



**Summary of Public Comments by Topic:**

Topic	Responses
Walking/ Biking Trails	21
Cabins	13
Preserve History	10
Outdoor Events	10
Workshops / Programs / Activities	8
Primitive Camping	7
Restaurant / Concessions	6
More Water Access / Boat Rental	6
Cycling Destination Park	5
Facility Rentals	5
Picnic shelters / spaces	5
Outdoor Adventure / Ropes / Zipline	5
RV Park	4
Horseback Riding / Horse Arena	4
Keep Rutrough Road Connection	4

Topic	Responses
Wildlife Viewing	3
Playground	3
Large Amphitheater	3
Dog Park	2
Amusement Park / Water Park	2
Athletics Fields	2
Artisan Center / Craft Sale / Show	2
Not supportive of project	2
ATV Trails	2
Cross Country Skiing	2
Bike Rental	1
Ice Skating	1
Conference Center	1
Culinary School	1
Hotel	1

**Public Comments Received: 9/1/13 to 9/23/13**

**Public Comments:**

I have followed the development and struggles for Explore Park for many, many years and worked in the beginning to get it established as a resource for the Roanoke Valley. My family mill, the Slone Mill, is now on the property. I worked, too, to have the Hofhauger House salvaged and moved to the property. I am pleased that Roanoke County is entering into a partnership with the Authority to lease the property and make it an outdoor recreation resource for the region. I do hope that citizens and the County understand that the buildings that are on the property are important to the heritage of the Roanoke Valley and that their continued use (and maintenance) are important to the original intent of the park and they are of educational and interpretive value. There are additional outdoor recreation and passive opportunities for recreation that can be explored for the park, including camping, additional trails for biking/hiking/walking, and outdoor events. Wildlife viewing is an opportunity, as well as outdoor adventure (e.g. rope courses for multiple ages). Also, don't forget family picnics and outdoor spaces for just kicking back and enjoying friends, family and nature. Be very cautious about pavement and building placement and design! Roanoke County needs a signature park for outdoor recreation and Explore park can serve this function. It is unlike any other park in the County system and can be a true asset and a revenue producer if handled appropriately and sensitively. Thank you for the opportunity to comment!

I've had many thoughts about the future of explore park for many years now. I have been a big fan of its sister park The Frontier Culture Museum. The best happiness for all is make the place a year round visitors haven. I feel a Great Wolf Lodge would be a great place to have on the property, that would keep it the wilderness theme. An indoor water park with accommodations. The park could then offer other attractions such as bonfires with story tellers and enhance the historical buildings already there, a mini Williamsburg. Horse drawn hayrides, pumpkin patches in the fall, craft festivals in the summer, and a Christmas experience with a festival of lights. I guess a mini Gatlinburg TN. These things would benefit the community and have a constant flow coming to Roanoke.

I am very sorry some of the planned projects and died. It could still be a wonderful history for all ages, especially students. It is also a wonderful natural site for hiking trails and the flora and fauna that is so apparent on a walk. I think if trails could be extended in different direction from the main site, it would be a boon to outdoor enthusiasts. I still believe a nice restaurant could be an advantage, but I know the economy at the present time is a drawback. Other log structures of age (I know the Murray log cabin was donated) would be terrific showing the different types of log construction and the difference in English and German log cabins. There are probably many other ideas, but these are just a couple. Is Fred Anderson still on this committee? I know Roanoke County has contributed quite a bit of money to this project--requiring more at this time may be hard, but a project with integrity to the past.

I would like to see environmental, historical, and outdoor recreational activities take place at the park, along with some cultural activities in an outdoor setting. I would not like to see more commercialized recreational activities (skate park, bowling alley, water park, RV park, etc.). My primary concern is for the historic structures and the artifacts that are currently located on the property. As a board member of the Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation, we have a great deal of concern about the care of the historic buildings that have been relocated to the site. As a historian and non-profit administrator, I'm concerned about the fate of the artifacts and would be happy to consult with authorities on the proper care or deaccessioning of those artifacts.

