



Department of Planning & Community Development Report to Town Council

August 12th, 2025

Good evening, Members of Town Council,

Here are some updates on key long-term initiatives we are actively working towards as of August 5, 2025.

Downtown Revitalization

- We are waiting to hear back from RVARC on an official kickoff date for the Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- The grant that we submitted to DHCD on behalf of Clifton Forge Main Street was awarded in the amount of \$14,500. This is to do a town-wide branding project. The consultants will be hosting a public kickoff meeting on September 9th from 5:30 to 6:30 (before Town Council at 7pm) in the West Rock Room at the Historic Masonic Theatre. We would love for everyone on Council to be there!
- We are submitting a grant on or before August 20th to DHCD for a downtown master plan. This is a very competitive grant program so are working to ensure the grant application is very strong.

Housing Development & Revitalization

- We just awarded the Housing Needs Assessment/Local Market Assessment project, which is funded by Virginia Housing, to S. Patz & Associates. They just finished the county-wide housing study. We will coordinate with them in the coming week on scheduling/etc.
- Following a successful housing needs assessment, we will then apply for another grant to explore strategies to expand housing opportunities in the upper-level of downtown buildings.
- Please mark your calendars for a housing summit on August 14th at MGCC from 9am to 3:30pm with a reception to follow. Registration is required and this event is free. I am on the planning committee so feel free to reach out with any questions you have.

Lodging Needs Assessments

- We have signed an MOU with SERCAP to do a lodging needs assessment. The first phase of this assessment will include a community survey to assess needs, gaps, and preferences on potential additional types of lodging, and a lodging-provider survey to understand occupancy rates of existing lodging, challenges, etc.

Building & Site Redevelopment

- Jefferson School: We successfully submitted a BIPOC grant through DHR for \$1M. We should receive notice in late September on their decision. We will be applying for additional grants once available this fall. We are almost ready to sign the Performance Agreement with the Jefferson School Partners, after which we will enter into the due diligence period.
- 608 Main Street: We have been awarded \$150,000 from Virginia Housing, \$50,000 from the Rural Investment Collaborative, and \$50,000 from DEQ for building stabilization. Once we have the requested estimates from contractors, we will move forward with stabilization efforts.
 - As part of our current Opportunity Appalachia grant to support design work for 608 Main, I will be attending an Investor's Convening in Asheville on August 11 and 12 and presenting information about the project to date.
- The Council Meeting agenda for August 12th includes a reading of the proposed Vacant Building Registry ordinance. This will be followed by a second reading next month. Given that there are an estimated 150-160 vacant buildings in town, I strongly support this ordinance to help address the challenges of vacant buildings in Clifton Forge and encourage more development.
- DEQ will be back in town on August 21st for the second BAD building inventory day. This will be followed by a presentation by Karen Weber of DEQ at the evening Community Gathering.

Other Grants Updates

- We have been preliminarily approved for the grant application to DCR for \$148,400.00 for a restroom facility at the Smith Creek Trailhead near the community gardens. We had a site visit with DCR on July 15th, and the final approval process is underway.

Misc.

- Brad Balsler completed and passed his testing to become a certified Property Maintenance Official. Congratulations to him!
- We have finalized the interpretive trail signage at Green Pastures, in partnership with Douthat and the USFS. We are now in the process of getting the signs made and expect them to be installed early Fall.
- We are working with John Morris on setting up the 'Visit Clifton Forge' website, which should go live very soon.
- We are planning a free community rain barrel workshop, in partnership with RVARC, to be held at the Armory. This is tentatively scheduled for October 15th from 3:30 – 5pm.

- We are exploring an opportunity to install a historic marker that acknowledges and honors the memory of three African Americans who were victims of racial violence in our community's past.
- We are continuing conversations with Amtrak/CSX relating to the yard office building.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maria Saxton
Director of Planning & Community Development
Town of Clifton Forge