

## Notes from the Roanoke Change Academy's First Discussion of *Designing Creative Communities*



We began the session with a brief introduction of the purpose of this series. Led by Book City Roanoke, the Roanoke Arts Commission, and the Roanoke Public Libraries, this discussion of Spud Marshall's *Designing Creative Communities* hopes to bring together Roanoke's arts community and Roanoke's activist community. 2022 is the [Year of the Artist](#) in Roanoke, and this conversation is geared towards looking at innovative ways to build and improve our community.

**Discussion Questions:** Doug and Marissa asked the group a few questions inspired by the first portion of the book. Individual and group responses to these questions often shared similar themes.

- 1) What do you care about?
  - One overarching theme was creating opportunities for people of all ages to express themselves. Creativity and making art with others is fundamental for positive community change and can decrease isolation. Art can heal trauma and be sustaining.
  - We discussed how the act of making something with others is a way to share your skills.
  - Another theme was improving the quality of life in Roanoke. Participants also expressed a desire to give children equal opportunities and to support disenfranchised populations.
  - Participants reminded those present that the environment is our natural palette to create with and to preserve.
  
- 2) What are your skills? While participants listed multiple unique skills, the following appeared as commonalities:
  - Being a “people person”
  - Guiding others and helping them find their goals
  - Showing up
  - Problem-solving
  - Technology
  - Bringing people together, including people with differing and similar points of view

**Discussion:** Some additional topics were raised:

- First, Roanoke already has a community!
- There is often judgment placed on community art—this judgment doesn't acknowledge the process of creation. Public art should have community engagement along the way in order to use co-creation as a way to build community and to provide transparency. Transparency of process leads to trust.
- Remember that the community we have now imagined [City Plan 2040](#).

As a thought assignment, participants were asked the following question: What local goings-on, traditions, establishments, procedures, people, places, etc. are you curious about?