Good morning, I'm a neighbor of Explore Park, and I am unable to attend tonight's meeting. I also work at Virginia Western Community College in student events/programs and I look forward to talking with Roanoke County to see if we can partner with student activities. I am in favor of Roanoke County leasing the land- as I think they have proven experience operating successful events and facilities. I wanted to offer comments, however, as a community resident and neighbor of the park. The park has not been open since I moved into my home in 2008. Based on the last 5 years, I will offer the following observations:-The addition of the parking lot at the river/end of Rutrough is wonderful. It makes it feel like it is ""okay to be down there"". However, I don't always feel comfortable being down there because I still feel like it's pretty secluded (sometimes we just want to take our son down there to look at the water).-Because the park is partially shuttered, I still sometimes question if it is ""okay to be there"" - where is ""ok"" vs. ""not ok""? Just having the park open and knowing where is ""okay to play"" will be great. I actually did not know the BRP Visitor's Center was still open until about a year ago - and I drive right beside it almost every weekend. -Because of the layout of the park, I don't feel like there is anywhere I feel comfortable just walking with my son (stroller or otherwise - he is 2 now). Here are some amenities I would love to see as a resident of Roanoke County: Playground (pretty standard for any one who has kids and wants to bring them along). Maybe like the one the city just put at Mill Mountain that is ""nature-esque""? Walking trail separate from bikers; Rutrough Road service road either repaved or all gravel - whatever it would take to smooth that road out. People do use it for accessing the park quite a bit and it beats you to death right now; Remove the trailers; they are looking run down and I think they give a negative impression of the park; Open the restaurant with a vendor? Open the buildings for rentals to generate funds; reasonable rental fees; Picnic shelter for rent for funds; -don't charge admission for some basic access to the park. User fees should be reserved for special activities, workshops, special event rentals, camping, concessions, equipment rentals, etc. As someone with a small child - we are more likely to go somewhere else in Roanoke that's already free access for some basic recreation - walking/hiking/biking/etc.; workshops for beginners who want to learn to kayak, bike or other outdoor activities; introduce to the outdoors; tent camping only; Educational signage for names trees, plants, etc. - that would be a great place to walk with your children and talk to them about nature; -If history needs to come into the programming - I think it should be more participatory ""learn to make butter"" ""learn to make cheese"" ""learn to knit/weave/etc."" - I think people will come for hands on - instead of just watching someone do something. Just a few of my initial thoughts. Thanks for considering!

Possible soccer/other seasonal ball fields similar to Green Hill Park in Salem if enough room. County seasonal team/ball events as well as special outdoor events and fundraisers on east side of Roanoke would draw lots of people like Green Hill park already does in Salem. Perhaps in flat area on entrance of parkway where is not being used for anything but general overlook? same on left side as you enter off parkway- field not used for anything-ntain bike/running trails; fishing and historical building sites and events half mile or more away? Perhaps model Pipestem WV state park\*\*\*- our family loves going there as getaway peaceful retreat with many family option activities offered more than most remote lodges\*\*\* We go there for cabin rentals with fire places, walking trails, pond boat rental n quite lake; + and various outdoor athletic and family options all in 1 state park @ reasable pricing compared to most state parks in VA- horseback riding, golf par 3, tennis, mountain lodge- restaurant. Mountain bike trails; archery- wonderful model to go off of - please consider. Do not have to have a large mountain lodge but perhaps many can rental swith fireplace options will draw many people all year long. Perhaps nice mountain top restaurant eventually to be built. The cabin rentals 20+ will draw people as well as few more ball fields near exterior of the park to draw county and city residents to parkway with team events. As Vinton resident, Green Hill park is wonderful site with many team events, but a long ways away on west side of county to travel to play various team events for Southside north side and east side county residents... would be nice to have a few ball field options off parkway too is all... Just some ideas.

Explore Park is a gem, and there is nothing like it left in the area. Whatever you do needs to be a diamond, not cubic zirconia. Don't half ass this, please think big...especially if you want to truly attract tourists. What's needed is an attraction where a person can go tubing/paddling on the river, rock climbing, hiking, biking, zipping, listen to music, eat good food, camp, etc. Random ideas: Proximity to Blue Ridge Parkway which offers world-class road cycling lends Explore Park to being a cycling mecca for not only road cycling but also all forms of cycling (BMX, skills park, flow trails, cross country, velodrome, etc.). Charlotte created the United States Whitewater Center...why not go for the United States Cycling Center. If you haven't been to the Whitewater Center you need to visit it; Definite need for camping and cabins. Here's an opportunity to capitalize on camping by using yurts, treehouses, etc....be unique; Canopy tours back and forth across the river; The river is great but can be better. An adequate put-in needs to be created. Get the dam to release water, better yet tear it down. Build man-made rapids down near the riverwalk area which are spectator friendly and allow you to have rodeo events; Put a cool climbing wall in the center of the visitor buildings. Can't wait.

