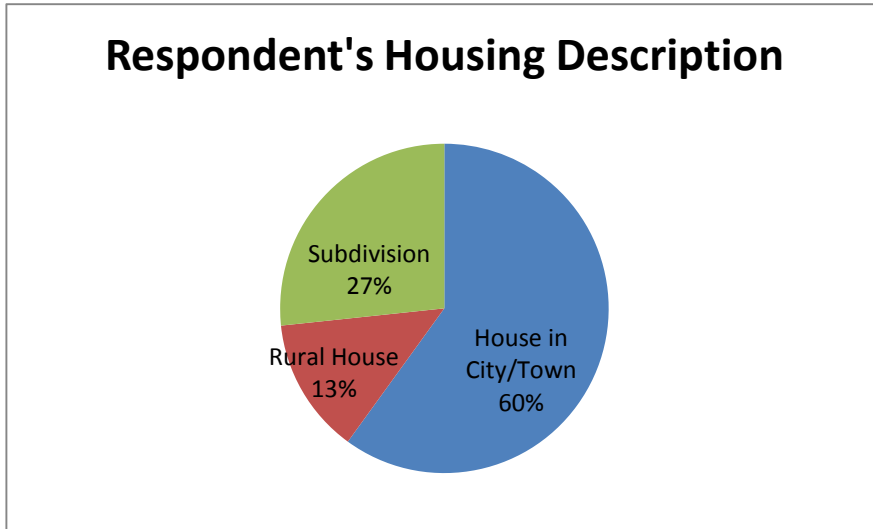
The following tables and figures illustrate the characteristics of the respondents and summarize the results of the survey. A full listing of written comments as well as a printout of all survey results have been included following the narrative.

Demographic Characteristics

The following chart shows the respondents by their locality. Nearly half of all respondents (47%) were from Roanoke County and the City of Roanoke, the most populous areas of the study area.

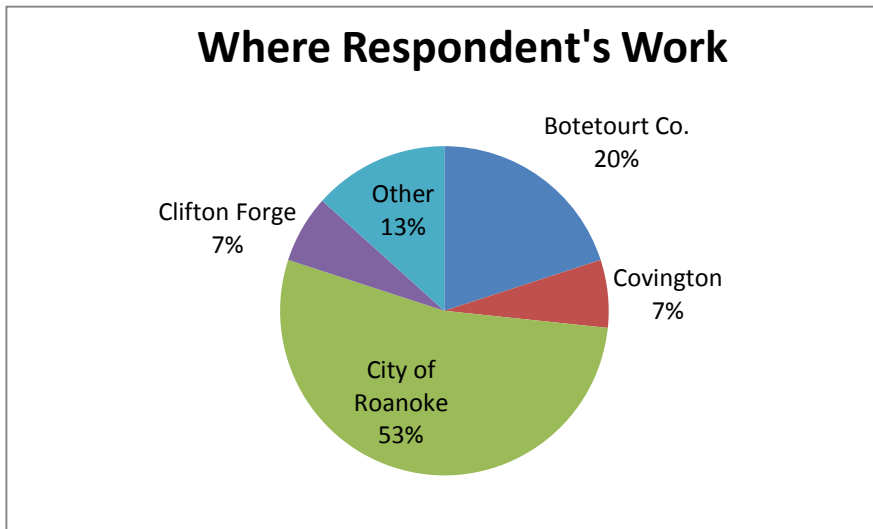


The following chart describes the setting in which respondent's live and their general housing situation.

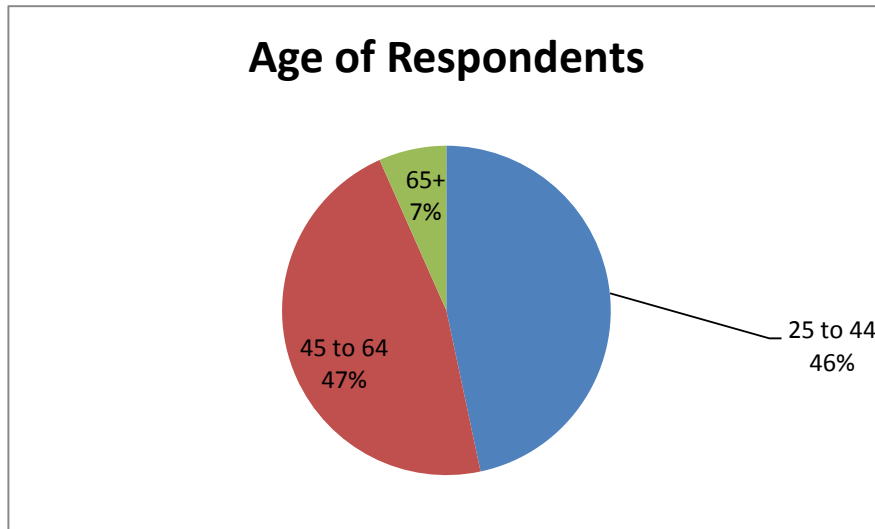


Respondents were asked to state how many years they have lived in the project area. The average response was just over 21 years. Responses ranged from as few as 8 years to as many as 60 years.

