



## **Department of Planning & Community Development Report to Town Council**

June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Good evening, Members of Town Council,

Here are some updates on key long-term initiatives we are actively working towards, as of June 4, 2025.

### **Downtown Revitalization**

- We just signed an agreement with RVARC for a Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan (see enclosed agreement).
- We plan to pursue funding, once available in the fall, to do a downtown master plan.

### **Housing Development & Revitalization**

- We have applied for a \$20,000 housing needs assessment grant from Virginia Housing to do a town-wide housing study – currently awaiting decision.
- 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.

### **Lodging Needs Assessments**

- We are working on scoping a Lodging Needs Assessment in collaboration with SERCAP.

### **Building & Site Redevelopment**

- On May 22<sup>nd</sup> we held the first 'BAD Building Inventory' workshop in collaboration with DEQ. This effort will continue throughout the summer.
- Jefferson School: We successfully submitted a BIPOC grant through DHR for \$1M. We should receive notice in late September on their decision.
- 608 Main Street: This month, we were awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Rural Collaborative program through the Federal Reserve of Richmond to assist with a roof replacement for 608 Main Street. Since this amount will not cover the entire roof replacement, we also submitted a grant to Virginia Housing and intend to submit another to VBAF in the next month.

## **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 submitted a grant application to DCR for \$148,400.00 for a restroom facility at the Smith Creek Trailhead near the community gardens – currently awaiting decision.
- We are collaborating with Chief Balser on the grants for AEDs we discussed last month.
- We are exploring a grant opportunity with CFMS for a concert series.
- Thanks to Jeff's lead, we have spoken with a local T-Mobile representative about potential funding to support an existing community event – specific details TBD.

## **Misc.**

- In collaboration with many partners, we are working hard to plan an event at Green Pastures on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025 from 3-6pm to celebrate the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its opening. This is funded by a grant that the Town received from Monuments Across Appalachian Virginia (MAAV). We hope to see you there!
- Through a grant with the Allegheny Foundation, a representative from the Coalfield Development RePower team (via the Solar Finance Fund) conducted a site visit to Town Hall on May 29<sup>th</sup> to evaluate the potential for solar for the building. We will share the results of this assessment when received.
- Chuck and I have been invited to participate in a regional grant coalition to pursue funding for regional projects. I have been nominated to be the Community Lead.
- We are continuing conversations with Amtrak/CSX relating to the yard office building and potential relocation of the existing Amtrak station. With staff changes at Amtrak, these conversations have slowed down.
- Chuck and I attended the 2025 Investing in Rural America conference in Roanoke mid-May and learned a lot!

Respectfully Submitted,

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



Roanoke Valley-Alleghany

**REGIONAL**  
**commission**

[RVARC.ORG](http://RVARC.ORG)

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## Project Agreement

### Project Name: Clifton Forge – Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan Process

Participating locality: Town of Clifton Forge

Projected hours: 100

Projected funding sources: Local

RVARC Staff Lead: Bryan Hill

Locality staff lead(s): Maria Saxton

**Project Description:** The Clifton Forge Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan aims to promote sustainable economic growth and enhance the quality of life for all residents. This plan will be developed through a collaborative process involving key stakeholders, community members, and local government officials. The document will provide a firm foundation upon which to build more detailed downtown and special purpose plans, regulations and ordinances, and other associated public policy and implementation documents and initiatives.

**Project Scope:** The scope of work and activities for the Clifton Forge Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan are as follows:

- **Plan Development Activities**
  - **Project Initiation and Planning**
    - Self-assessment: Evaluate current capabilities and resources.
    - Stakeholder Identification: Identify key stakeholders and partners.
    - Engagement Plan: Develop a plan to engage stakeholders and the community. This is to include public surveys hosted through the RVARC Social Pinpoint platform, focus groups of key stakeholders with a special emphasis on local businesses and regional industries, and local public meetings such as the Community Gathering.
  - **Community Assessment**
    - Data Collection: Gather key community information and statistics.
    - Asset Inventory: List and categorize community assets.
    - SWOT Analysis: Conduct a strategic assessment to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This will be conducted with town council, the public, and various stakeholders.
  - **Business Needs Assessment**
    - *Define Objectives: Establish the goals and objectives of the needs assessment within the context of the strategic plan, focusing on local business growth and community development.*
    - *Gather Existing Data: Collect existing reports, statistics, and documents related to local business performance, economic conditions, and community needs.*
    - *Conduct Interviews: Engage local business owners and other stakeholders through interviews, and focus groups to gather qualitative data, focusing on community and economic development priorities.*
    - *Analyze Market Data: Review market trends and economic indicators to understand the business environment and its impact on community development.*

**MEMBER GOVERNMENTS:** Counties of Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, Franklin and Roanoke  
Cities of Covington, Roanoke and Salem, Towns of Clifton Forge, Rocky Mount and Vinton



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- *Identify Current Services: Assess the current services and support provided to local businesses by the locality and their impact on community and economic development.*
- *Retail Leakage Analysis: Identify retail uses which could or could not be supported in downtown Clifton Forge.*
- *Prioritize Needs: Rank the identified needs based on urgency, impact, and alignment with the strategic plan.*
- *Develop Findings: Summarize the key findings and insights from the data analysis, highlighting areas critical to the strategic plan.*
- *Create Recommendations: Formulate actionable recommendations to address the identified needs, ensuring they support the strategic plan's goals.*
- Visioning and Goal Setting
  - Vision Statement: Establish a vision for local economic and community development.
  - Strategic Areas: Identify broad subjects to focus on, such as housing, business retention, entrepreneurial development, and downtown improvements and revitalization.
  - Goal Setting: Set specific goals for each strategic area.
- Action Plan Development
  - Action Items: Develop specific actions to achieve strategic goals.
  - Prioritization: Prioritize activities based on impact and feasibility.
  - Implementation Plan: Create a detailed plan for implementing the actions.
- Monitoring and Evaluation
  - Performance Metrics: Establish metrics to monitor progress.
- **Council Retreat**
  - Current State Analysis
    - *Presentation on current economic and community status*
    - *Review of existing data and reports*
  - Visioning Session
    - *Group discussion on long-term vision for the town*
    - *Identifying key priorities and goals*
  - SWOT Analysis
    - *Identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats*
    - *Group brainstorming sessions*
  - Goal Setting
    - *Defining specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals*
    - *Prioritizing goals based on community needs*
  - Strategy Development
    - *Developing strategies to achieve the set goals*
    - *Assigning responsibilities and timelines*
  - Resource Allocation
    - *Identifying necessary resources (financial, human, etc.)*
    - *Budget planning and funding strategies*
  - Action Plan Creation
    - *Detailed action plans for each strategy*
    - *Setting milestones and deadlines*

**Project Timeline:** “Activities” within the timeline are flexible, based on staff and Planning Commission schedules.

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Date	Activity
Late May-June 2025	Public engagement plan development.
June-July 2025	Public/Stakeholder Meetings
June-August 2025	Data collection
August-November 2025	Draft plan development
September 2025	Council Retreat
November-December 2025	Adoption

### Project Deliverables:

1. Public engagement survey and public/stakeholder engagement meetings.
2. Facilitation of a retreat with the Clifton Forge Town Council.
3. Development and presentation of the strategic plan document.

*This Project Agreement is wholly by and between the Town of Clifton Forge administration and the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission. Any changes or revisions to the Agreement are outside the purview of any other party, public body, or agency, save the Town Council.*

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RVARC Project Lead

*Maria Saxton*  
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Locality Project Lead

6-3-2025

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RVARC Executive Director