I would love to see more mountain bike trail development in the area as well as bathroom and changing room amenities. A pump track would be a great addition too.It could be a great venue for races and bike events - Demo days?

I would like to encourage that Explore Park remains a cycling destination. cycling could easily live in harmony with whatever else the park is used for!

The best outdoor tourism and general rec options for Explore already exist in a form: mountain bike trails. Much can be done to enhance the trails already there. These were built by mostly volunteer mountain bikers, a worthy legacy to carry forward at least! Suggestions to make the mountain bike experience a success: Improve existing trails. Most are quite good, though Many are poorly cut and suffer from poor contour caressing and lazy layout. Build a feature park to attract young thrill riders. This includes downhill and jump options, as well as wooden elevated routes and berms. Similar to Snowshoe's offerings, only better. These can be built properly and safely with expertise residing right here in Virginia. Marketing. Tie in with all the other area cycling riches, like Carvins Cove, the Chestnut Loop near the parkway, Bedford county park trails, plus e miles and miles of amazing stuff at our doorstep in the Jefferson National Forest. Contribute to the proper notion that Roanoke and Roanoke County is a mountain bike Mecca. Much cooler than Mecca! Events, like races. This is a great way to get folks to the park and spread its influence. Kids races and an emerging High School series would be timely and effective concentrations. I have produced over a hundred mountain bike events (some were really good even!) in more than 20 years time. I offer my consultation, if needed. I can go on and on like this for hours. I'd be glad to discuss further. Make mountain biking, and even road biking, priorities for the future of Explore.

I would love to see some camping (tent) options at Explore Park. Additional trails (mountain bike) would be great too, and I would volunteer to help build and maintain them.

I am a trail runner and goes to explorer park almost each week. I was actually part of the team that cleans up the trail a few months ago. I could not believe when I came to Roanoke that it was abandoned, it is such a nice park, I am very happy to hear there will be a project developing there.

I would love to see Explore Park trails further developed for hiking and mountain biking. I would also love to see a campground, now that the Roanoke Mountain campground is closed, I think that would be a great asset to the region. The facilities are already there, they just need to be operational.

I trail run, mountain bike and Kayak at Explore. he park is great. What would make it even greater:

1. A Riverside hiking trail to the parkway
2. Kayak access point from within the main park
3. Expanded expert mountain bike trails
4. Linking trail to the roanoke mtn trails

Let's capitalize on the existing trails and make Explore as appealing for Mountain Biking and trail running as Carvin's Cove has become!

"Contact via mail only please. Canoe Rental & Launching; Connection to Roanoke River greenway; Camping / Cabin Sites (If Roanoke Mountain Campground is not re-opened); Mountain Bike trails; Nature programs hikes etc; A screening station that filters out trees and trash from river before they get to SML.

Continued maintenance & development of biking trails; Camping facilities for visitors.

"I am a retired ART teacher with Roanoke City Schools and Community School. I am very interested in participating in any LIVING HISTORY PRESENTATIONS. I create both NATIVE AMERICAN CRAFTS AND SCOTTISH HISTORICAL CRAFTS. I do have complete hand made Scottish regalia and create Highland bonnets, kilt hose, piper' gloves etc. I also do loomed beadwork, hand weaving, woodwork etc. I would love to present historical programs and demonstrations at the park! Explore Park has always held a special place in my heart, and I am so pleased to hear that it may be reopened, soon!!!! What a wonderful venue for educational experiences through LIVING HISTORY. Please, let me know if I can be of help in any way!"

"Want a Busch Gardens type of theme park at Explore Park, wants an RV campground with full hook ups and laundry facilities  
Wants a pool. Something to attract children.

I am sorry, I did not show up. I love that foundational idealism of Explore Park. Love History, Genealogy. Don't allow this NEW move on Explore to destroy the history aspects... I had to decide between this and "Storm Water Management".

