

# **BULLET POINTS FOR GO GREEN VIRGINIA CONFERENCE**

Claude Moore Education Complex  
May 16, 2008, 8 a.m.

## Conference Theme

“Going on a Low-Carbon Diet: Greening Your Home and Business”

- Being “green” has never been more important than it is today. People want to live in forward-thinking communities, places that understand the value of conserving natural resources and the concept of environmental stewardship. In fact, emphasis on the environmental health and livability of cities has become a major drawing card for attracting new residents and businesses.
- Realizing behaviors have an impact not only on their own citizens but on neighboring communities, the City of Roanoke has taken the lead among local governments in Southwest Virginia by working with Virginia Tech’s Green Engineering Program and the Shenandoah Valley Air Quality Initiative (SHENAIR), part of the Center for Energy and Environmental

Sustainability at James Madison University, to assess our carbon emissions.

- We have recently completed our carbon footprint, which shows that we have reduced carbon emissions by 1.5% since 2005—we are not where we want to be, but we are headed in the right direction.
- This was a first step in the “Cities for Climate Protection Campaign,” an initiative of Local Governments for Sustainability (also known as ICLEI), which Roanoke joined in fall 2006. The campaign helps localities to assess their carbon footprint and identify good practices that promote environmental health for their cities. I might add that Roanoke was the first city in Virginia to join ICLEI.

Ways Roanoke is becoming a green community:

- Launched our Clean and Green Campaign in fall 2007. The campaign’s mission is to make Roanoke the cleanest and greenest city in Virginia through its government, residents,

businesses, schools, and civic organizations taking an active role and responsibility for improving and preserving the visual appeal and natural beauty of the community.

- Retrofitting city buildings with compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) and more energy-efficient HVAC systems.
- Fleet is using bio-diesel (B15) in all diesel vehicles, city equipment, and fire apparatus, including school buses – in excess of 350 pieces of equipment and 170 school buses.
- Recycling program with schools. Last year, the city partnered with the Roanoke City Public Schools to reinvigorate the school recycling program. School personnel and students were educated about recycling, provided recycling containers, and monitored regularly to identify recycling needs and patterns. As a result of this partnership, school recycling increased from 10 tons in September 2007 to 29.8 tons in February 2008, resulting in a school savings of \$13,200 in just six months.

By recycling we not only save space in regional landfill, but reduce the virgin feedstock used to make products such as paper, steel and aluminum.

- “Safe Routes to Schools” initiative (partnership with Roanoke City Schools) – encourages students to walk instead of riding school buses – promotes better health, less use of school buses, which cause carbon emissions.
- "Students Ride Free" program, which began July 1, 2007. The program allows free Valley Metro bus rides to students age 18 and under in the City of Roanoke, and has been successful beyond expectation. Student ridership is running between 25,000 and 26,000 student trips per month.
- By instituting the program, Roanoke students are guaranteed a safe, dependable, free mode of transportation throughout the city. This program helps to reduce carbon emissions and promotes use of public transportation. Over the past year, this service has showed consistent increases in the number of

riders, demonstrating that residents are beginning to recognize the value of public transportation.

- Smart Way Bus – With the dramatic rise in the cost of gasoline, the city sees the continued support of the Smart Way Bus and Valley Metro system as an increasingly important service to offer citizens.
- Separate real estate tax which provides a 10% real estate tax reduction for five years for energy-efficient buildings (first in Virginia). Effective July 1, 2007, the City of Roanoke began offering a reduced real estate tax rate for energy-efficient buildings.

This program is for any existing or proposed building which exceeds or is designed to exceed energy efficiency standards as contained in the Uniform Statewide Building Code by 30 percent. The Special Tax Real Estate Rate established by City Council is \$1.07 per \$100 of the assessed value of the

proposed of existing structure versus the regular tax rate of \$1.19.

- **Solar Energy Ordinance:** Roanoke adopted Solar Energy Ordinance in February 2005. Certified solar equipment, facilities and devices were declared to be a separate class of property and constitute a classification for city taxation separate from other classifications of real or personal property. Owners of real estate in the city to which is attached certified solar energy equipment, facilities or devices or owners of such equipment, facilities, or devices that are taxable as machinery are granted an exemption from taxation on such certified solar energy equipment, facilities or devices.
- Environmental Business Coalition – established to get the business community involved, asking them to develop their own carbon footprints (Stan Breakell and Gwen Mason). The coalition's mission is to identify and implement environmentally sound business practices, including the development of

- sustainable business plans, the tracking of carbon emissions, and greater recycling opportunities.
- Greening the Office Checklist – offered to city businesses to enable them to gather practical information about the environmental impact of their current business practices. By putting simple environmental strategies into action, businesses can realize a number of cost savings.
  - Building our first “green” building, Williamson Road Fire Station. The new station will be constructed using the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) design rating, making it more environmentally friendly. LEED is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings.
  - Greenways (locations): the Roanoke River, Lick Run, Mill Mountain, Tinker Creek, and Murray Run. Future greenway plans include Phase Three of Lick Run from Valley View Mall toward William Fleming High School, the airport, and Valley

Pointe. Conceptual design for this project is slated to begin in 2008.

- Carvins Cove Conservation Easement — On April 21, Roanoke City Council approved a Deed of Gift of Easement to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and the Western Virginia Land Trust, granting to the Foundation and the Trust a conservation easement covering approximately 6,185 acres at the Carvins Cove Natural Reserve. This perpetual easement consists of all the portion of the Reserve owned by the city that is above the 1,500-foot elevation contour line as depicted on the Daleville, Catawba, Roanoke and Salem USGS Topographic Quadrangle Maps.

Carvins Cove—a natural carbon sink—is the largest conservation easement in the state, and is a first step to accomplishing City Council's goal of placing all of the 12,000 acres under easement at Carvins Cove, which is the second largest municipal park in the nation.

- Created easement to protect Kegley's Farm property between Blue Hills golf course and Old Monterey.
- Household Hazardous Waste Collection Days: free only to the residents of the City of Roanoke, the Counties of Roanoke and Botetourt, and the Town of Vinton.

Three regional household hazardous waste collection events scheduled for 2008.

- Sunday, May 4
- Sunday, August 3
- Sunday, November 2

Collection events held at the Roanoke Valley Resource Authority's Transfer Station. Residents from the City of Roanoke, Roanoke County, Botetourt County and the Town of Vinton are welcome to participate in these free collection events.

- Set up Web site to track our “Clean and Green” efforts –  
[www.roanokeva.gov/green](http://www.roanokeva.gov/green)

#### Getting involved in regional efforts

- **Green Government Challenge sponsored by the Virginia Municipal League:** Roanoke has entered this challenge, which focuses on major activities that help local governments become better stewards of the environment.

#### Spreading the word about the importance of environmental stewardship.

- The city’s General Services Director, Ken Cronin, participated in four regional forums to help other localities learn how to implement green practices. He spoke to other localities as part of a “getting started” program with the Virginia Municipal League. Mr. Cronin is scheduled to speak in front of the Governor’s Climate Protection Commission in June.