Respondents were asked where they worked. Most respondents at 53% worked in the City of Roanoke and the second highest proportion (20%) worked in Botetourt County. A total of 2 respondents checked 'other' for their answer (1 was retired and 1 works in Blacksburg).



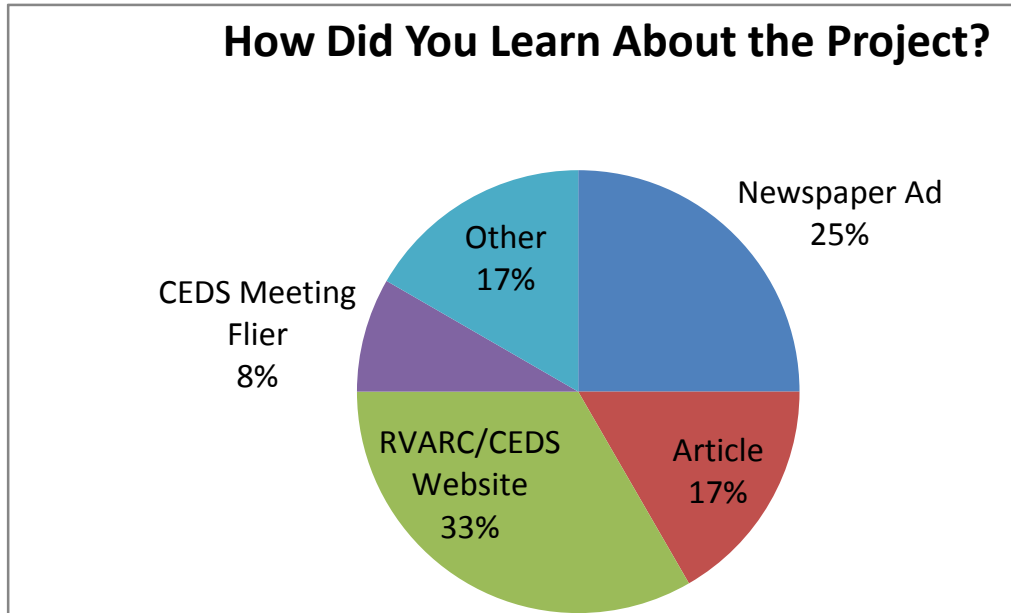
Respondents were asked to indicate an age cohort (or range of ages) in which they fell. The following shows that the majority of respondents fell within the age grouping of 45 to 64 years of age.



Respondents were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with statements regarding the CEDS project listing:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Projects listed in the CEDS adequately address key issues in the Roanoke Valley – Alleghany Region	63.6%	27.3%	9.1%	0%	0%
Five years is a reasonable amount of time to implement the projects listed in the CEDS	33.3%	41.7%	16.7%	8.3%	0%

Respondents were asked how they heard of the meeting or the project. The following chart illustrates that most heard of the meeting through channels other than those suggested on the survey. Those who answered other indicated that they heard of the meeting through word of mouth, email newsletters by various groups, and from involvement in community and environmental groups.



Respondents were asked for any additional comments. They are listed below, verbatim and in the order in which they were received:

1. Over many years I have supported local efforts to bring in outside experts to help us define where we stand when it comes to competing for Economic Development money- either in the form of grants or in the form of Businesses coming to town and setting up shop. These studies have been done at least 3 times that I know of – using different methodologies and experts. Most all have come to the same conclusion or at least the same package of conclusions – perhaps sorted in different ways. After getting the results and capturing a few headlines for a few days – maybe weeks. These things have generally been relegated to the book shelf; over shadowed by inconsequential events that are short term in duration but distractions never-the-less. No one seems to be accountable and most business, education and governmental leaders suffer from market myopia. Beth’s Economic Development group and the Roanoke Chamber (but not Roanoke-Salem or Botetourt, oops!) come as close any group to “getting it” – but they have not been successful in getting the other segments of the economy around the table and guiding the resources toward addressing one or two economic development goals. The first order of business in Economic Development is on display elsewhere in today’s (Oct 9) newspaper – it is the low graduation rate in the city. Toyota is not coming to Roanoke because of the mountains or the scenery – yes these are attractive – they and any other industry that is thinking of investing in the Roanoke region wants to have access to a workforce that is interested, motivated, educated, and willing to learn. Drop out rates and other measures of work force readiness are an immediate turn-off. First order of business- establish a business/ school board (all of them)/ VT School of Education roundtable- meet every month take the gloves off and demand more of the educators, the local civic leaders, the community leaders, and the families. Make the discomfort that we read about in the paper today a permanent discomfort- at least until the numbers turn around. This needs to be a business-led process. The same one that shareholders would put into place on a CEO if a business was losing money and not performing well. VT could be a help by being the “outside auditors” – measuring and delivering results/ outcomes. The other variables that inevitably show up when experts come to town and advise us about our strengths and weaknesses in attracting economic development interest are at least being addressed – with the exception of a coordinated effort versus the City fighting with the County, etc. Are still out there... but education is the one item that seems to be the most troubling.