Sewer Swell above darn safety on the river. Keep Rutrough access open, Hamman Property - fix map, local artist show birding event, Lodging Peaks of Otter, Hot Air Balloon Festival, River Cleanup - Boaters - Market through Go Fest.

Mountain biking & signage, playground, dog park, hiking & signage, picnic area

Summer science camps for kids, K-12, Art opportunities - classes, display for all ages, Daily usage fees for any recreational activity requiring parking, music venue.

Dedicated horseback trails, campgrounds (primitive), horse arena/outdoor evening area (similar to Green Hill Park, but for our end of the county.)

Fishing access

I would love to see a camping area - like a campground, showers, bathroom, electric hookups. Canoe access to river.

I'm looking forward to more things at Explore Park. Have been a supporter since 1980's w/ Bern Garst (spell?) Will help when ever I can.

Outdoor rentals, mountain bikes, kayaks, etc.

Horseback riding, walking trails, bike trails, a large public pool and picnic shelters, a large community building.

Riverdale/Grandview Heights Neighborhood Watch

Have a "Norman Rockwell" pond for ice skating.

We would like to continue our relationship with the park and provide service with Scouting through Eagle Scout projects!

I want the historical stuff back, low impact on the river, tent camping, no RVs, yada yada yada green, but I don't want their hands tied by the lease!

I would care to see an opportunity for local artists and craftsman to show/display/demonstrate/sell their art work here. Also nature education (birds, plants, etc.) especially for young people. Most important thing is to rescue the existing buildings which have been neglected.

Conference center for business meetings, campgrounds, RV sites, rental cabins, swimming facilities, improve the Subaru Bike trail, music concerts. Please contact me by phone or email. I would love to work here at Explore Park.

My thoughts are to build a covered pavilion/amphitheater similar to nTelos, Jiffy Lube, or Richmond with covered seating for 2000-4000 and additional lawn area for another 1000 +-. Access from somewhere other than the Parkway would be my main concern with the Explore Park. I'm surprised Floyd Fest hasn't come under Federal scrutiny for jamming up the Parkway for a week in July. Amphitheatre attendance for the following: Elmwood Park - 1000-1500, Reserve Avenue - 1000-1500, Floyd fest (Floyd) - 12,000 this year, Chantilly Farm (Floyd) - 2000-3000, Daleville Town Center (Botetourt) - 1000, Salem football stadium - 5000, Charlottesville nTelos Pavilion - 5000+, Bristol (near Manassas) Jiffy Lube Pavilion - 5000+, Richmond Amphitheater - 3000+.

Lodges, cabins, trails, greenway - connect back to County. More festivals - bluegrass.

"Gorge Day". I have spoken with Debbie Pitts about a river clean up. I would like to be in contact with the clean up of the river. I am a member of the whitewater, climbing, general outdoor recreation community. If anything wants to be done on the river, a large clean up effort needs to be provided.

I would to propose an idea for ATV trails and parking area.

My parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles have lived on and near Rutrough Road. Across from my parents house and all over I see fallen trees. I and my parents have wood stoves. We would like to keep Rutrough Road green and use the fallen tress as fire wood. Please call me back so we can get permission.

Better marked trails, trash containers, drop boxes at both entrances. I have made "piles" in the park, Need to be brought up out especially river bank. Have events to raise money. Let Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, use/work at park. Figure what you need to operate let individuals pay fee. Would not 100 or 200 using/caring for park better than 100s of tourists coming through - amusing /trashing the park.

More trash cans, better marked trails, bring festival events. More cash envelopes.

Will be glad to see future maintenance work performed on buildings, roads, trails, etc. before they decay further. \*Cannot volunteers because of wife's health conditions.

Extend Roanoke Greenway to Explore Park. Increase number of biking trails. Mtn bike skills park. Host races and training events. Tent camping, children's programs, science camps. Nature Center, kayaking/water activities. Better location for Virginia Cycling center than Fallon Park. I volunteer with Pathfinders and Roanoke IMBA. I would be happy to volunteer here as well and would love to have Roanoke IMBA involved here too.

I would like to see this land made into an off road recreational vehicle trail system. Aimed mostly at ATV and dirt bikes this would be a great place for people to ride and enjoy trails. Right now everyone in Roanoke is driving at least an hour to find trails.

Canoe or kayak rentals/guided tours (maybe) with stops to hike the hiking trails (other than the bike trails) Classes/demos such as grinding at Mill or music sessions. Evening campfires in summer-fall, possibly with meal.

