



Department of Planning & Community Development Report to Town Council

July 8th, 2025

Good evening, Members of Town Council,

Here are some updates on key long-term initiatives we are actively working towards as of July 1, 2025.

Downtown Revitalization

- We will kick off the Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan with RVARC in the next month or two. At this time, we will schedule dates for public engagement and a Council retreat.
- We plan to pursue funding, once available in the fall, to do a downtown master plan.

Housing Development & Revitalization

- We have been awarded a \$20,000 housing needs assessment grant from Virginia Housing to do a town-wide housing study. We currently have an RFP out for consultants.
- 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. I have been asked to be part of the planning committee, and the event is being hosted by AHEDC and RVARC.

Lodging Needs Assessments

- I am meeting with the SERCAP team on July 2nd to review the scope for the lodging needs assessment and sign a final agreement.

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.
- 608 Main Street: We have been awarded \$150,000 from Virginia Housing and \$50,000 from the Rural Investment Collaborative for building stabilization and are awaiting a decision on another \$50,000 application to DEQ's VBAF program. Once we have a final budget, 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.

Other Grants Updates

- We have submitted a \$15,000 Community Vitality grant to DHCD on behalf of CFMS to provide funding for a branding project – currently awaiting decision.
- 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. The application needs to go through multiple rounds of review, but our application scored the highest by the initial review committee! We have a site visit on July 15th with DCR representatives.

Misc.

- Five Sides is hosting their grand opening on July 2nd! Please keep an eye out on a date from the Chamber regarding a ribbon cutting ceremony later this month.
- We are collaborating with Douthat and the USFS to finalize the interpretive trail signage at Green Pastures.
- We are working with John Morris on setting up the 'Visit Clifton Forge' website, which should go live in the next month.
- We are continuing conversations with Amtrak/CSX relating to the yard office building and potential relocation of the existing Amtrak station.
- Chuck, Jeff, Debbie and I attended the Small Towns conference in Farmville in June.
 - During a presentation at the conference, it was strongly suggested to remove personal contact information from our website for security reasons and instead provide a 'Contact Us' form where responses will be forwarded to the appropriate person. We are in the process of setting this up with John Morris.
- Chuck, Dale, and I attended the Community Convening on Economic Opportunity in the Alleghany Highlands at MGCC in June.

Respectfully Submitted,

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