2. I was most interested in the article in today's Roanoke Times concerning the search for public input concerning the economic strategy needed in the area. Over the years, particularly since the 1970's, the chief complaint I have heard from outsiders and no small number of Roanokers is that it is "hard to get to and from Roanoke and the environs." This comes from tourists, students at area colleges, salesmen, potential employers, and the business community both here and in other communities. Yes, there is an Interstate Highway, I-81; an airport, and a few greyhound buses--all of which have severe drawbacks for those of us who live here and particularly for those who might be contemplating relocating here. The practical bottom line is that we are an isolated area and most young professionals, potential manufacturers, tourists and other who might otherwise consider our communities pass them up because of the lack of dependable transportation alternatives to I-81, the cost and limited service available at Roanoke Regional Airport, the reluctance to consider taking a bus, and particularly-- the lack of dependable rail passenger service. This long predates the gasoline situation, simply another nail in the Valley's coffin. We need the Trans-Dominion Express from Bristol to Richmond and Bristol to Washington, which has been sabotaged by absentee railroad management for a decade and the Virginia General Assembly in the pocket of the Highway Lobby. At the very least, we need regular bus service from Roanoke to Clifton Forge/Amtrak three days a week and Lynchburg/Amtrak seven days a week. Running the "smart-way bus" through from Blacksburg to Clifton Forge Sunday-Wednesday-Friday and to Lynchburg seven days a week would be a minimum "down payment" on a skeleton service until the TDX becomes a reality, as it must and will once the public pressure becomes so great that the politicians "quake in their boots" and even Norfolk-Southern gives in to the inevitable. Only then will your efforts to grow this area begin to bear fruit, regardless of the number of greenways, mountaintop restaurants and other ineffective nostrums have been tried and failed.
3. Appreciate easily accessible opportunity for feedback.
4. Good varied list of projects.
5. Funding availability will be critical re: timing cooperation is essential and a macro-view is essential. There are so many groups working on EDA- Is there coordination and cooperation among the various groups?
6. Remove the project that is regional singular brand identity. We already did that!



survey title:

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Response Summary

Total Started Survey: 16
Total Completed Survey: 14 (87.5%)

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1. In which locality do you live?


	Response Percent	Response Count
Botetourt County <input type="checkbox"/>	20.0%	3
City of Covington	0.0%	0
Craig County	0.0%	0
Alleghany County <input type="checkbox"/>	6.7%	1
Roanoke County <input type="checkbox"/>	13.3%	2
Town of Clifton Forge <input type="checkbox"/>	13.3%	2
City of Roanoke <input type="checkbox"/>	33.3%	5
City of Salem <input type="checkbox"/>	13.3%	2
Town of Vinton	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	0.0%	0
answered question		15
skipped question		1

2. Which setting best describes where you live?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Subdivision <input type="checkbox"/>	26.7%	4


House- in city/town	<input type="checkbox"/>	60.0%	9
Apartment		0.0%	0
Farm		0.0%	0
Condo/Townhouse		0.0%	0
House- rural area with public water/sewer		0.0%	0
House- rural area without public water/sewer	<input type="checkbox"/>	13.3%	2
answered question			15
skipped question			1

3. How many years have you lived in the Roanoke Valley or the Alleghany Highlands?

	Response Count
 view	13
answered question	13
skipped question	3

4. Where do you work?


	Response Percent	Response Count
Bath County	0.0%	0
Town of Iron Gate	0.0%	0
Botetourt County	<input type="checkbox"/>	20.0%
Craig County	0.0%	0
Alleghany County	0.0%	0
Town of Hot Springs	0.0%	0
City of Lexington	0.0%	0
Roanoke County	0.0%	0
City of Covington	<input type="checkbox"/>	6.7%
City of Roanoke	<input type="checkbox"/>	53.3%
City of Salem	0.0%	0

Town of Vinton		0.0%	0
West Virginia		0.0%	0
Town of Clifton Forge	<input type="checkbox"/>	6.7%	1
 Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	13.3%	2
answered question			15
skipped question			1

5. What is your age?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Under 18 years old		0.0%	0
19 to 24		0.0%	0
25 to 44	<input type="checkbox"/>	46.7%	7
45 to 64	<input type="checkbox"/>	46.7%	7
65 or over	<input type="checkbox"/>	6.7%	1
answered question			15
skipped question			1

6. How did you learn about the CEDS project or public meetings?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Newspaper Advertisement	<input type="checkbox"/>	20.0%	3
CEDS Meeting Flyer	<input type="checkbox"/>	6.7%	1
RVARC/CEDS Website	<input type="checkbox"/>	26.7%	4
Local Government Official/Meeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	20.0%	3
 Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	26.7%	4
answered question			15
skipped question			1



survey title:

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Response Summary

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7. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
The projects listed in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy adequately address key issues in the Roanoke Valley—Alleghany Region.	63.6% (7)	27.3% (3)	9.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11
Five years is a reasonable amount of time to implement the projects listed in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.	33.3% (4)	41.7% (5)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	12
					<i>answered question</i>	12
					<i>skipped question</i>	4

8. Please write any comments on the project listing or any other comments you may have:

	Response Count
view	6
<i>answered question</i>	6
<i>skipped question</i>	10