



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

September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

Good evening, Members of Town Council,

Here are some updates on key long-term initiatives we are actively working towards as of September 3, 2025.

### **Downtown Revitalization**

- The Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan, facilitated by RVARC, is underway. A focus group was held the evening of September 3<sup>rd</sup> with downtown business owners and stakeholders. The next step will be a community survey.
  - Part of this scope also includes a Council retreat. Bryan Hill or I will be in touch shortly to coordinate scheduling this.
- Branding project – Arnett Muldrow & Associates will be hosting a public kickoff meeting on September 9<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 6:30 (before Town Council at 7pm) in the West Rock Room at the Historic Masonic Theatre.
- We submitted a grant on August 20<sup>th</sup> to DHCD for a downtown master plan. We should hear back by the end of the calendar year.

### **Housing Development & Revitalization**

- We have kicked off the Housing Needs Assessment/Local Market Assessment project which is funded by Virginia Housing. S. Patz & Associates, our consultant, is preparing a community survey and will be reaching out to interviewees in the coming weeks.
- A successful housing summit was held on August 14<sup>th</sup> at MGCC from 9am to 3:30pm. Lots of great ideas came from this summit.
- A few months ago, I submitted an application for the town to be part of the Housing Supply Accelerator Challenge, an initiative of National League of Cities and the American Planning Association. We were just admitted to their 'Housing Adopters' program! This will be an 18-month challenge where we can learn about innovative housing initiatives, receive coaching, and learn from peer communities. I invite you all to be a part of this effort.

### **Lodging Needs Assessments**

- SERCAP has published an community survey for the lodging needs assessment. So far, they have received 144 responses. This is available on our website; please spread the word.

## **Building & Site Redevelopment**

- Jefferson School: We just signed the Performance Agreement with the Jefferson School Partners. To date, we have submitted a \$1M BIPOC grant to DHR, and a \$2M Virginia Housing Trust Fund grant to DHCD.
- 608 Main Street: We are about to begin stabilization work on 608 Main, which will include the removal of asbestos tiles, the removal of the existing roof, construction of a new roof, demolition and reconstruction of the rear exterior wall, and stabilization of the front façade. These efforts are funded by three grants that the Town has received.
- The Council Meeting agenda should include a second reading of the proposed Vacant Building Registry ordinance. 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.
- Karen Weber/DEQ are continuing their efforts on the BAD building inventory. We should have all of the data available in late fall.

## **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 15<sup>th</sup>, and the final approval process is underway.

## **Misc.**

- 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 mid-October.
- The 'Visit Clifton Forge' site is now live and will be integrated into our official town website soon.
- We are planning a free community rain barrel workshop, in partnership with RVARC, to be held at the Armory. This is scheduled for October 15th from 3:30 – 5pm and will be advertised in the coming weeks.
- 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