What are your plans and improve Rutrough Road to handle additional traffic. Would like to see an amphitheater for music and other events. Field days of the past - 3 day event in the fall.

Cross Country skiing. 200-Relocae.

Possible local business (Muddy Squirrel) for outdoor education. Lisa and Tim contacts for Muddy Squirrel website based out of Botetourt County,. Winter sports and Cross Country skiing.

River Triathlon - run kayak/canoe bike. Trail races.

Have a nice Park Service type lodge. Rental cabins - like state park.

Establish better cellphone service. Transmitters/receivers can be somewhat concealed. This is a safety consideration. Establish some rental cabins. Camping facilities are very desirable, but be sure that sites are not crowded together.

Weddings - horse carriage ride for bride and groom.

Connection with Virginia Western Culinary program and Brugh Tavern to act as an externship for students in Culinary school. Debbie Yancey at Virginia Western [dyancey@virginiawestern.edu](mailto:dyancey@virginiawestern.edu)

Juried arts and crafts show.

Will the consultant be from the Roanoke Valley? In this economic time is this something that we should be tackling?

Weddings, etc., scouting, concerts, races, Pow Wow, birding. History center, periodic events.

Log Cabin rentals, fix service entrance from Rutrough Road, create railroad history (beginning days) to demonstrate early days of Roanoke history. Create medical hospital that would demonstrate early medicine. Zip lines.

Zip lines, Explore Peace Park, drum circles, chime swings, Tibetan sand art, storytelling, fountain gazebo, telescopes, horticulture/art classes, culture days, sketch artist/face painting, labyrinth, prayer flags, streamers, native American, flower gardens, intertubing, canoeing, bike rides/hiking, horse back riding, animal rescue-wildlife, music amphitheater, Decade day, Tell your story (studio), Peace Park, Merry Go Round, Ted Talks, Rock Wall Climbing, Wine Festivals, \*VA Recreation Authority, \*Boy Scouts, \*Biking, \*Public Private Partnership, \*Co-Visitor Service, Picnic area, Greenway along river. \*1st priority.

This area is an absolute gem. The Roanoke Valley has been carving its way through the Blue Ridge for eons. Rare - deserving of use.

With its obviously checked past, adherence to the same mission statement, and with the VRFA with some of the same faces, please explain how Explore Park v.2 is going to be any different from Explore Park v.1. The initial proposed cost of E.P. was \$186 million. The sticker shock resulting from this figure resulted in a scaling down of expectations. However, \$55 million has already been spent in ongoing attempts to sustain the park. The question that Roanoke County, Virginia and federal taxpayers need to have answered is, What assurance can Roanoke County and the VRFA give to make sure that the past will not be repeated. Did you learn your lessons?

Put something in Brugh Tavern that everyone can afford and children can eat. Put in small RV, camper parking

Campgrounds built, Hotel built on grounds. More school volunteer each month or 100 hours. Plus, business involved in running it.

"Used to work as a blacksmith at Explore Park.Has a great deal of institutional knowledge about Explore Park that may come in handy (e.g. locations of utilities, historic buildings, pictures of EP prior to opening, etc.)

The park should be all about outdoor recreation such as mountain biking, hiking, whitewater, ziplines, etc. The Roanoke Valley has all of the necessary pieces of the puzzle to become a world class cycling destination and Explore should be a major part of the attraction.

No I'm sorry I don't agree with any of it! You want to spend thousands of dollars on a park when more than 1/2 of Roanoke County and City are hungry and homeless! What about them? Why not help them?? Cause you say it will help the economic , etc, but its not helping these people NOW! Thats my feedback.

Thanks for your department's outreach to City residents in the Riverdale subdivision regarding Explore Park. I would use Explore if there was a dog park there. Extension of the greenway Explore would be nice too.

I was pleased you want to keep the historical part of the park. I have visited Warrior Path State Park in Kingsport TN on several occasions and have always thought of what Explore could bring to the Valley. Each segment of WPSP has sponsors, and one is built on a tree house. I could see Lowes and Home Depot building an over look for us and Carillon, Advance and Kroger sponsoring a section. It is worth a visit. We also need soccer fields. Visit Martinsville if you want to see a classy soccer field that also has a picnic area, boats, etc.